

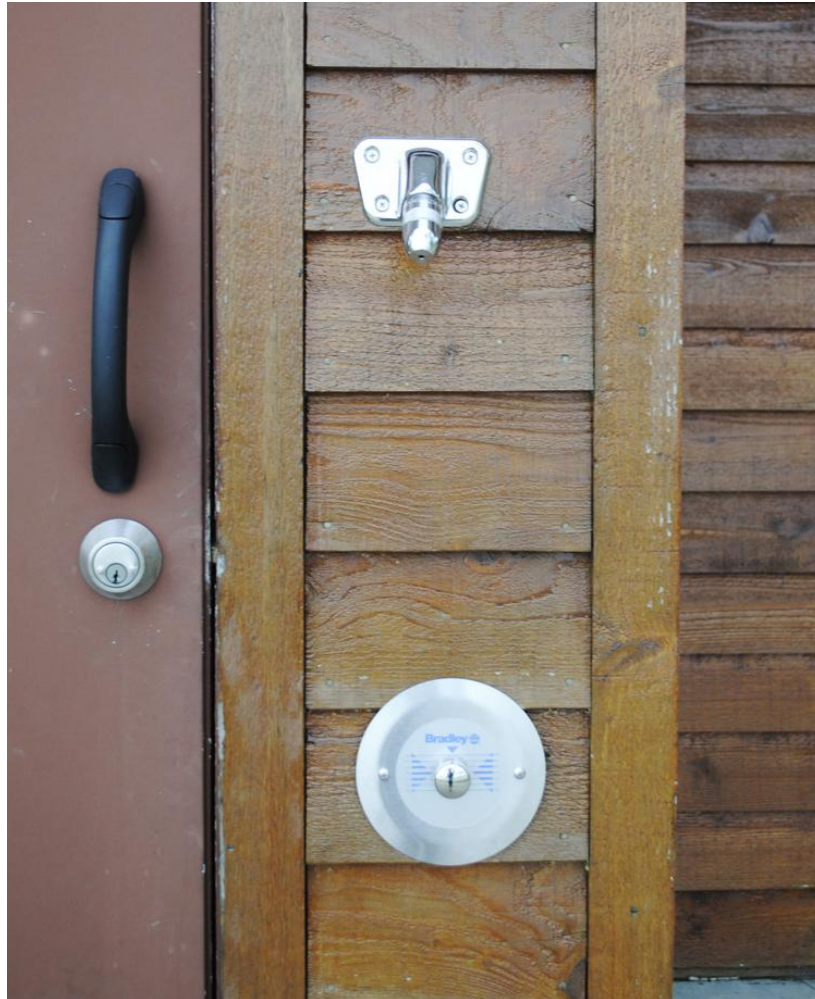
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FEATURED

OT officials discuss Ratliff Park rinse station, other topics

Jenny Haglund

Jun 2, 2020



PARK DONATION – Connected to the bath house at Ken Ratliff Memorial Park, on Van Etten Lake, is a new rinse station for people to clean off if they come in contact with the foam on the water. The device was paid for with a donation from the Van Etten Lake Association, and it was recently announced that the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy will also be sending the township a rinse station. The plan is to have the second unit installed closer to the park's Warrior Pavilion.

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OSCODA – From a new rinse station, to gypsy moths, an election commission appointment and more, the Oscoda Township Board of Trustees tackled a number of topics at their May 26 meeting. This included approval of their government restart procedures, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (see separate story).

As for the first item, it was reported on May 20 that a new rinse station would be installed at Ken Ratliff Memorial Park, on Van Etten Lake. The purpose is so that park goers can wash off if they come in contact with the foam on the water, some of which is contaminated by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances.

It was during the May 11 board meeting when Trustee William Palmer shared that the Van Etten Lake Association (VELA) offered to cover the \$2,070 cost of the rinse station. He advised at the most recent meeting that the rinse station has since been installed, and that the check has been submitted by VELA.

Township Supervisor Aaron Weed said he appreciates the association taking this on.

He added that, a few weeks ago, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) notified the township that they were trying to get a rinse station for Oscoda. But, considering everything that has been going on with COVID-19, EGLE simply wasn't going to have the money for it.

“So, VELA took care of it and it's already installed, so that's wonderful,” said Weed.

He got a call from EGLE the day of the meeting, though, and was informed that the department did end up getting authorization to spend money on a rinse station for Oscoda – which EGLE was ready to ship out.

In talking with EGLE representatives about a station already being set up, Weed said it was determined that having a second rinse station at the park would be advantageous. “And EGLE had said that they would pay for a portion, or all, of the installation cost with it.”

The recently installed station is located by the bath house, and the idea is to put the second one closer to Warrior Pavilion.

“So, I think having those options for the people are going to be very beneficial,” Weed said, especially when they come off of the boat ramp or come in from the beach.

In other matters, “Every so many years, our county has a gypsy moth problem, and we’re coming up on that time frame,” Weed told the board.

He said that biologists conducted a survey, which shows that Plainfield Township has the largest gypsy moth egg population right now. There are very few in the southern part of Iosco County.

“So, it was proposed from Plainfield Township to the county that the funds that are used for that are focused on Plainfield Township, to try and eliminate the greatest threat,” he continued. “The proposal was made to the county, and several municipalities had signed off on approving that their portions of gypsy moth funds be used to focus on Plainfield Township.”

Approval of same was also going to be on the agenda of the Oscoda board meeting but, according to Weed, Iosco County Board of Commissioners (BoC) member Donald “Jay” O’Farrell did not want that to happen.

Weed also claimed that BoC Chair Rob Huebel later said not to bring it up to them at the county, and that it’s a dead issue.

Weed said it is now past the point of being able to schedule getting the people out there to take care of the gypsy moth eggs in Plainfield. “So, I hope this doesn’t turn out to be a big issue for our county this go-around.”

Trustee Jim Baier asked if he knew of the other municipalities which were willing to give all, or a portion, of their monies to Plainfield to fight this battle.

Weed said AuSable Township was one, and he can’t recall all of the others, but that Plainfield Township Supervisor Fred Lewis has the resolutions from these communities.

“But Jay O’Farrell put the kibosh to it, hey?” asked Baier, which Weed confirmed.

“He doesn’t like the north or northeast or northwest portion of the county for some reason,” Baier remarked of O’Farrell.

“And my concern with that is, is he’s saying he’s representing his district,” Weed commented. “The problem is, is his votes affect the entire county. And all those county commissioners are actually representing the entire county, not just their districts.”

He said the BoC needs to focus on county unity, rather than dividing it up, and that they need to be looking at the big picture.

Trustee Martin Gayeski said that half of the county, from the Footesite area west, is nothing but Plainfield Township. “And the last time this happened, this area was devastated for quite a few years, as far as fruit-bearing trees; especially the oaks.”

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In separate topics, officials discussed an election commission appointment, at the request of Clerk John Nordeen.

He explained that, as outlined in an excerpt from the Charter Township Act (Act 359 of 1947), the board of township election commissioners is to be composed of the township clerk and two trustees appointed by the township board.

“Currently, the board of township election commissioners is composed of the township clerk, one trustee, and the township supervisor,” Nordeen stated, adding that he thinks this is a holdover from when Weed was a trustee. “In order to comply with the Charter Township Act, the board must appoint a trustee to replace the township supervisor.”

“We had gone over this back in 2016, I believe, and it was allowed for the supervisor to be on it. But I have no firm attachment to the job, so it makes no difference to me,” said Weed.

Nordeen, however, said he recalls going over this in 2018, and he has no knowledge of the supervisor being acceptable for this role.

But, if there is information to the contrary, he said he would be interested in that.

“I’ll be out as the supervisor by November, anyway, so it doesn’t matter,” Weed shared, before asking if there were any volunteers for the election commission spot.

Baier asked what the function is of the commission, how often it meets, if it covers both the August and November elections and who the current trustee is.

“It’s a standing committee. It meets as often as needed, but at least once per election,” Nordeen said, adding that Timothy Cummings is currently the trustee representative to the commission.

Nordeen said the group’s function is to approve election inspectors, and to see to it that the election has suitable equipment and supplies. A lot of those functions are delegated to the clerk, but another one is the preliminary testing and public accuracy testing of the ballots, to demonstrate that the ballots and the programs in the equipment are operating correctly. There are some proofs that are demonstrated internally, as well as one which is demonstrated to the public.

Palmer said that he would be willing to work on the commission, and Baier’s motion to this effect was unanimously approved.

In other action, officials voted 7-0 to approve a \$320,144 partial payment to Team Elmer’s, associated with the progress made on Phase II of the water main extension project. (The overall project was described in last week’s edition of this publication).

Superintendent Dave Schaeffer said this figure represents a 23.2 percent partial payment of the total project amount of \$1,379,417.

Treasurer Jaimie McGuire asked if the township will be reimbursed for this, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Schaeffer said that once this information has been submitted to the USDA, the funds will be pushed to the township, which will then pay the contractor. “It’s like Phase I, when we were making those partial progress payments.”

“So, we’re not going to pay it upfront; we’re going to wait until we get the money from USDA?” McGuire asked, which Schaeffer confirmed.

In separate business, he told the board that Robert J. Parks Library Assistant, Barbara Hamilton-Here, has given her letter of resignation.

In her memo to library director Diana London, Hamilton-Here wrote that, due to the COVID-19 situation and concern for her family's health, she will not be returning when the facility reopens. She thanked London for the opportunity to work at the library for the past five years.

McGuire said she was sorry to hear this, which was echoed by Cummings.

He remarked that it's a shame and he feels bad for Hamilton-Here. "It's a loss. I'm sorry this had to happen."

Baier's motion to accept the resignation, with regret, passed 7-0.

"Thank you for your service to us, Barbara. We appreciate it," said Weed.