



## **Regular Meeting with Work Session March 27, 2023**

**Call to Order:** The Board met in person in Council chambers at Richfield Village Hall. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Anita Gantner, Board Chair.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

### **Roll Call**

Present: Anita Gantner, Mike Lyons, Holly Price, Mark Robeson, Mike Selig  
MrWehner was excused.

**Also in Attendance:** Park Director John Piepsny, Township representative Don Laubacher, Village Council representative Sue Ann Philippbar, Administrative Coordinator Polly Wheeler, Volunteer Coordinator Susan Czapliski, and approximately 10-12 other attendees.

### **Work Session**

#### 1) Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve MOU

Mr. Selig presented the changes he proposes to the Friends MOU. These include eliminating a couple of sections pertaining to work project flow. He proposed adding an amendment stating that projects will be run through the park director.

Regarding fundraising, Mr. Selig offered an amendment that has been reviewed by the legal advisor, stating that fundraising will be reviewed annually by the park director. A record would be provided annually to the Friends listing how the funds were used.

Mr. Selig stated that this agreement will need some wording revisions.

Mr. Piepsny stated that a budget allocation would be needed in order to take funds from a donation account. The board or park director cannot immediately spend funds without this.

Ms. Gantner stated that she has no issue with Mr. Selig's points. This is the first review of the MOU since June 2019. The board should be able to get a full list of the changes to the Friends by June.

Ms. Price asked if the board is replacing the work program plan mentioned in the MOU with the Champion process in the strategic plan.

Mr. Selig responded that, no, this version is replacing the work program plan with direction from the director where there is no Champion process in place. The work programs would need a consistent length of time to apply to the agreements.

Ms. Gantner suggested that the agreement length should perhaps be three years but that it could be amended as necessary.

Mr. Piepsny mentioned that three years would allow continuity with current board members, since the length of each member's term is three years.

Mr. Lyons stated that, being new to the board, he is still digesting the suggestions.

2) Accessibility of structures

Mr. Piepsny reviewed a discussion with Corey Ringle from January 2023.

Ms. Ringle gave a brief description of the three levels of accessibility:

A = fully adaptable

B = ready to finish adapting

C = visitable, meaning that a person with disabilities could visit the location but not alone and would need assistance for some activities

Mr. Piepsny also mentioned that historic structures fall into a different category and do not require all of the details to be currently adapted.

Ms. Ringle referred the board to the ANSI code documents covering accessibility, saying that she will forward this information to the board.

Further discussion followed regarding the approach to accessibility throughout the park. Remarks included effects of planned use on the accessibility of a give structure or area, the cost to improve accessibility, landscaping modifications needed around buildings, and the desired status of full accessibility for restrooms.

3) Operating levy

Ms. Gantner stated that she spoke with the fiscal officer, who talked to the Summit County fiscal office. She asked the board what direction they feel they should go on this levy: replacement, renewal, or increase. A replacement levy would cause the 0.5 mil rate to be applied to current property values and to new homes, resulting in about \$219,000 annual revenue to the RJRD. A renewal levy would bring in a level amount of funds based on millage rate adopted in 2014, resulting in lower amounts paid by property owners due to value increases and an increase in number of homes, and an effective rate of about 0.45 mils..

Right now a Richfield property owner pays about \$15.00 annually per \$100,000 in property value, which translates to about \$65.00 per year for the median home in Richfield. This needs to be decided at the next meeting so that it can be presented to Summit County to begin process of placing it on the ballot.

Discussion followed, including wording for promotion of the levy to the public; whether the estimated \$219k of a replacement levy is enough; the necessity of a clear understanding of goals, budget, and revenue; the desirability of an historical view of how funds have been used; how much of a burden the structures actually have been; request for scenarios in writing for comparison; and other sources of revenue. Ms. Gantner said that the Friends have put money into the stabilization of structures, but she feels that taxpayers do not have a stomach for an increase.

**Comments from the floor**

**Karen Smik (resident)** – The board is talking about a levy renewal, but it is taking away tasks that the Friends have done well for free.

**Rick Hudak (resident)** – Regarding a replacement vs. a renewal, if a levy fails in one entity but passes in the other, does that affect the entire district if it passes overall? Mr. Lyons responded that the district functions as a whole.

**Corey Ringle (Friends president)** – The Friends have spent \$2,150 on North House and other structures, slightly less than \$2,000 on the roof of Garfield Hall, and \$3-4,000 on Amity House so far. The lack of expenses is due to the efforts of volunteers and to their resourcefulness.

**Gary LaGuardia (Friends volunteer)** – Another park with 22 acres has a budget of \$250,000. It is not realistic to rely on volunteers in perpetuity. The park needs basic maintenance equipment. A levy increase is absolutely justified.

**Corey Ringle (Friends president)** – In past fundraisers for Friends, most of the money has gone to Kirby's Mill. Friends will need the opportunity to hold fundraisers for their operating expenses.

## Regular Meeting

### Approval of Minutes

Minutes of February 27 regular meeting were considered. The minutes stand approved.

### Standing Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

### Administration Report:

Park Director John Piepsny stated that he will give a presentation under New Business.

### Treasurer Report:

Mr. Wehner was excused, so there was no treasurer's report.

### Old Business:

#### 1) Water line to Amity House

Mr. Piepsny reported that the quote from Plumb Nation is the lowest and best to run a water line from The Lodge to Amity House. The quote is \$17,500. The lines within the houses are good. However, the hot water tank in Amity is not good.

Using \$17,500 from the capital budget for this project, plus the paving in front of The Lodge, will leave about \$9-10,000 in the capital budget.

There is currently no running water in Amity. The line was severed during some earlier project. There is a well by Chagrin Valley Cabin, but it may not be good. A ballpark estimate has been given of \$25,000 to fix it. If the line runs from The Lodge, no additional EPA inspection is needed, and Amity has enough water pressure to serve both facilities, but not to extend beyond that to other buildings.

Ms. Price stated that the board is operating in a vacuum regarding the future use of buildings. They may need to consider fixing the well to supply other buildings.

Ms. Gantner asked if quotes for well repair could be obtained. Mr. Piepsny replied that there are many other expenses and time involved to use that source.

Mr. Robeson asked if a business plan for Amity House exists. Since there is not one, he wants to see one to make better projections.

Mr. Selig asked about the timeline for Amity, other than the water line. Mr. Piepsny responded that the other upgrades are expected to be ready by May 6 for the Goat Derby. The water is the last piece required to make Amity House rentable. He also related that Shari Green believes that Amity can be rented for \$1,000 per night for wedding parties and other events.

Gary LaGuardia stated that each well has a specific output that it can provide. The well at Chagrin was originally 85 ft deep, but the lower half collapsed. If it were redrilled, the supply cannot be determined ahead of time. The Lodge will supply a definite source of water.

Mr. Lyons observed that the other structures won't be ready for quite a while. There is value to producing revenue right away. He stated that he would like to move forward with the current plan to run the line from The Lodge to Amity House.

**MOTION by:** Mr. Lyons and seconded by Mr. Selig to accept the bid from Plumb Nation to install the water line to Amity House from The Lodge.

**DISCUSSION:** Mr. Robeson asked from what fund the money will come for this project. Mr. Selig asked if current estimates could be obtained for repairing the well so that costs would be available in case of applying for grants, to which Mr. Piepsny agreed.

**MOTION PASSED:** Vote taken by roll call: Mr. Lyons (Yea); Ms. Price (Abstain); Mr. Robeson (Yea); Mr. Selig (Yea); Ms. Gantner (Yea).

2) Brush hog

Mr. Piepsny reported that this equipment was listed on Govdeals with a \$10,000 reserve. It had not been used more than 10 hours since purchase. No bid met the reserve. However, Mifflin Township offered to purchase the brush hog tractor attachment for \$9,500.

**MOTION by:** Mr. Lyons and seconded by Mr. Robeson to accept the bid from Mifflin Township to purchase the brush hog attachment for \$9,500.

**DISCUSSION:** None.

**MOTION PASSED:** Vote taken by roll call: Ms. Price (Yea); Mr. Robeson (Yea); Mr. Selig (Yea); Ms. Gantner (Yea); Mr. Lyons (Yea).

**New Business:**

1) Clover payment processing fees

Mr. Piepsny reported that there will be a 3% processing fee for credit card payments made through our new reservation software, RecDesk. He asked the board whether or not they want to pass this fee along to customers.

Discussion followed around including costs of credit card payments, other payment options, Shari's feedback regarding impact on Lodge rentals, risk of driving away customers, complications of processing fees, and other factors. Ms. Price asked what the village does in this situation. For large events an additional fee could be added, or the rental cost could be increased. Pricing can be adjusted going forward to cover the fees.

Reaching consensus among the board, Ms. Gantner stated that the park will continue to absorb the fees.

## 2) Power Point

Mr. Piepsy stated that he has heard that "nothing has gotten done" in the park. He showed a PowerPoint to show what has been done since January 1, 2023, most of it by volunteers.

This included the following:

- Amity House improvements
- Lodge kitchen and bridal suite
- Chagrin Valley Cabin – getting ready for summer camp
- Trails – cleaning, regrading, clearing drainage ditches

Mr. Piepsny stated that it is wonderful to have so many volunteers offering their time and talents in the park.

## Announcements:

- Next regular board meeting on April 24
- Youth Art Contest – April 23; submission deadline April 15
- Photo Contest – April 1-30
- Goat Derby – May 6

Ms. Gantner made a statement regarding an incident involving a volunteer, a business owner, and accusations by a member of a partner group. She read an email from the business owner to the volunteer and remarked on the inappropriateness of the partner group member's actions. She requested that anyone questioning an activity in the park should direct it to the park director, and everyone should give each other the benefit of the doubt as a common courtesy.

## Questions / Comments from the Floor:

**Sandy Norris (resident/Friends)** – There will be two bird hikes in the morning on May 6. On May 2 a wildflower event will be held in The Lodge.

**Judy Bowman (resident/Oviatt House)** – May 6 will also be the Oviatt House open house and native plant sale.

**Sue Serdinak (resident)** - Ms. Serdinak asked if a government entity allowed to use Zelle for bank-to-bank transfers. This is what the Richfield Chamber of commerce uses.

**Corey Ringle (Friends president)** – Praised multiple volunteers and gave examples for recent miracles that occurred to make things happen for the benefit of the park and its projects.

**Rick Hudak (resident)** – Mr. Hudak commended the board on their decision to waive credit card fees. Sometimes contracts prevent vendors from charging this. Insurance companies have advised that raising

prices 5% to cover the fees, or adding a service charge, is a much better option than a credit card charge. He stated that the board made the right decision.

**Adjournment:**

**MOTION by:** Mr. Lyons, seconded by Mr. Selig, to adjourn the meeting.

**MOTION PASSED:** Vote taken by voice, which was unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Submitted by:

Accepted by:

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Polly Wheeler, Administrative Coordinator

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Anita Gantner, Board Chairperson

