

LARA Minutes

December 13, 2023

Board Members Present

Perry Beachum (Chair) City of Lowell Resident
Janine Mork (Secretary) Vergennes Twp. Treasurer
Amanda Rogers (Treasurer) Lowell Twp. Resident
Mark Weaver, Vergennes Twp Resident
Thomas Gossiaux, Lowell Twp Resident abs

Board Members Absent

Mark Anderson (Vice Chair) Lowell Twp. Trustee
Cliff Yankovich Lowell City Council Member
Thomas Gossiaux, Lowell Twp Resident

Guests

Dave Austin – Williams and Works, Planner and Engineer

Janine motions to excuse absences. Weaver supports. Motion carried.

Approval of Agenda Rogers moves to approve the agenda. Weaver seconds. Motion carried.

Approval of November 8, 2023, minutes Weaver moves to approve the November 8, 2023, minutes, Rogers seconds. Motion is carried.

Treasurer Report

There is one invoice to be paid. \$2075 to Williams & Works for easement and grant. Weaver moves to pay the invoices as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comment

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New Business

Trail at development entrance. Mark Anderson has been in contact with developers. They will work on it. Have had complaints about not being able to get through on trail at construction entrances.

Old Business

Amendment to bylaw – re: authorizing bill pay without board approval.

If we made an amendment to bylaws, we could have chair approve bills as long as it was not a related person. Would need all entities approve amendment. Perry would like to see it just in case we had no meeting but could pay bill alone. Perry motions to proceed with developing amendment and present to townships. Janine supports. Motion carried.

Rail Trail Connection/Update

Grand Rapids Gravel Easement – Dave Austin

- A Good Faith Offer was made in September to Grand Rapids Gravel for the necessary easement and grading permits totaling \$47,914. This offer was based on the formal appraisal required by MDOT.
- Grand Rapids Gravel counter offer totaled \$112,128. Their justification was based on a recent sale of industrial property in the Lowell area. We shared this information with the appraiser who indicated that it was not a valid comparable. No other support information was provided.
- Yesterday, Grand Rapids Gravel indicated they wish to now mine a portion of their property that is designated for the easement. They do not have a defined length, width or depth, but said they would do the work in advance of our project. They indicated they would not be bringing the excavation back up to grade however, so we would need to plan to fill this hole (unknown quantity) as a part of our project. They hinted that they might be able to fill it, but we would have to negotiate a cost with them for that.
- After discussion, the LARA Board indicated that they are not in favor of offering more than the appraised amount given the already high cost involved with installing the trail on this property. In addition to the easement expense, extra costs include special foundation geogrid material, wetlands mitigation costs, installing new fence between trail and GR Gravel mining operation and contractor costs to access GR Gravel property for construction.
- Austin suggested that he meet with GR Gravel to request a specific scope and costs for the expanded mining operation so that the Board can understand the impact on the project costs. No discussion regarding a reply to their counteroffer will take place at that time. After that meeting, Austin will report back to the LARA Board so that they can make a formal decision on how to proceed with a reply to GR Gravel's counteroffer.

Adjourned at 8:07 pm via motion by Weaver, support by Mork.

Next scheduled meeting is January 10, 2024