



*We will enhance community and quality of life through people, parks and programs.*

Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation Commission  
Future of Parks and Recreation Ad Hoc Committee Meeting  
Thursday, February 22, 2018, 5:30 p.m.  
Governmental Center, Room 300  
400 Boardman Avenue  
Traverse City, Michigan 49684

### **AGENDA**

**Members:** David Grams, Rod Kivell, Steve Largent (Vice Chair), John Roth (Chair), Whitney Waara

**Objective:** To research and make a recommendation to the Parks and Recreation Commission about how to structure and fund County Parks and Recreation in the future.

**General Meeting Policies:** Please turn off all cell phones or switch them to silent mode. Any person may make a video, audio, or other record of this meeting. Standing equipment, cords, or portable microphones must be located so as not to block audience view. If you need auxiliary assistance, call 231-922-4780 or TDD 231-922-4412.

#### **A. Call to Order**

#### **B. Roll Call**

#### **C. First Public Comment**

Any person shall be permitted to address the Parks and Recreation Commission, which is required to be open to the public under the provision of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, as amended (MCLA 15.261, et.seq.).

Public comment shall be carried out in accordance with the following rules and procedures:

1. Any person wishing to address the Commission shall state his or her name and address.
2. No person shall be allowed to speak more than once on the same matter, excluding commissioners' questions. The chairperson shall control the amount of time each person shall be allowed to speak, which shall not exceed three (3) minutes. The chairperson may, at his or her discretion, extend the amount of time any person is allowed to speak.

#### **D. Approval of Agenda**

**E. Where to Begin? Options for the Future of Parks and Recreation** (Orientation and Discussion; Harry Burkholder, AICP, Executive Director, Land Information Access Association; "Partnering for Parks" and "Wins and Losses of Millage Campaigns" Attached for Reference)

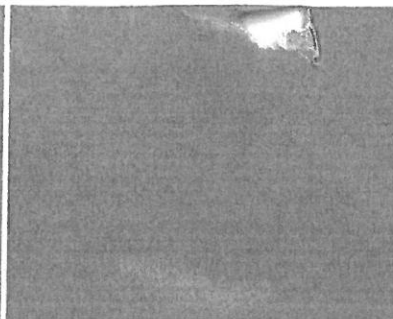
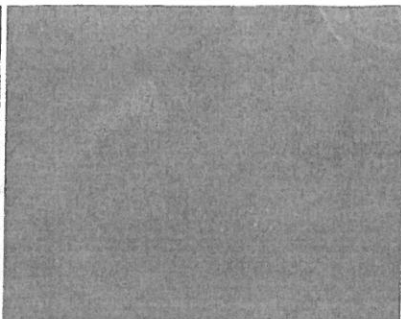
#### **F. Next Steps; Research Assignments; Meeting Schedule** (Director)

#### **G. Second Public Comment**

Please refer to rules and procedures under C. First Public Comment, above.

#### **F. Notices and Commissioner Comments**

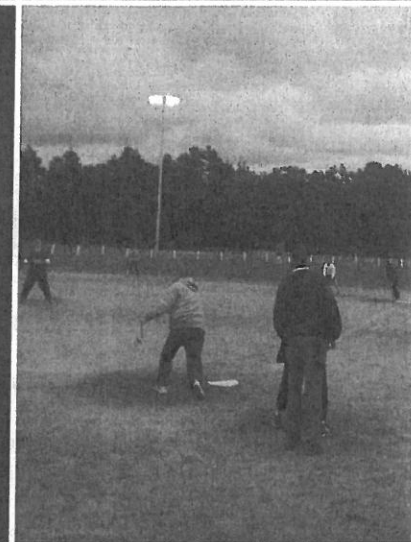
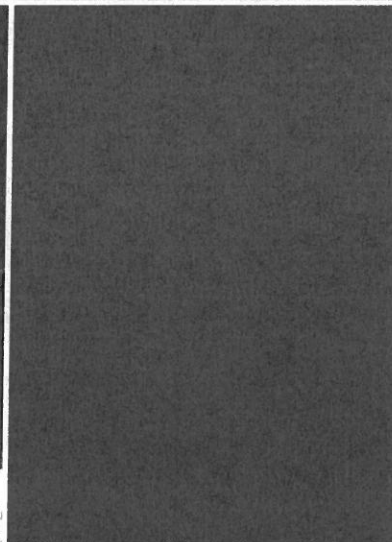
#### **G. Adjournment**



# Partnering for Parks

**Intergovernmental Options in Providing  
for Parks and Recreation**

*A Guidebook for Michigan Municipalities*





# Partnering for Parks

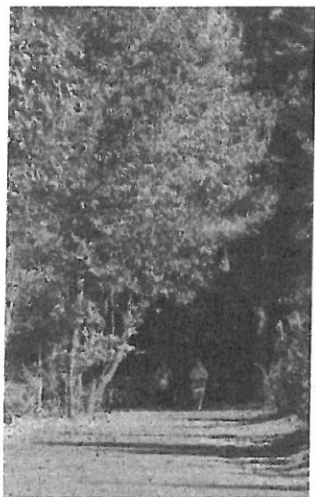
## *Intergovernmental Options in Providing for Parks and Recreation*

A Guidebook for Michigan Municipalities





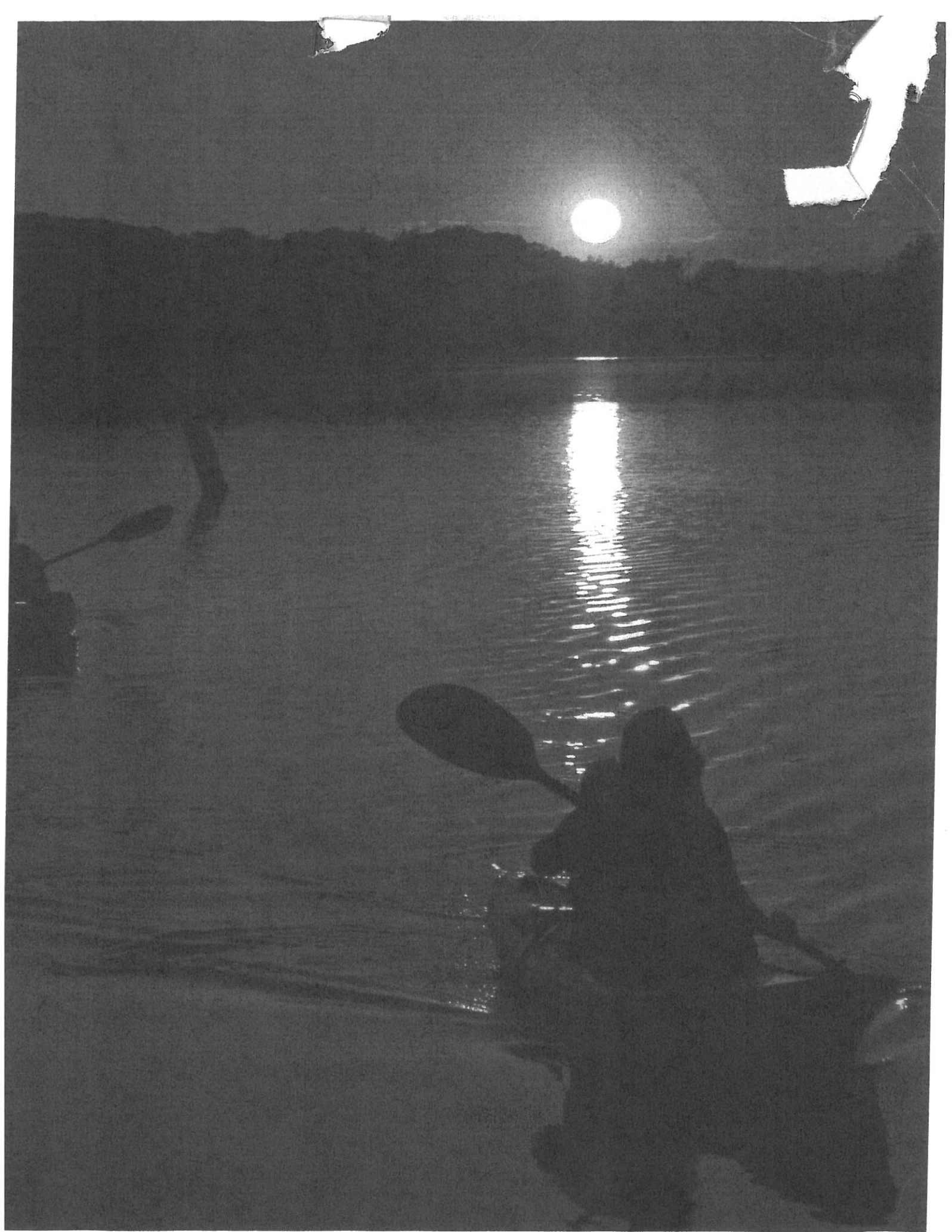




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*“Leave all the afternoon to exercise and recreation,  
which are as necessary as reading.  
I will rather say more necessary  
because health is worth more than learning.”*

Thomas Jefferson





**One** of the dominant theories of community economic development today is called *placemaking*. In general, the theory states that people and wealth are mobile assets that can be retained and attracted by communities. Further, educated young people, creative people and well-financed entrepreneurs can and do choose to live in places that are engaging, welcoming, diverse and offer a wide range of cultural and natural amenities. That is, vibrant communities that offer many options for learning, playing and social engagement are places most of us actually want to live. These are the places that job-creating entrepreneurs, as well as creative and educated workers, will naturally gravitate to. From this perspective, economic development requires a focus on making communities amenity-rich, attractive places. Without a doubt, some of the most important amenities and key attractions are parks, playgrounds, trails and pathways, heritage landscapes, and recreation programs.





## INTRODUCTION

Local governments are responsible for providing many of the essential public services needed for the everyday functioning of a community. In many communities, police and fire protection, snow-plowing and road maintenance, and sewer and water are considered necessary government services. Local governments also arrange for a number of non-essential public services that contribute to the sense-of-place and to the overall quality of life in a community. High-speed internet zones, community festivals, public libraries, recreation programs and parks are a few of the non-essential services citizen's desire. The level and quality of these services can heavily influence whether people choose to live in a particular community. In fact, most residents now consider many of these services as essential to their quality of life.

To provide for adequate levels of services, local governments must invest in both infrastructure and personnel. However, local governments throughout Michigan are encountering unprecedented financial constraints. In every budget since 2000, the State of Michigan has not fully returned revenue sharing as required by statute. According to the Michigan Municipal League (MML), 10 consecutive cuts have left local communities more than \$4 billion short in revenue sharing. Squeezed between falling revenues and

increasing costs, local governments have few options: cut services or raise revenues, or find a combination of the two. In some cases there may be other alternatives. Local governments may be able to save costs through the sharing of services, consolidation of government services, or both. This approach may be the key to maintaining a community's parks, trail systems and recreation services.

Recently, local governments have used a number of strategies to provide for and fund community park and recreation services, including: contracting with the private sector, obtaining local, state and federal grants, and mobilizing community volunteers. Additionally, municipalities are working across jurisdictional boundaries to increase efficiencies in financing and managing community parks and recreation. This inter-jurisdictional approach was supported by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources through the five-year State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Referencing a survey of recreational professionals, the Plan indicates that the most important efforts local jurisdictions must pursue are increased funding and inter-jurisdictional cooperation and collaboration.

In many instances, sharing parks and recreation programs has proven to be one of the more agreeable forms of community-wide inter-jurisdictional cooperation. Parks and recreation facilities tend to serve

people across large geographical areas and contribute to a community's overall sense-of-place. Additionally, recreation infrastructure often extends well beyond municipal boundaries, especially for trail systems that often traverse multiple jurisdictions. As a result, cooperation may be necessary for some forms of recreation.

On the other hand, local officials may be reluctant to give up any amount of control in the management and development of parks and recreation facilities. For example, some local leaders may feel special ownership of the parks that their municipalities established and invested in. Such feelings can make it difficult to discuss shared control or joint operation options. Either way, inter-jurisdictional cooperation requires work.



## SCORP FACTS

### Top Suggested Recreational Initiatives for Michigan

- More funding
- Cooperation/collaboration
- More advertising/marketing

**Dollars needed for capital improvements:** \$460 million

### Projected Funding Sources for Capital Improvements

- Approximately ¼ will come from tax dollars
- Approximately ¾ will come from grants (state and other)

### Funding Sources

Over the last five years, the proportion of agencies depending on user fees, millages, and private gifts increased for each type of government

Over the next five years, most local units of government expect to further increase their dependency on user fees, millages, private gifts and volunteers while decreasing their dependency on general fund dollars



## The Important Roles of Local Parks and Recreation

The physical, environmental, social, and economic benefits of community parks and recreation services are well documented. Numerous studies have shown that when people have access to parks, they exercise more. This increased level of physical activity can reduce the risks for chronic diseases and help manage mental illness. Parks and open space also play an important role in our environment, helping to improve both water and air quality. Perhaps most importantly, parks and recreation can build and strengthen community and contribute to sense-of-place.

### Physical Benefits

According to a 2010 report from the U.S. Surgeon General, regular physical activity can help control weight, reduce risk for many diseases (including heart disease and some cancers), strengthen bones and muscles, and increase life expectancy.<sup>1</sup> Physical activity also produces psychological benefits, relieving symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Despite the well-known benefits of physical activity, 53% of Michigan residents reported to have less than 30 minutes a day of leisure-time physical activity five or more times a week, and 24% reported no leisure-time physical activity.<sup>2</sup>

The sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy diet of many Americans has produced an epidemic of obesity. According to 2010 statistics from the Centers for Disease Control

*“Americans need to live in places and work in environments that help them practice healthy behaviors. The social, cultural, physical and economic foundations of a community are important factors in its ability to support a healthy lifestyle for its citizens - government and private organizations should pool their resources to increase access to healthy foods, such as ensuring that all neighborhoods, especially in low-income areas, have full service and safe options for physical activities such as walking and bike paths, sidewalks and parks.”*

- U.S. Surgeon General Report, 2010

(CDC), one-third of U.S. adults are considered obese and 12.5 million children and adolescents are considered obese. In Michigan, just over 26% of the population is considered obese.

### Environmental Benefits

Parks and open space have a significant impact on our environment. Greenspaces help to reduce storm-water runoff, keeping phosphorus and other pollutants out of waterways and preventing septic system overload. In large urban areas, parks with large mature trees help remove smoke, dust and other air pollutants. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, one acre of forest absorbs six tons of carbon dioxide and puts out four tons of oxygen. This is enough to meet the annual needs of 18 people.<sup>3</sup> Parks also help protect wildlife and support biodiversity.

### Social Benefits

According to a report from the Trust for Public Land, parks (especially urban parks) can have a significant role in the development of a community, reducing crime and offering recreation opportunities for at-risk children and low-income families.<sup>4</sup>

**Reducing Crime.** Officials in Kansas City reported a one-third to two-thirds reduction in juvenile crime in areas where there was a midnight basketball program.<sup>5</sup>

**Supporting Child Development.** Recreation activities help develop decision-making skills, cooperative behaviors, positive relationships and empowerment. Children learn to act fairly, plan proactively and develop a moral code of behavior.<sup>6</sup>





**Creating Stable Neighborhoods.** Research has shown that residents of public housing developments that include green spaces tend to build stronger social relationships with neighbors than people who live in public housing surrounded primarily by concrete.<sup>7</sup>

Seventy-seven percent of Los Angeles citizens who were surveyed after the 1993 riots listed improved parks and recreation facilities as “absolutely critical” or “important” to the restoration of their community.<sup>8</sup>

### *Economic & Sense-of-Place Benefits*

Parks, recreation facilities and recreational programming contribute greatly to a community’s sense of place. In some instances, parks become iconic symbols that help define a community and shape its identity. For example, the “bean” in Millennium Park is as much a symbol for the City of Chicago as the Hancock Building, Michigan Avenue or the Lake Michigan Shoreline. In New York, Central Park is as identifiable as the Empire State Building or Times Square.

According to a recent report<sup>9</sup> from the Trust for Public Land, Central Park was visited by approximately 25 million people in 2010. In Chicago, it has been estimated that Millennium Park is visited by over 2.5 million people each year. A 2005 study<sup>10</sup> designed to examine the potential economic impacts of Millennium Park for Chicago predicted that visitor spending over the next ten years will range from \$1.9 billion to \$2.6 billion.

In the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, local jurisdictions are working to establish recreation facilities that attract tourists

and young professionals and connect with the region’s unique cultural heritage. Local governments in the Marquette Region (five townships and three cities) are building a 48-mile recreational trail that will connect people to historic landmarks, museums, mines and historic downtowns as a multi-jurisdictional placemaking and economic development effort.

The American Planning Association (APA), the national non-profit education and membership organization for planning professionals and public officials, recently published a briefing paper<sup>11</sup> highlighting the economic benefits of parks for local communities.

#### ■ Increased Property Values:

- ▶ Studies demonstrate that proximity to parks and trails can increase property values
- ▶ A study of greenbelts of residential property in Boulder, Colorado, found that other things being equal, there was a \$4.20 decrease in the price of residential property for every foot one moved away from the greenbelt, and that the average value of the homes next to the greenbelt was 32% higher than those 3,200 feet away.
- ▶ In a 2001 survey by the National Association of Realtors, 50% of respondents said they would be willing to pay 10% more for a house located near a park or other protected space.

*A 2008 study by the Land Policy Institute found that in Oakland County, the proximity of walkable and bikeable green infrastructure significantly increased the value of nearby property - as much as 6.3% for properties within a half mile.*

*Comprehensive Study on the Economic Valuation, Economic Impact Assessment and State Conservation Funding of Green Infrastructure Assets in Michigan*

- Michigan State University  
Land Policy Institute, 2008



### ■ Increased Tourism:

- ▶ Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park has an estimated 1.5 million visitors each year, attending 175 public events.
- ▶ San Antonio's Riverwalk Park, created for \$425,000, has overtaken the Alamo as the most popular attraction for the city's \$3.5 billion tourism industry.

### ■ Increased Municipal Revenue:

- ▶ Increased property values and increased municipal revenues are linked. By creating a positive climate for increased property values, tax revenue will increase.

### ■ Affluent Retirees & Knowledge Workers are Attracted and Retained

- ▶ Retirees seek communities with ample and accessible recreation opportunities. Citing a recent report, the American Planning Association notes that if 100 retired households come to a community in a year, each with a retirement income of \$40,000, their impact is similar to that of a new business spending \$4 million annually within the community.
- ▶ Companies continually seek to retain talent (knowledge workers) and attract more talent. As a result, several studies have been conducted to determine what factors are important to talent when they are making employment decisions. Cities with a high number of knowledge workers tend to be places that offer a diverse range of recreational opportunities.

In 2007, the MRPA facilitated a comprehensive study of six Michigan communities. The goal of the study was to determine the economic impacts of parks and recreation programs in each jurisdiction. The results of this study, including the methodology of how the economic impact was determined, is available by calling MRPA.

*The Rifle River Recreation Area (4,450 acres in size) in Ogemaw County, MI, created 37 jobs and had an economic impact of \$1,788,095.*

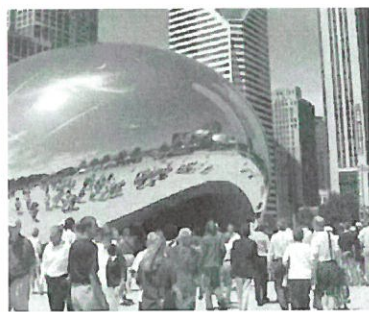
*How Important are Parks and Trails to Michigan's Economic Recovery?*

- Michigan State University  
Land Policy Institute, 2010

## COMMUNITIES REALIZING THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF RECREATION<sup>12</sup>

Local officials across the country have realized how much parks and recreation contribute to the overall quality-of-life and economic vitality of their community. In some instances, the lack of quality park facilities may even limit future economic

development opportunities. The following excerpt from author Peter Harnik's *Urban Green: Innovative Parks for Resurgent Cities* describes how one such city has taken



extraordinary steps to create a parks system designed to establish sense-of-place and attract future investment.

"In the mid-1990s, for internal business reasons, the Boeing Corporation decided to move its headquarters and 500 of its top staff from Washington State to a more geographically central location. After exhausting analysis and negotiations, the choice was narrowed to the cities of Denver, Chicago, and Dallas. In 2001, Boeing chose Chicago. Among other reasons, the company believed that Chicago offered its executives a higher quality of life. Besides world-class music, art, theater and food, of course, Chicago had been greening its lakefront for well over a century and had been building neighborhood parks and field houses throughout the city for decades. The bad news hit Dallas like a bomb shell. Park advocates, who had been complaining unsuccessfully about the quantity and quality of the city's downtown parks and about the lack of park spending, spun into action. They pressed the city's corporate and political leadership about the economic necessity of a serious investment in parks. The parks department, which for years had been squeezed, was suddenly given a generous budget for an ambitious *'Renaissance Plan.'* Four years later, a referendum on a huge park bond was held, and it overwhelmingly passed. The result was an infusion of \$45 million for land acquisition (along with \$55 million for a multitude of improvements to existing parks)."

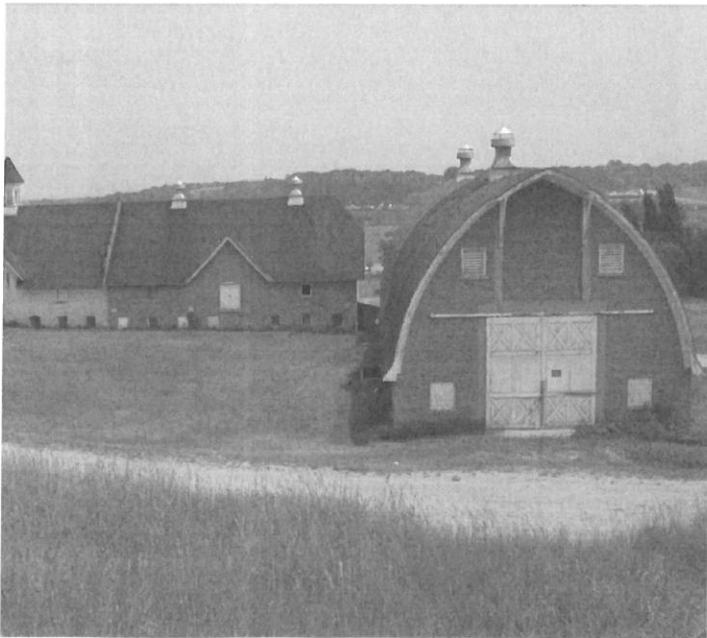




## The Different Kinds of Parks and Programming

From playgrounds, soccer fields, and basketball courts to swimming pools, picnic pavilions and baseball fields, parks and park facilities are a familiar part of any community landscape. However, these traditional park amenities tend to be just a part of the entire recreational landscape of a community.

In most communities, there is a wide spectrum of park types, ranging from wetland preserves that have very little human visitors to downtown squares that host informal drum-circles and weekly farmers markets. Some communities may have dog parks, trails and bike paths, ski hills and canoe liveries, while other communities may have disc-golf courses, linear riverfront parks, historic barns and heritage areas. When it comes to programming, some communities may offer beachside yoga classes, water polo and rock climbing, while other communities may offer cricket, pickle-ball and sailing. Parks and recreation programs are creative expressions of the communities from which they arise. Like an old covered bridge, parks and recreation can be the focal point for a community's identity and a feature attraction for visitors.



## Administrative Tools for Cooperation

### *Inter-departmental Cooperation*

Parks, recreation facilities, and trail systems can be maintained and operated by multiple municipal departments. In most instances, the parks and recreation department is responsible for maintaining parks, operating athletic facilities and conducting a wide spectrum of youth and adults programming. However, in some instances, the public works department may be charged with maintaining certain park and recreation facilities (e.g., mowing athletic fields, clearing brush from trails and refinishing the basketball court). This type of departmental cooperation is natural for most jurisdictions. However, two or more jurisdictions could take a cooperative inter-departmental approach to maintaining and operating park facilities. For example, one jurisdiction could contract with another to provide for beach cleaning or life-guard staff. In another example, two municipalities could work together to purchase and share equipment. This type of arrangement may be advantageous when purchasing large and expensive equipment that may only see limited use.

### *Public/Private Partnerships*

More and more local municipalities are reaching out to local businesses and corporate sponsors to support and build recreation facilities. Local businesses and large corporations are often willing to sponsor local athletic programs. For example, annual contributions from the Dow Chemical Company Foundation support a number of youth and adult recreational and wellness programs through the Midland Community Center. In addition, the Foundation is a key sponsor for Midland's annual 10K/5K run event. Large corporations are also often willing to donate materials and/or volunteers to build recreation facilities. For example, Home Depot recently worked with a non-profit advocacy organization to supply mulch for and help build over 1,000 playgrounds.

In Michigan, the City of Grand Rapids offers two public/private programs. The ***Adopt-a-Park Program*** provides individuals or organizations an opportunity to assist in the maintenance of public spaces within the city. The

**Sponsorship Program** provides an opportunity for donors to help finance a number of programs and services throughout the city.

In Detroit, a public/private partnership has transformed one of the city's oldest squares into one of the most celebrated parks in the Midwest. The *Detroit 300 Conservancy*, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, manages, maintains and operates Campus Martius under a long-term operating agreement with the City of Detroit. The work of the Conservancy is supported by a long list of corporate sponsors. This successful partnership resulted in the park being named one of the "top-10 public spaces" of 2010 by the American Planning Association.

Local municipalities can also work with local non-profit organizations to support and promote shared recreation assets. For example, a local municipality might work with a local land conservancy to coordinate and develop community-wide green infrastructure systems. Local municipalities might also work with local non-profit trail providers to plow pathways, clear brush and coordinate links to existing municipal trail infrastructure.

### **Friends Groups and Volunteers**

Friends groups are non-profit organizations that can assist local municipalities in recruiting volunteers, leading construction projects and supporting programs. Perhaps most importantly, friends groups can assist with local fundraising efforts. For example, the *Friends of Recreation Board* in Kalamazoo exists to develop funding partnerships with corporations and individuals for parks and recreation throughout the community. Appointed by the city commission, the Board hosts several fundraising events each year. In 2011, their annual golf event raised over \$5,000.

In another part of Michigan, the *Friends of Bay City State Recreation Area* was recently awarded the National Association of State Director's Presidential Award. In existence for 17 years, the friends group was responsible for raising over \$300,000 toward building the first-ever spray park in a Michigan State Park. According to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, there are a number of such friends groups around the state.

## **PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AT WORK**

In 2006 and 2007, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy assisted both Forest Home Township and Antrim County in submitting Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund applications for the acquisition of two large properties that now make up part of the 763-acre Glacial Hills Natural Area. Portions of these properties include the headwaters for Antrim County's famous Chain-of-Lakes. Since then, the Conservancy has continued to work with the local business community, volunteers and regional non-profit agencies, to construct over a mile of trails throughout the natural area. Significant portions of this trail building effort were provided by students participating in the local Youth Corps Program and unemployed individuals sponsored by the Herrington-Fitch Foundation through a unique partnership with Goodwill Industries.



There are also less-formal arrangements. In response to budget cuts to the City of Allen Park Parks and Recreation Department, which forced the layoff of nine ground-crew employees, a number of local youth organizations (including the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Brownies and Allen Park Athletic Club) have volunteered to pick up trash at local parks.



## Legal Tools for Cooperation

State enabling legislation (see chart) has allowed local governments in Michigan to work across jurisdictional boundaries to provide for and finance a wide range of park and recreation services for many years. For example, over 70 years ago the state legislature established the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority (Public Act 147 of 1939) specifically to create and fund a regional park district in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, and Livingston Counties.

There are numerous ways in which local governments can work together across jurisdictional boundaries to provide for park and recreation services. On one end of the spectrum, using the simplest form of cooperation, two or more local governments can develop and adopt a joint recreation plan for an entire community. At the other end of the spectrum, two or more local governments can establish a *Recreation Authority*, seek a millage and oversee the development and operation of municipal recreation facilities. The unique

provisions of various state statutes allow local governments to establish a cooperative arrangement that best fits the specific needs and desires of their community.

### Joint Recreation Plan

Two or more local governments can develop and adopt a joint recreation plan for the entire community. This form of cooperation may be best suited for smaller communities in which there are only a handful of parks and recreation services and where future development priorities and goals are narrowly defined. Once the plan is adopted by each jurisdiction, local officials can work together to coordinate funding (including applying for grants), oversee park development and manage resources. If needed, the local governments could also establish an informal joint recreation committee to help plan for and guide these administrative efforts.

## MICHIGAN ENABLING LEGISLATION FOR PROVIDING PUBLIC RECREATION AND PARKS - JOINTLY

Act	Title	Government Units Covered	Governing Body Established by the Act
1905 PA 157	Township Parks and Places of Recreation	Townships	Township Park Commission or Board of Commissioners <sup>i</sup>
1913 PA 90	Parks, Zoological Gardens and Airports	Counties	County Park Trustees
1917 PA 156	Recreation and Playgrounds	Cities, Villages, Townships, Counties and School Districts	Recreation Board
1929 PA 312	Metropolitan District Act	Cities, Villages, Townships, and Parts Thereof	Charter Commission
1965 PA 261	County and Regional Parks	Counties	Parks and Recreation Commission <sup>ii</sup>
1989 PA 292	Metropolitan Councils Act	Cities, Counties, Villages and Townships <sup>iii</sup>	Metropolitan Area Council
Part 721 of 1994 PA 451	Michigan Trailways	Federal Government, Counties, Cities, Villages and Townships	Michigan Trailway Management Council <sup>iv</sup>
2000 PA 321	Recreational Authorities Act	Cities, Counties, Villages, Townships and Districts	Board of Directors

<sup>i</sup> Formed when two or more townships hold land jointly; it is made up of the supervisor or designee from each Township

<sup>ii</sup> To oversee a Regional Park

<sup>iii</sup> With a Metropolitan Area

<sup>iv</sup> Councils are formed pursuant to the Urban Cooperation Act (1967 PA 7)

This chart is adapted from Appendix A of the DNR Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans





The community of Fife Lake offers a useful example of basic cooperation for joint recreation planning. In 2010, Fife Lake Township and the Village of Fife Lake adopted a joint recreation plan. The plan outlines a series of improvements to park facilities within the Village and future efforts to develop a non-motorized pathway that would traverse around the lake through both the Village and Township. Local leaders are currently working with regional trail experts to determine a preferred route for the pathway and explore links to other trail systems within the region.

**Urban Cooperation Act: PA 7 of 1967  
(MCL 124.501 - 124.512)**

The Urban Cooperation Act permits two or more “public agencies” (county, city, village, township and/or school district) to jointly provide for parks and recreation services. Under the Act, the joint exercise of power is established through an inter-local agreement, which may provide for the purpose, function, organization, allocation of resources and other specific provisions of the arrangement. Under the Act, local governments can also share tax revenue to provide for park facilities and recreation services.

The mission of the new multi-jurisdictional collaborative should be clearly outlined within the inter-local agreement. Given the Act’s flexibility, the mission may be quite broad or very narrowly focused. For example, the DeWitt Community (DeWitt Charter Township & City of Dewitt) utilized the Urban Cooperation Act to establish the *DeWitt Area Recreation Authority* for the sole purpose of providing quality recreation programming. Under the agreement, the two participating jurisdictions still own and operate their own parks and recreation facilities. According to



Clay Summers, the Executive Director of the DeWitt Area Recreation Authority, “Even though we work closely with the participating jurisdictions to help oversee the use and maintenance of their existing sports fields, the inter-local agreement has allowed us to really focus on providing quality programs for our residents, which is our strength.”

In 2004, Vergennes Township, Lowell Charter Township and the City of Lowell used the Urban Cooperation Act to establish the *Lowell Area Recreation Authority*. The Authority is charged with developing a new non-motorized trailway that connects all three municipalities. Under the inter-local agreement, the Authority can purchase and acquire property, build and operate trails, hire employees and seek and accept funding (including private donations and grants). The Authority is directed by a seven-member board consisting of officials from each township board, the city council and area residents. In 2010, the Authority announced that it had achieved its fundraising goal of \$1,092,330 for the construction of a new trail. Construction of Phase I of the new trail was completed in the fall of 2011.

The Urban Cooperation Act is mentioned in the Michigan Trailway Act (PA 451) for creating Trailway Authorities (e.g., the Mid-West Michigan Trail Authority, the Polly Ann Trails Council, Betsie Valley Trails Council and Walled Lake Wixom Trails). Trailway Authorities develop, manage and maintain multi-jurisdictional trailways. However, they do not have any bonding or taxing authority.

**Recreation and Playgrounds Act: PA 156 of 1917  
(MCL 123.51 - 123.54)**

The Recreation and Playgrounds Act permits two or more cities, villages, counties or townships to jointly operate park and recreation services. The Act also permits any combination of these municipalities to work with a local school district to jointly operate park and recreation services. Local jurisdictions can delegate the operation of park and recreation services to a “recreation board.” The local cooperative can also appropriate funding generated from a tax levy (subject to voter approval) to the recreation board to carry out its activities. Once established, the recreation board is permitted to conduct its activities on property under its own custody and management, and/or public and private properties.

The Romeo Community offers a useful example of this approach. In 1983, Washington Township, Bruce Township,



the Village of Romeo and Romeo Community Schools used the Recreation and Playground Act to establish the *Greater Romeo-Washington-Bruce Parks and Recreation Commission*. Under the agreement, the Commission is charged with supervising public parks, athletic fields, recreation centers and conducting “any wholesale and constructive form of recreation and public service designed to enhance the standard of living and the leisure time for adults.” In 1986 (and successive years), voters approved .75 mills for the operation of recreation services. The participating jurisdictions work very closely with the Romeo Community Schools, often sharing the same facilities.

**County and Regional Parks Act: PA 261 of 1965  
(MCL 46.361 - 46.367)**

The County and Regional Parks Act allows a county to establish a “Parks and Recreation Commission” to plan, develop, preserve, administer, maintain and operate parks and recreation places and facilities. Under the Act, the Commission may:

- Acquire property
- Accept funding
- Levy a tax (subject to voter approval)
- Borrow money
- Issue bonds
- Charge and collect fees
- Hire staff

A Parks and Recreation Commission must be established by resolution, approved by 2/3 vote of the county board of commissioners. A formal agency of the county, the Commission must be made up of 10 members, including the chairperson or commissioner from the county road commission, the county drain commissioner (or an employee of the drain commissioner’s office), the county executive (if an elected official) or the chair of the county planning commission, and seven other members, one being a member of the county board. Under the Act, the county board of commissioners in two or more contiguous counties can also establish a regional Parks and Recreation Commission.

On paper, it may appear that the County and Regional Parks Act is intended to facilitate large, single-entity (county) recreation services. However, one Michigan community has utilized the Act to facilitate new collaborative opportunities and substantive park development at the local level.

In 1995, St. Clair County used the County and Regional Parks Act to establish the *St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission*. The Commission is charged with managing county parks, non-motorized trails and specialized mobile recreation units for community events. The Commission is funded by a voter approved .5-mill tax levy (approximately \$3 million). From that, 25% of the annual millage revenue is distributed back to every unit of government within the county. The amount of the annual distribution is based on population, and must be used to support local park development and recreational programs. In its first 16 years, \$9.14 million was distributed back to







the 33 local jurisdictions within the county. As a result of this unique funding mechanism, local governments have been able to provide for recreation facilities that might not otherwise be possible. According to Charter Township of Fort Gratiot Supervisor Douglas Hannan, “This unique funding mechanism has allowed the Township to establish a number of recreational facilities that we could not have developed any other way. For example, we are currently working on developing a unique ADA-accessible canoe launch for the Black River.”

In a further effort to support inter-jurisdictional cooperation, some neighboring jurisdictions within St. Clair County have pooled their millage allocation to build regional park facilities. According to Hannan, the success of this millage distribution system has led voters to subsequently approve a millage renewal three different times over 16 years, including in 2010 when it was approved by over 72% of county voters.

### **Metropolitan District Act: 312 of 1929 (MCL 119.1 - 119.18)**

The Metropolitan District Act permits two or more cities, villages or townships (or parts of these) to incorporate into a metropolitan district for the purpose of acquiring, owning, operating and maintaining parks. Under the Act, the District’s powers can include the ability to:

- Hire staff and contract for services
- Borrow money and issue bonds on the credit of the district
- Collect rents and tolls
- Sell or lease lands
- Acquire properties
- Establish a special assessment district
- Pass and enforce regulations
- Levy taxes in a sum not to exceed ½ of 1% of the assessed value of all real property and personal property in the district

The Metropolitan District Act requires the creation of a “charter” and “charter commission,” which must be approved by the voters of the participating jurisdictions. The charter may include a millage. Any subsequent amendment to the charter would require a similar public vote.

In 2000, the Townships of Tyrone, Fenton and Argentine

and the cities of Linden and Fenton put a charter and a perpetual .40 millage proposal before voters to operate a year-round parks and recreation district. Voters in Argentine Township and Tyrone Township rejected the charter and millage proposals. However, voters in the remaining three jurisdictions approved the proposals, formally establishing the *Southern Lakes Regional Metropolitan Parks and Recreation District*. The District is directed by a full-time staff member and seven-member board consisting of officials from the township board, the city commissions and residents from the community. The District also works closely with the local school district.

### **Recreational Authorities Act: 321 of 2000 (123.1131 - 123.1157)**

The Recreational Authority Act allows two or more villages, cities, townships, counties and/or districts to establish a Recreation Authority for the acquisition, construction, operation, maintenance or improvement of one or more of the following:

- Public Swimming Pool
- Public Recreation Center
- Public Auditorium
- Public Conference Center
- Public Park (see inset for the definition of “public park”)
- Public Museum
- Public Historical Farm

Act 321 of 2000 also allows the Recreational Authority to acquire and hold real and personal property inside or outside the territory of the Authority through purchase, lease, land contract, installment contracts, bequest and other means.

To establish a Recreational Authority, the participating municipalities must first prepare *Articles of Incorporation*. This is the formal document that is filed with the state to establish the Recreational Authority as a multi-jurisdictional corporation. To establish a Recreational Authority, the *Articles of Incorporation* must be adopted by the legislative body of *each* participating municipality.

The Recreational Authorities Act provides a number of ways in which the Authority can be funded, including grants, fees and revenue as appropriated by the Michigan Legislature or participating municipalities. The Recreation Authority may also borrow money and issue bonds to

## DEFINITIONS

### Definition of "Public Park"

An area of land or water dedicated to one or more of the following uses:

1. Recreational Purposes – Including, but not limited to landscaped tracts, picnic grounds, playgrounds, athletic fields, camps, campgrounds, zoological and botanical gardens, living historical farms, boating, hunting, fishing and birding areas, swimming areas and foot, bicycle and bridle paths.
2. Open or scenic space
3. Environmental, conservation, nature or wildlife areas

### What is a "District?"

A portion of a municipality having boundaries coterminous with those of a precinct used for general elections.

finance the acquisition, construction and improvement of recreation facilities. The Recreational Authority may also levy a tax of up to 1 mill for no more than 20 years. The Authority may levy the tax only upon the approval of a majority of the electors in *each* participating municipality, voting during a statewide or primary election.

To date, citizens have supported millages in just a handful of Recreational Authorities established under Act 321. Due to the current economic and political environment in many Michigan communities, it can be very difficult for any local entity to get a new millage approved across jurisdictions. However, recent election trends demonstrate that voters in many Michigan communities are willing to support and pay for local parks and recreation facilities. That said, it can be especially difficult for a Recreational Authority under Act 321 to get a millage passed because it requires the approval of voters in each participating municipality.

In 2008, the *Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority* put forward a .20 millage proposal to improve the 48-mile Iron Ore Heritage Trail in the greater Marquette region. Unfortunately, the proposal did not move forward because voters in two of the 10 participating jurisdictions did not approve the millage. Despite overwhelming support in eight of the participating jurisdictions, the proposal was

defeated in two of the least populated jurisdictions by a total of just 38 votes. Last year, a reconstituted Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority was able to get a millage proposal adopted by each of the eight participating units of government. According to Carol Fulsher, the Executive Director of the Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority, the flexibility of the Recreational Authority Act allowed the local governments to move forward with the millage proposal: "The Act allowed us to re-create a multi-jurisdictional authority that was better equipped to secure millage funding for future trail developments. The Act allows other local jurisdictions to join us if their voters also approve the millage."

Much like the Urban Cooperation Act, the Recreational Authorities Act allows the mission of the Recreation Authority to be quite broad or very narrowly focused. For example, the *Newaygo Community Recreation Authority* (Garfield Township, Brooks Township, Croton Township and the City of Newaygo) has a narrowly defined scope, focusing specifically on the development of trails, a soccer complex and a skate park. At the same time, the participating jurisdictions can continue to pursue their own recreational needs. Les Salacina, the Supervisor for Brooks Township says, "The Authority is one of the most positive things we have done in this community. The Authority has allowed us to focus on providing for facilities that affect the entire region while maintaining our own autonomy for township initiatives."







### Programming Limitations?

Act 321 of 2000 specifically allows local governments to collaborate in the provision of recreation *facilities*. Act 321 does not explicitly allow for the provision of recreational programming. However, a number of the current Recreational Authorities provide a wide range of recreational programs to their citizens. It appears Recreational Authorities are providing for recreational programming under the guise of the “operation” definition provided under the act. The

original sponsor of Act 321 believes the Act can provide for recreational programming. We recommend consulting with a municipal attorney if there are any questions concerning Act 321 of 2000 and the provision of recreation programming.

### What About School Districts?

For the last several years, legislators have been trying to amend the Recreational Authorities Act to include school districts as a “participating entity.” In many areas of the state, the geographical boundaries of the school district are a

## RECREATIONAL AUTHORITIES IN MICHIGAN UNDER ACT 321 OF 2000

Authority	Year Established	Participating Municipalities	Nature of Effort
Southeastern Livingston County Recreation Authority	2001	City of Brighton, Brighton Township and portions of Green Oak Township	Future park/recreation facilities
Greater Reed City Area Recreation Authority	2003	City of Reed City, Village of Hersey, Lincoln Township and Richmond Township	Future park/recreation facilities
City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority	2003	City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield	The purchase and maintenance of land and historic barns
City of Charlevoix, Township of Hayes, Township of Charlevoix Recreation Authority	2004	City of Charlevoix, Hayes Township and Charlevoix Township	Community swimming pool
Flushing Area Parks and Recreation Authority	2006	City of Flushing and Flushing Charter Township	Future park/recreation facilities
Newaygo Community Recreation Authority	2006	City of Newaygo, Brooks Township, Garfield Township and Croton Township	Future park/recreation facilities
Howell Area Recreation Authority	2006	City of Howell, Oceola Township, Marion Township and Genoa Township	Future park/recreation facilities
South Lyon Area Recreation Authority	2007	City of South Lyon, Lyon Charter Township and portions of Green Oak Township	Future park/recreation facilities
Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority	2007	City of Marquette, City of Ishpeming, and Republic, Negaunee, Chocoma Charter, Tilden and Marquette Townships	Iron Ore Heritage Area and Trail
Tahquamenon Area Recreation Authority	2008	Luce County, Village of Newberry, McMillan Township and Pentland Township	Community Center
Northwest Ottawa Recreation Authority (NORA)	2009	City of Grand Haven, City of Ferrysburg, Grand Haven Charter Township and Robinson Township	Future park/recreation facilities
Headwater Recreation Authority	2010	City of Hillsdale, Village of Jonesville, Hillsdale Township and Fayette Township	Non-motorized pathways
Windsor Recreation Authority	2010	City of Iron River, Bates Township, Iron River Township and Stambaugh Township	Recreation/Community Center
South Haven Area Recreation Authority	2010	City of South Haven, South Haven Charter Township and South Haven Public Schools	Large park w/facilities
Civic Center South Recreation Authority	2011	Village of Kingsley, Fife Lake Township, Mayfield Township and Paradise Township	Large park w/facilities
Recreation Authority of Roseville and Eastpointe	2011	City of Roseville and the City of Eastpointe	Recreation programs and services
River Country Recreational Authority	2012	City of Three Rivers and Fabius Township	Non-motorized pathways



better indicator of the “community” than are the jurisdictional boundaries. Additionally, the school district is home to a number of well maintained playgrounds and recreation facilities. Furthermore, in many small communities, the high school is home to many of the large indoor recreation facilities (e.g., gymnasiums, pools) that are capable of hosting adult and youth sports programs.

### ***Municipal Partnership Act: Public Act 258 of 2011***

Adopted in December of 2011, the Municipal Partnerships Act allows two or more villages, cities, townships and counties (and a public agency) to enter into a contract with each other to form a “joint endeavor” or Authority for the purpose of operating parks and recreation programming. Under the Act, the Authority may:

- Acquire property
- Operate, maintain, repair, replace, construct and improve property
- Determine the entity that will function as the employer of staff
- Use existing tax revenues or levy a tax of not more than 5 mills

The inter-jurisdictional contract must be established by resolution adopted by each participating municipality. The contract must include provisions that state:

- The purpose of the joint endeavor and method of accomplishing the purpose
- The duration of the contract and provisions for early termination and withdrawal
- The method of financing the joint endeavor and each participant’s contribution
- The method for submitting a tax levy, if any
- If creating a separate Authority, the precise organization, composition, nature and powers of the Authority (including the designation of officers)

Under the Act, a tax levy must be approved by a majority of voters in areas served by the authority. Prior to placing the tax proposal on the ballot, the proposal must be adopted by resolution of the governing body of each participating municipality. Ultimately, if the tax levy is approved it must be reduced annually as necessary to insure that the total millage levied by the participating municipalities does not exceed the local constitutional and statutory millage limits. Therefore, the millage levied under the Act may be adjusted from year to year.

## **STATUTORY TOOLS FOR COOPERATION**

### **Urban Cooperation Act**

- Can establish an Authority
- Extremely flexible, arrangement is created through an interlocal agreement
- Can include school districts in the agreement
- Can utilize/share *existing* tax revenue (not a “new” millage)
- Established by resolutions

### **Recreation and Playgrounds Act**

- Can include school districts in the arrangement
- School district can operate independently
- Local jurisdictions can delegate operation to a “recreation board”
- May levy a tax, subject to voter approval
- Permitted to conduct activities on own property and other public/private properties

### **County and Regional Parks Act**

- Establishes a Parks and Recreation Commission
- Focus is on entire county rather than small group of municipalities
- May operate jointly with other counties
- May levy a tax, subject to voter approval

### **Metropolitan District Act**

- Must first establish a “charter” - which is subject to voter approval
- Voter approval of the “charter” creates a possibility of a smaller cooperative then intended if not approved by voters in each potential jurisdiction
- The “charter” may include a taxing provision
- Cannot include counties
- Can work closely with schools

### **Recreational Authorities Act**

- Established by resolution
- May levy a tax, subject to voter approval in *each* jurisdiction
- Can work closely with schools

### **Municipal Partnership Act**

- Can establish a “joint endeavor” or Authority
- May include school districts and other defined service districts
- Established by resolution
- May levy a tax, subject to voter approval in each jurisdiction - tax levy must be annually adjusted to insure that the total millage does not exceed the local constitutional and statutory millage limits



## Getting Started

Establishing a new inter-jurisdictional body capable of overseeing, providing for and financing a wide range of park and recreation services is not an easy proposition. Local officials from each participating jurisdiction should be aware that establishing a new inter-jurisdictional body requires time, patience and a strong commitment to work together.

One question that often arises is, “Do we draft a plan and then create an inter-jurisdictional body?” or “Do we establish an inter-governmental body then draft a plan?” There is no right or wrong answer to this question. However, completing a comprehensive community-wide planning process prior to establishing a formal inter-jurisdictional body provides local officials an opportunity to better define the mission of the collaborative and build trust. Local officials should review the following steps as they consider moving forward with joint planning activities.

### Step One

Local officials from each participating municipality should meet to discuss and assess whether or not they will be able to work together. This step may require several meetings. During these early discussions, local officials should consider previous collaborative experiences, staff requirements and available resources, and the potential cost of a comprehensive planning process. Officials should also establish a basic understanding of the goals of the new inter-jurisdictional body.

### Step Two

Once local officials have agreed they can work together, a steering committee should be appointed. The steering committee will be responsible for overseeing the development of a community-wide or directed recreation plan, evaluating options for collaboration, informing the community and helping draft the inter-jurisdictional agreement. When considering the composition of the steering committee, it is advantageous to include a diverse group of community, economic and recreational stakeholders (e.g., municipal staff, parks commission, city commission, planning commission, chamber of commerce, school district, local sports programs).



### Step Three

Once appointed, the steering committee should get together at least once to meet one another, agree upon the rules of engagement, and discuss the potential goals of the new inter-jurisdictional body. When ready, the steering committee should take steps to initiate a community-wide planning process, assess the recreational needs and assets of the community, collect public input and formulate the recreational goals of the community. The results of the community planning process are formally stated in a Recreation Plan that establishes a framework under which the inter-jurisdictional body can provide for community-wide parks and recreation.

The Michigan Recreation and Park Association, private consulting firms, non-profit organizations and community foundations can assist local municipalities with each of these steps.

## Funding Local Parks and Recreation Facilities

There are a number of ways in which local municipalities can finance the development or expansion of parks, recreation facilities and recreation programs. Perhaps the two funding mechanisms that get discussed the most are grants and millages.



## Grants

Grants are an excellent, and often preferred, funding source for the development of new parks and recreation facilities. The largest recreational grant source in Michigan is the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF). Administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), funding for the grants comes from the sale of oil, gas and mineral leases and royalties from state lands. As of January of 2011, over \$900 million has been appropriated for more than 1,250 state and local development and acquisition projects. According to the DNR website, two of the top three project priorities established by the MNRTF Board for 2012 include trails and greenways and wildlife/ecological corridors. These types of projects often traverse multiple municipalities.

Local community foundations can be another funding source for community-wide recreational projects. In addition, community foundations may also fund multi-jurisdictional planning efforts.

## The Millage Challenge

As previously mentioned, there is a perception that due to the economic and political environment in many Michigan communities, it can be very difficult for any local entity to get a new millage approved across jurisdictions. However, recent election trends demonstrate voters in many Michigan communities are willing to support and pay for local parks and recreation facilities. In the August 2010 primary election, voters approved 86% of the 623 overall budget initiatives that affected how much they would pay in taxes or fees and 96% of the requests to renew or restore rates that had been reduced by the Headlee Act. Among those, recreation ballot measures were approved in Oakland County, St. Clair County, Saginaw County, Springfield Township and the City of Lansing. In 2011, similar ballot measures were approved in the City of Oak Park, Republic Township, the Windsor Recreation Authority, the Holland Community Pool District and the Roseville and Eastpoint Recreational District.

## Millage Strategies I

In 2004, the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority succeeded in convincing voters to tax themselves for the purchase and general

## GRANT IMPROVEMENTS

Local municipalities can often receive grants on behalf of a larger multi-jurisdictional entity. For example, the City of Ishpeming and Marquette County were awarded Transportation Enhancement Grants from the Michigan Department of Transportation for work on the multi-jurisdictional Iron Ore Heritage Trail.



operation of three large parcels, including the Historic Barns on the grounds of the former Traverse City State Hospital. So, how were voters convinced?

The millage proposal was approved by voters as the result of a well-organized and well-funded millage campaign. State laws prohibit government officials from officially participating in millage campaigns. Therefore, it is important to organize support from interested citizens and local organizations. Active and engaged citizens can help raise funds, develop publications and provide a clear and focused message. The millage campaign in the greater Traverse City community was led by the *Friends for Recreation Lands in Garfield Township & Traverse City*. The friends group consisted of interested citizens, open-space advocates and members of the business community. The group was advised at no charge by the Trust for Public Land. There are a number of campaign strategies that community organizers can employ to help win approval of a millage proposal. Community organizers in the greater Traverse City community were able to employ and use a number of the following strategies.





### ***Know What You Are Buying***

One adage you hear when buying a new car is, “Know what you’re buying.” The same can be said of a new tax proposal. Voters like to know what their tax dollars are buying. Whether your local jurisdictions would like to build a new recreation center, maintain trails or purchase open space, it is extremely important to clearly identify and articulate what project or facility the new tax will be funding.

In 2006, despite a strong campaign highlighting the recreational deficiencies of the community, voters in the Howell Community rejected a proposed tax of 1 mill for 20 years by the Howell Area Parks and Recreation Authority. The failure of the millage proposal was primarily attributed to the economic climate in the Howell Community at that time

and the fact that it was competing with other public service millage proposals (fire and road taxes were approved). However, the millage campaign and ballot language did not identify specific projects or facilities to be paid for by the tax.

Prior to the millage campaign in the Traverse City Community, community organizers conducted a community-wide survey to learn more about what appealed to voters. The survey responses were used to help develop the message of the campaign and craft the actual ballot language.

Some observers say that local jurisdictions may find it easier to get a millage passed to fund the operation and/or purchase of recreation facilities that already exist in the community. Voters in the Charlevoix Community approved a new tax to fund the general operation of a community





swimming pool that had already been in operation for several years. Apparently, the possible loss of that community resource was unacceptable. Voters in the Traverse City Community approved a new tax to fund the purchase and maintenance of three large properties that were adjacent to current park properties. In each instance, voters knew exactly what their tax dollars would be buying.

### **Publicity**

Once community organizers have developed and agreed upon a clear and concise campaign message, it is very important to get the message out to as many people as possible. According to a report on the Traverse City Community millage campaign by the *Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy*,<sup>13</sup> "Campaign tactics included radio spots by former Governor Milliken and a well-known area recreation supporter; a full-page ad the day before the election; 200 yard signs; and four postcard mailings to voters including pictures of land to be voted on and compelling messages." In addition, "a website was also developed with an email address where questions could be submitted. In total, approximately \$50,000 was expended for the campaign, including \$33,000 in-kind donations for graphic design, printing and materials for four direct-mail pieces, yard signs and information brochures."

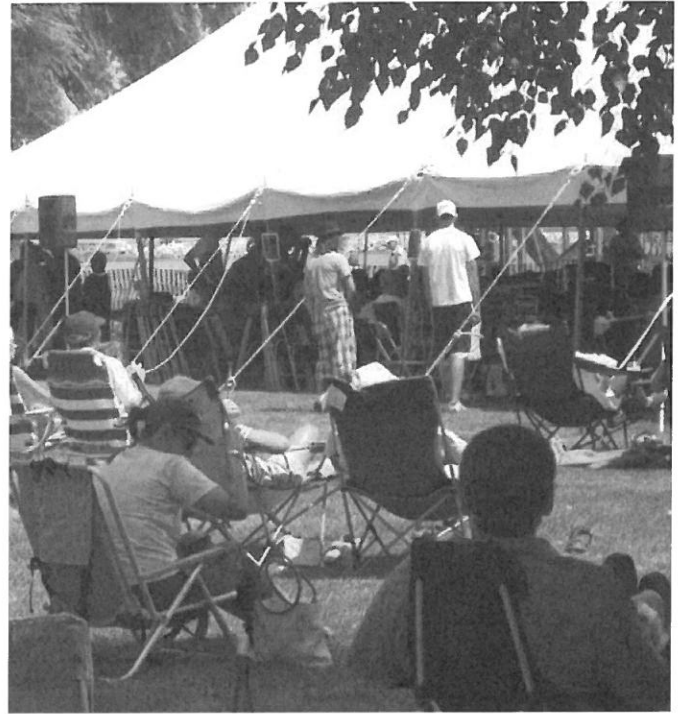
According to the report, the best advice offered from the *Friends for Recreation Lands in Garfield Township & Traverse City* was, "Don't start campaigning too early as it offers more time for opposition to surface, and target the campaign to appeal to voters and determine the most efficient use of campaign funds."

### **Location, Location, Location**

The three large properties purchased by the Recreational Authority in the Traverse City Community are located in both Garfield Township and Traverse City. The physical location of these properties provided tangible results for residents in both jurisdictions. Some observers say that voters are more likely to approve a new multi-jurisdictional tax for facilities that are physically located within each participating jurisdiction.

### **Previous Collaborative Experience**

According to a 2003 Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) background paper<sup>14</sup> on intergovernmental cooperation by Dr. Lynn Harvey



of Michigan State University, "An important factor in determining whether local units of government or community institutions seek collaborative solutions to problems is in large part determined by the past interactions between the parties." Local officials who have previously worked together to provide public services (especially recreation) often have a sense of trust and familiarity with area residents. In turn, voters may be more accepting of a new multi-jurisdictional millage proposal.

According to Charlevoix Area Community Pool Director Al Gooch, Charlevoix Community residents worked hard to establish a swimming pool many years prior to the Recreational Authority. The effort was spearheaded by a local citizens group consisting of residents from several jurisdictions. The swimming pool was constructed in part by a number of in-kind service donations from area businesses. After several years of hard work, the group realized additional funding and support were needed to properly maintain and manage the pool. In 2004, voters approved .3 mills for 10 years for the general operation of a community swimming pool. Voters approved the millage proposal because they were invested in this recreational asset and trusted the multi-jurisdictional citizen-led effort to establish the swimming pool for community-wide purposes.



## Millage Strategies II

As previously mentioned, the millage campaign in the greater Traverse City Community was directed by the *Friends for Recreation Lands in Garfield Township & Traverse City* and advised by the Trust for Public Land. Since 1996, the Trust for Public Land has assisted in the passage of over 400 state and local ballot measures that generated nearly \$31 billion for natural area protection. In their publication, *Conservation Finance Handbook*,<sup>15</sup> the Trust for Public Land provides useful strategies for getting local funding initiatives passed by voters.

## Conduct Feasibility Assessment

According to the *Handbook*, the first step toward getting a funding initiative passed is to research the community. Research will help local advocates better understand the community, the land conservation financing options and legal parameters of proposing a ballot measure, and what has previously worked in the community. Additionally, research can help guide the polling process and design a ballot initiative that reflects public priorities. Most importantly, the results of this research may convince proponents whether it

is the right time to move forward with a ballot initiative. For example, if the community has recently rejected a similar public spending measure, it might not be the right time to pursue another measure.

## What to Research?

- Demographics: Growth rates, population distribution, ethnicity, education level
- Economics: Recent economic growth, unemployment, income trends
- Quality of Life Issues: Community growth, environmental and land use issues
- Finance Options
- Legal Constraints: Filing requirements, who will be responsible
- Previous Election Results

## Measure Public Opinion

Once you have completed your research, it is important to measure the public support for your initiative. This process will help advocacy groups understand whether a measure can win and how much taxation a voter will accept. This process may include interviews with community leaders, focus group discussions with local stakeholder organizations and community-wide surveys. Through this effort, advocates can





learn which language works and help define potential ballot language. Ultimately, the local advocacy group should ask, "Can we win?" If there is still doubt, it might not be the right time to pursue the measure.

### ***Designing a Winning Measure***

Crafting the language and title of the ballot is very important. The language should reflect broad-based goals. Whenever feasible, priorities should be tied to scientific analysis. Remember, the ballot is the last thing a voter sees before making a decision.

### ***Running a Successful Campaign***

Once the measure is designed, a good campaign must be conducted to build broad support from community leaders and organizations and to communicate (through the media) the key benefits of the measure to undecided voters. The design and implementation of the campaign must be compelling, affordable and accountable.

## **BALLOT LANGUAGE FROM TRAVERSE CITY**

### **OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION BOND PROPOSAL**

This proposal will allow the Recreational Authority of Traverse City and the Garfield Township to purchase and improve land to preserve open space and scenic views of the Bay and protect wildlife habitat and natural areas. Properties to be purchased include the West Bay Waterfront property, the Barns at the Commons, and the property next to Hickory Hills. State law requires an annual independent audit of the Recreational Authority.

This proposal, if approved by the voters, will only be effective if both it and the Open Space and Natural Area Millage Proposal pass.

Shall the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority formed by the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield borrow the sum of not to exceed Six Million Six Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$6,650,000) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds for all or a portion of that amount, payable in not to exceed twenty years from the date of issuance for the purpose of open space and scenic view preservation and wildlife habitat and natural areas protection by purchasing and improving land for public parks including West Bay Waterfront property, the Barns at the Commons, and the property next to Hickory Hills?

The estimated millage to be levied in 2004 is 0.27 mill (\$0.27 per \$1,000 of taxable value) and the estimated simple average annual millage rate required to retire the bonds is 0.27 mill (\$0.27 per \$1,000 of taxable value). This is expected to result in an increase of \$13.50 in the tax levied on property valued at \$100,000 for a period of 20 years.

### **OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL AREA MILLAGE PROPOSAL**

This proposal will allow the Recreational Authority of Traverse City and Garfield Township to maintain natural areas, wildlife habitat, public parks, and open space. The proposal would levy a property tax of up to 0.1 mill that would cost the owner of a home with a value of \$100,000 \$5.00 per year. State law required an annual independent audit of the Recreational Authority.

This proposal, if approved by the voters, will only be effective if both it and the Open Space and Natural Area Millage Proposal pass.

Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed on taxable property in the City of Traverse and the Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority be increased by up to 0.1 mil (\$0.10 per \$1,000 of taxable value) for a period of twenty (20) years, as a new millage for the purpose of protecting natural areas, wildlife habitat, and open space by acquiring, maintaining and improving public parks?

It is estimated that 0.1 mill will raise approximately \$125,000 when first levied in 2004.

## CONCLUSION

All across Michigan, communities are facing some of the most difficult economic challenges ever encountered. Recent decreases in property taxes, reductions in revenue sharing and increasing costs for public services are combining to create budget challenges for many local governments. As a result, many communities are looking for ways to reduce the costs of public services provided by local governments even as they push for new economic development. We believe that intergovernmental cooperation can help communities move toward both goals at once.

Community parks, recreation facilities and recreation programs are extremely important public services, contributing to our quality of life as well as our attachment to a place. In fact, parks of all types are essential components of community economic development strategies. Cities, townships, villages and counties need to work together in addressing their shared financial constraints while pooling their resources to assure that their multi-jurisdictional communities have the highest quality parks and recreation services.

We believe that one of the most important and effective strategies for maintaining community parks and recreation services in this difficult economy is inter-jurisdictional cooperation. This guidebook describes various state statutes that give local governments a variety of ways to pool their resources and share the benefits of community-wide park and recreation services. The primary challenge for local



leaders appears to be figuring out which approach is best for the whole multi-jurisdictional community - physically, organizationally and politically.

Cooperative park and recreation programs must be developed locally, by cooperative planning processes. Circumstances and resources vary from community to community. However, with a little time, lots of patience and a strong commitment to inter-jurisdictional cooperation, local governments will develop effective frameworks under which superior community-wide parks and recreation services can be provided.

<sup>1</sup>"The Surgeon General's Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation." U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2010

<sup>2</sup>"Healthy Michigan 2010." Michigan Surgeon General's Health Status Report, April 2004

<sup>3</sup>Arbor Day Foundation. [www.arborday.org/trees/benefits.cfm](http://www.arborday.org/trees/benefits.cfm)

<sup>4</sup>"The Benefits of Parks." The Trust for Public Land, 2006

<sup>5</sup>Varmicheal, David. *Youth Sports and Youth Crime*. Active Healthy Kids, Inc., 2008

<sup>6</sup>"The Health and Social Benefits of Recreation." California State Parks Planning Division, 2005

<sup>7</sup>"The Green Envy." Neighborhoods Parks Council, 2007

<sup>8</sup>"The Health and Social Benefits of Recreation." California State Parks Planning Division, 2005

<sup>9</sup>"2010 City Park Facts." Trust for Public Land, Center for City Park Excellence

<sup>10</sup>"Millennium Park Economic Impact Study." Goodman Williams Group & URS Corporation, Prepared for the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 2005

<sup>11</sup>"How Cities Use Parks for Economic Development." City Parks Forum Briefing Papers, <http://www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/pdf/economicdevelopment.pdf>

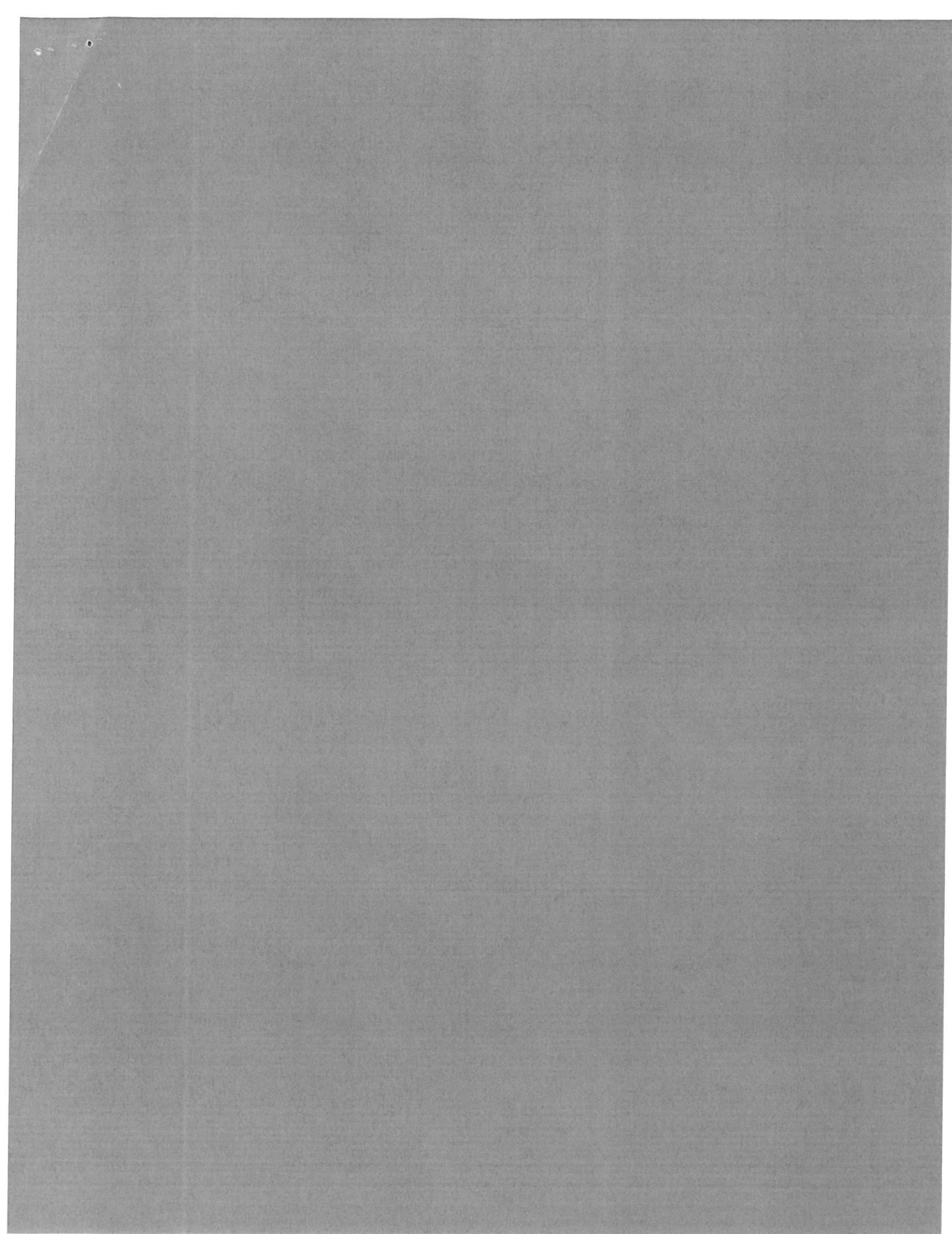
<sup>12</sup>Harnik, Peter. *Urban Green - Innovative Parks for Resurgent Cities*. The Trust for Public Lands. Island Press, 2010

<sup>13</sup>"Michigan Land Use Practices." Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservancy Policy, 2004

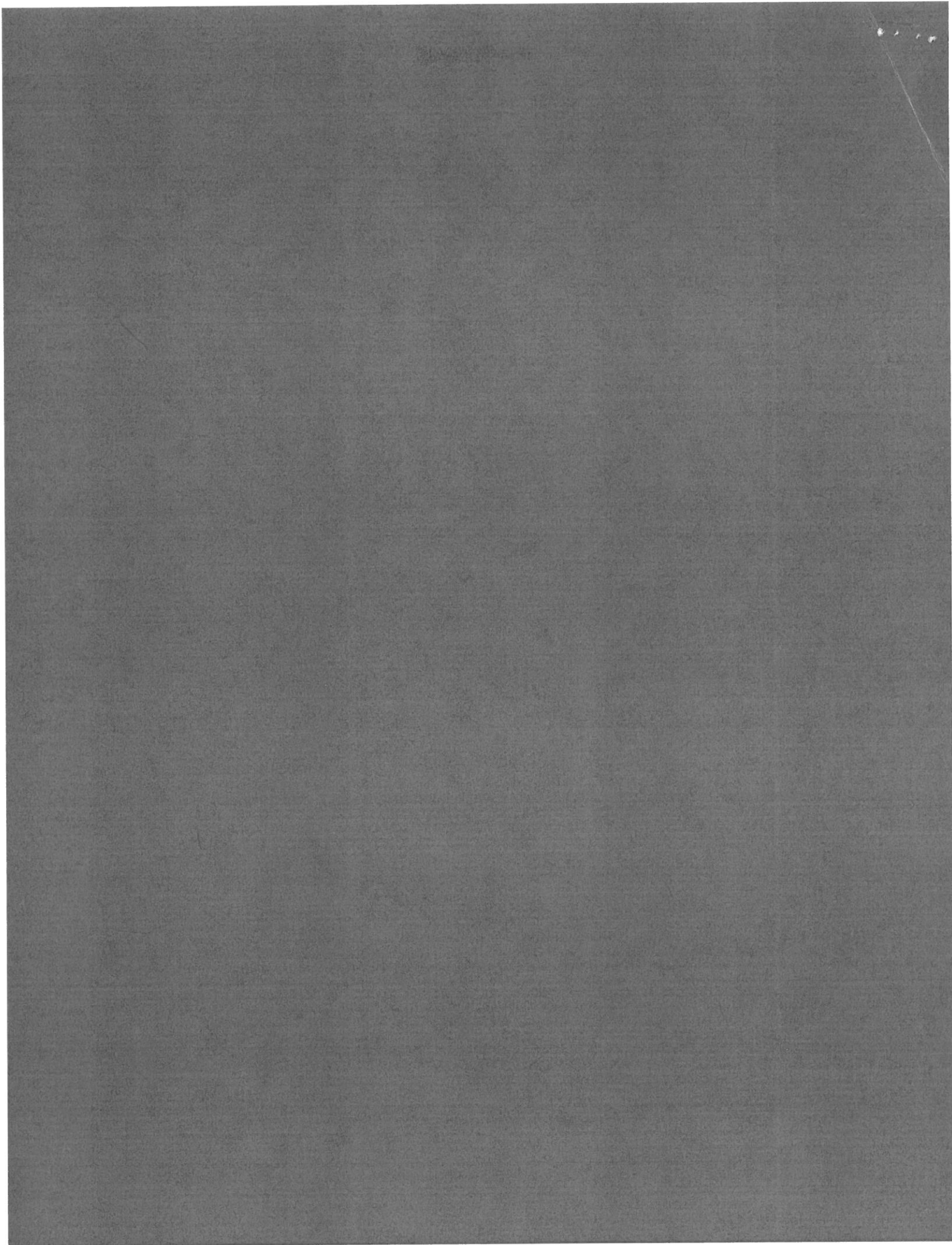
<sup>14</sup>Harvey, Lynn. *Intergovernmental Cooperation: A Background Paper, Making Joint Public Services Work in the 21st Century*, 2003

<sup>15</sup>"Conservation Finance Handbook." Trust for Public Lands, 2004









# Wins & Losses of Millage Campaigns

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*Managing a Successful Community Millage Campaign*

MRPA Conference & Trade Show

Roger Coles, EdD

Traverse City, MI

February 18, 2016

## **Communicating to Gain Community Support**

From the results of diffusion research, several key ideas emerge about new ways to gain community support for organizations.

1. Word-of-mouth is the best way to gain support  
Innovators learn new ideas from the media, especially technical journals. But for others in a group, information that causes them to adopt new ideas or products comes word-of-mouth from people they believe and trust.
2. Convince opinion leaders to support you and they will influence the majority of the community to follow  
Build relationships and communicate with the early adopters. This small group of key influencers convinces the two majority groups, which represent about 70 percent of the community.
3. Do not expect impersonal communication or mass media to change people's behavior  
Newsletters, brochures, letters and annual reports do not cause people to make decisions supporting an organization. News releases and stories in mass media also are too impersonal to cause behavioral change.
4. The best way to convince opinion leaders is by building relationships with them  
Add word-of-mouth as a key communication strategy. Create a program to identify opinion leaders and begin to communicate with them one at a time. Plan to communicate on a regular basis to build long-term relationships.
5. Utilize employees to build relationships  
Organization leaders can't do all the word-of-mouth communicating and relationship building alone. Enlist the help of employees. They already are talking about the organization with family, friends and people in power in the community. Harness this powerful communication source and train employees to work together to help gain ongoing grass roots support.

J. Pyle, Face-to-Face Matters



## **Flat River Community Library**

### **Millage Election Committees**

1. Finance:
  - a. Raise \$1,000 to pay for campaign expenses
  - b. Open checking account
  - c. Register Campaign Committee with Montcalm County Clerk
2. Speakers Bureau:

Individuals prepared to give presentations regarding the library, proposal, the costs, millage, etc.
3. Public Relations/Marketing:

Prepare brochures, reminder-to-vote cards, special mailings, newspaper ads, letters to the editor.
4. Community:

Setup presentations for the speakers bureau to service clubs, unions, parent groups, business and industry, etc.
5. Yes Voter List:
  - a. Identify 2,000 yes voters
  - b. Divide into 4 precincts
  - c. Identify callers to contact each yes voter and remind them to vote
  - d. Appoint poll watchers to check off voters. Call all people who have not voted by 5pm.

## **Greenville Schools**

### **Millage Campaign Committees**

1. Finance:  
Seek the necessary funds to pay for printing, mailings, ads, etc. Treasurer must register at the county offices, write checks, and keep financial records. Goal: \$3,000
2. Publicity:  
Assist in the preparation of campaign flyers, work with printer, and coordinate mailings.
3. Data:  
Must have access to computer to prepare a "yes" voter list. Tasks: Prepare labels for mailings, work with administration to create a "yes" voter list.
4. Poll Watchers:  
Organize a team to keep track of those voting on Election Day and organize a group of callers.
5. Community:
  - a. Develop a list of groups for presentations
  - b. Organize community "coffees"
  - c. Schedule presentations for the speakers bureau
6. Chairperson:
  - a. Chair millage committee meetings
  - b. Motivate volunteers and help create interest
  - c. Oversee campaign theme and plan
7. School Staff  
Goal is to ensure that every employee (district resident) votes on Election Day.



## **Committees and Tasks**

### **Chairperson**

- Chair the bond/millage committee meetings
- Motivate volunteer committee members and help create interest in the community
- Oversee campaign theme and plan
- Select other chairs and find a treasurer
- Thank the community, win or lose

### **Finance Committee**

- By statute, governmental agencies and schools cannot pay for bond/millage campaigns out of their own budgets
- Determine a budget and seek the necessary funds
- Register the campaign committee with the county clerk
- Open a checking account and keep financial records
- Close the books and file the necessary paperwork

### **Public Relations/Marketing/Publicity Committee**

- Develop a theme for your campaign, e.g., Bonding Together for Quality Recreation Services
- See attached

### **Person-to-Person**

- Letters or cards to friends, neighbors
- Door-to-door visits
- Election-eve phone calls
- Telephone canvassing

### **Broadcast**

- Develop a video
- Radio public service announcements (PSA) by community leaders
- Cable channel PSAs
- Radio interviews
- Radio call-in programs

### **Special Events**

- Public tours of existing facilities
- Block parties, open houses, coffee klatches, receptions, etc.
- Community dialogs
- On-going press coverage
- Rallies
- Centrally located progress chart
- Letters to editor
- Endorsements by community leaders
- Letters to absentee voters
- Pledge cards
- Campaign among current 18 year olds

### **Yes Voters**

- Identify the number of yes voters you this it will take to win the election
- Attempt to determine those people you think will vote yes, either by pledge cards or by calling people, and develop a data bank
- Call yes voters the night before the election
- On election day have poll watchers at the different precincts and, again, call the yes voters who have not voted

### **Speakers Bureau**

- Develop a list of groups for presentations - service clubs, unions, businesses, and industries
- Arm the speakers with facts and figures for their presentations

### **Other Brainstorming Ideas**

- Market the good, Stress quality, and target market
- What it costs the taxpayer in dollars and cents (pennies), i.e., less than a cup of coffee per day
- Provide the actual nuts and bolts of what a positive vote will provide and what it will not



## **Millage/Bond Election Campaign**

### **Proposed Timeline**

#### **Week 1**

- Identify and recruit campaign leadership
- Work with election officials to schedule special election
- Develop case for support
- Develop a campaign budget
- Identify funding sources

#### **Week 2**

- Identify campaign volunteers for all voting districts
- Contact donor prospects to arrange meetings to solicit campaign funds
- Identify target voters and begin building database
- Develop promotional plan, including endorsements, media contacts and kick-off event, letters to the editor
- Begin developing campaign materials: brochure, flyer, lawn signs, etc.

#### **Week 3**

- Begin recruiting campaign volunteers from all districts
- Continue soliciting funds
- Continue building database
- Organize speakers bureau; identify speakers and destinations
- Plan absentee voter efforts
- Continue working on campaign materials
- Begin acquiring endorsements from community and business leaders
- Begin organizing block parties or similar campaign support events

#### **Week 4**

- Continue recruiting campaign volunteers
- Continue soliciting funds
- Continue building database
- Begin scheduling speakers
- Finalize campaign materials
- Begin acquiring media endorsements
- Continue acquiring endorsements from community and business leaders
- Continue absentee voter efforts
- Initiate letter writing campaign
- Begin organizing phone bank

#### Week 5

- Prepare campaign packets for businesses and organizations
- Prepare mailing to friends and patrons
- Continue scheduling speakers
- Continue recruiting campaign volunteers
- Continue building database
- Continue acquiring endorsements
- Continue organizing telephone bank
- Prepare for campaign kick-off
- Continue absentee voter efforts

#### Week 6

- Conduct campaign kick-off: at the site???
- Mail campaign packets to businesses and organizations
- Mail campaign materials to friends and patrons
- Distribute lawn signs and other promotional materials
- Continue acquiring endorsements
- Finalize plans for telephone bank
- Continue letter-writing campaign
- Continue absentee voter efforts

#### Week 7

- Distribute promotional materials to businesses
- Initiate telephone campaign
- Continue acquiring endorsements

#### Week 8

- Begin block parties/support events in the townships
- Continue absentee voter efforts
- Place media ads
- Secure media endorsements
- Begin door-to-door canvassing
- Mail literature to target voters
- Continue telephone bank activities

#### Week 9

- Continue media ads
- Continue absentee voter efforts
- Use media endorsements
- Continue block parties/support activities
- Continue telephone bank activities
- Continue letter writing



### **Week 10**

- Continue absentee voter efforts
- Continue block parties
- Continue telephone bank activities
- Continue letter writing
- Hand out campaign literature at designated spots
- Continue media ads

### **Election Day**

- Arrange for transportation and babysitting, if needed
- Continue telephone bank activities
- Finish absentee voter efforts
- Perform poll greeting and watching activities
- VOTE!
- Hold victory party and celebrate!

### **Day After Election Day**

- Take down all the signs
- Begin the process of writing Thank You's to the volunteers and committee chairs
- Thank the community for their support
- Close the books and register the group inactive until the next time

## **Greenville Public Library Resources**

### **Print/Graphic**

- User statistics – charts
- Millage pro-forma – examples
- Newspaper feature stories (which papers, when)
- Brochures
- Buttons, stickers, balloons
- Refrigerator magnets
- Bookmarks
- Ribbons, lapel pins
- Imprinted library bags
- Grocery bag imprints
- Bumper stickers
- POP displays in stores
- Store window posters
- Door hangers
- Press releases
- Reprints of favorable articles
- Direct mail
- Yard signs
- Signs on the way to polls
- Newspaper inserts
- Church bulletin inserts
- Have letters to the editor ready when a negative one appears, particularly if misleading information is presented

### **Person-to-Person**

- Speakers bureau
- Letters or cards to friends, neighbors
- Door-to-door visits
- Election eve phone calls
- Telephone canvassing
- Poll greeters

### **Broadcast**

- Video
- Radio PSA's by community leaders
- Cable channel PSA's
- Radio interviews

- Radio call-in programs

### **Special Events**

- Public tours of existing library
- Block parties, open houses, coffee klatches, receptions, cocktail parties, etc.
- Community dialogs
- On-going press coverage
- Rallies
- Centrally located progress chart
- Letters to the editor
- Endorsements by community leaders
- Voter registration efforts
- Get-out-the-vote



Please join **Citizens for Quality Education** in supporting  
the proposals on the ballot at the special election

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 2014**

These proposals were created with community input and are worthy  
of community support. They continue the work began in 1994 and  
address the need for technology and security in all buildings, improved  
athletic and physical education outdoor facilities for student and  
community use, and will build a central services facility.

**PLEASE VOTE YES, YES!**

An investment in our schools is an investment in our community

Absentee ballots are available at 516 W. Cass Street  
Paid for by Citizens for Quality Education

BONDING TOGETHER FOR OUR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE

**PLEDGE CARD**

**YES, YOU CAN COUNT ON ME TO MAKE MY VOTE COUNT FOR OUR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

(CHECK ALL OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY)

\_\_\_\_\_ YOU CAN USE MY NAME AS A SUPPORTER

\_\_\_\_\_ CALL ON ME TO DO VOLUNTEER WORK. I WOULD BE WILLING TO DO THE FOLLOWING

_____ CALLING	_____ WRITING
_____ OFFICE WORKER	_____ SPEAKERS BUREAU
_____ POLL CHECKER	_____ DRIVER
_____ HOST A COFFEE	_____ ANYTHING
_____ OTHER _____	