

Casco Township Board of Trustees Special Meeting
Wednesday, December 12, 2012
11:00 a.m.

The Purpose of the meeting is for the Township Board to decide on the Blue Star Trail request to sponsor a CMAQ grant.

Allan Overhiser called the meeting to order at 11:01 am and led in the pledge of allegiance. Approximately 16 people were present, along with Josiah Jessup, Trustee; Cheri Brenner, Clerk; Lu Winfrey, Treasurer; Judy Graff, Trustee; and Allan Overhiser, Supervisor.

Allan Overhiser reviewed historic commitments and actions. When he came into office with the township 24 years ago his concerns on Blue Star was safety. In the 90's Blue Star was resurfaced with a bike edge and that worked for awhile but with erosion and deterioration of the shoulder has caused concerns of safety. ~~In five years there will be some improvement and resurfacing of Blue Star.~~ Allan handed out copies of the Resolution adopted June 21, 2010 and also read a portion of the Resolution that states Casco Township endorses the Saugatuck-South Haven Blue Star Trail concept for further development, and supports the exploration of funding and other methods of implementation for the plan in order to make it a reality. He stated that he still endorses that concept but the township does not want ownership of the trail. On July 16, 2012 the Casco Board presented a Resolution supporting the expansion of the Blue Star Trail from Baseline Road southward to Phoenix Road, and further affirms the City of South Haven's efforts to raise funding for this section of the proposed trail. Judy Graff reviewed the Casco Township Board approval in 4/20/12 of the revised Casco 5 year recreation plan. The five year plan shows the trail concept as Casco's #5 priority.

Casco Township has repeatedly stated that it does not have the funding for this trail and the township doesn't want to own it.

Pam Blough responded to a request by the Casco Township Board of Trustees regarding the proposed submittal of a CMAQ grant to the Allegan County Road Commission for the potential funding of the Blue Star Path. She stated that the Pathway must be owned and maintained by ~~an~~ a governmental entity. ~~Both Allegan County Road Commission and~~ The Blue Star Trail Friends are requesting that Casco Township take ownership and be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the pathway. The Allegan County Road Commission is not interested in being responsible for the road right of way either. Also, the Allegan County Parks Commission currently does not see itself the entity due to budgetary constraints and other priorities. Pam explained the maintenance costs would be long term. Pam explained the CMAQ grant funding that is approximately \$300,000.00 per year for 2013 to 2017. These funds can be designated for one qualifying project ~~to several~~. You must submit your application to MDOT by Feb. 11, 2013. Pam supported the fact that the township has only part time employees. ~~and is not a huge entity with full time employees.~~

Allan stated that no ~~one~~ governmental entity has stepped up to take ownership of the trail or to take the financial responsibility.

Craig Atwood from the Allegan County Road Commission also explained how the CMAQ grant works and in the future these grants may not be there. Craig stated that the County Road Commission will be repaving Blue Star in the next 6 yrs. and could add a shoulder for pedestrian use. ~~Craig gave different ideas of how the road-side could be done, the 2" asphalt did not work.~~

Tom Jessup, County Commissioner, big question was who is going to fund this in the future, where will we get the money. As we all know dollars are getting tougher. The Parks Director has left the the position for another job elsewhere. That position has not been filled at this time. The question is how do you put funding into a park when funding is down 15%. Tom Jessup also stated that the

Bruce Brandon, Allegan County Parks & Recreation Committee, has been on the county committee for one year and there has not been anything on the agenda for the Blue Star Trail. Bruce asked if there has been any kind of a formal presentation at this time. Jean said they have not contacted the parks committee yet and her conversations were with Kevin Ricco. ~~It is going to take 10 years to do the jobs that need to~~

~~The trail~~ Blue Star Trail Friends group could possibly apply to the County Parks Committee for ownership ~~but must be in by June 2013~~. There is a feasibility study being done right now for finances for the Blue Star Pathway by the Friends group.

Sandy Warren asked "She agrees that the Bike Trail is a good idea but very concerned about funding. If this project will cost approximately \$2.2 million dollars and you have \$125,000.00 right now and the CMAQ is only \$325,000.00, where are you going to get the rest of the money?"

Judy read letters of support for the trail and were submitted to be part of the minutes.

Board Comments

Judy Graff said she commends the hard work the Friends have put into this project but the township has to prioritize it's funding and the Trail is not a priority for the township and will not be a priority for the next 5 yrs. ~~our next project~~. Judy also asked what would be the purpose of sending a letter to the Road Commission and Allan said it would state that the township would not own the trail or be the responsible entity.

Lu Winfrey felt that the path was not of ~~for the~~ interest ~~by~~ to the entire township that there is more interest ~~to the township then~~ along the lakeshore. There is the east part of the township and seniors that have trouble paying their taxes and they should not have to pay for this trail.

Allan Overhiser stated that the Township is not in shape to finance or own the trail. If the County were to own the trail, that would be great.

Cheri Brenner said that she lives on Blue Star and thinks the trail would be great but the timing is off because of other commitments. I pay the bills for the township and I'm amazed at the expenses the township already has.

Josiah Jessup also stated that the timing is bad right now for us to support this project.

Allan Overhiser made the motion ~~to the Road Commission~~ that clearly states that Casco Township ~~should~~ will not be owner of the trail, but does support the concept. To support the Road commission seeking CMAQ funding based on the ownership by Allegan County or other acceptable entities. And furthermore the board would urge friends of group to get approvals from Allegan County to own this project.

Lu Winfrey Supported the motion

All in favor, Josiah Jessup, Cheri Brenner, Allan Overhiser, Lu Winfrey, and Judy Graff.

Motion by Winfrey to adjourn, seconded by Judy Graff. Meeting adjourned at 1:25p.m.

Minutes prepared by Cheryl Brenner, Clerk, and approved by Allan W. Overhiser, Supervisor.