

## Trustee Lindsay: Harris Township taking the lead on Granger parks

Where do residents find green space when traditional park providers don't deliver? In Granger, Harris Township is trying to fill the void, according to Trustee Kenneth E. (Ken) Lindsay.

The Granger area is lacking in traditional green space, or parks. It is not a city, so it has no city government structure or city elected officials dedicated to what is commonly known as Granger. While the City of Mishawaka extends into smaller portions of Granger, its focus has been primarily on commercial uses.

The county has owned suitable land for two decades, but has no plans to develop it - rather opting to rent it out for farming. The City of Mishawaka keeps annexing into the area (Capital Avenue, Heritage Square, Juday Creek, to name a few), but despite spending a lot of money on parks near downtown Mishawaka, it has no plans to add a public park north of Day Road, the location of the one closest to Granger. There is no state or federal park in Granger. And while PHM schools offer some facilities, they are off limits when children are in school.

So how does anything ever get done in an area like Granger? It takes leadership - someone looking out for the people of Granger. Many years ago the Granger Paths non-profit organization was formed by a handful of concerned citizens who knew the lack of city sidewalks resulted in an opportunity to improve the quality of life for residents. Today, miles of biking and walkways are the direct result of their efforts.

The lack of city water and sewer is an ongoing point of discussion and concern in Granger.

Parks pose a similar challenge. If the traditional providers are not meeting the need, then what? Despite a township being one of the smallest units of government (there are 13 in St. Joseph County), Harris Township has been leading. Roughly 15 years ago, then Trustee Sue Dylewski and the township board established Harris Township Park at Brummitt Road, just west of the Elkhart County line. As a result, an open green area adjacent to Brummitt Road and a nice playground were made available to those in the far northeast of Granger and the county. This year, that playground will be dedicated to the efforts of Trustee Dylewski.

Six years ago, the back half of those 30+ acres was developed into playing fields, and an agreement was reached to allow regular play by the local ECHO Soccer Club, which had been forced to play as far away as Lakeville. Penn lacrosse and other organizations have also used the fields.

Over the last three years, Trustee Lindsay worked to better the park, as often as possible with community partners. The South Bend Audubon Society helped improve bird and wildlife habitats. More than 200 trees were planted through the efforts of Granger Community Church volunteers, a Penn biology teacher (John Gensics) and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. The parking lot surface was replaced. Seating was added under the leadership of an Eagle Scout candidate. The playground and mulch were refreshed. And earlier this year, parking and driveway improvements near the playground were completed.

*(Continued on Page 16)*

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Toscana Park off Gumwood just north of SR 23



(Continued from Page 14)

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In 2016, Trustee Lindsay and the Harris board (Jeff Broadwick, Karen Vargo and Chuck Sulok) transformed township-owned land into Harris Township Park at Elm Road, between the library and fire station just north of State Road 23. It offers basketball, pickleball, a ball diamond, a playground and a connection to the Granger Path. Community input was sought and highlighted the unmet demand for spaces that allow play and recreation.

Despite the township stepping up, it has no employees including no parks department. The City of Mishawaka and St. Joseph County are far better prepared and funded to provide parks in Granger.

The county parks department is taking input as it sets its direction for the next several years. You can request they focus on the Granger area by contacting them at their website or at 574-277-4828. Granger residents pay county taxes, so asking for a county service seems fair. And even though you might not be a Mishawaka resident, they might like to hear from you as well.

## New ambulance at Granger fire station

As part of an ongoing fleet upgrade, a new ambulance was recently put into service at the Harris Township fire station located at State Road 23 and Elm Road in Granger. It will be used by the Clay Fire Territory (CFT) to provide emergency medical services. Harris is a participating member of the CFT.

Advantages of the new ambulance will benefit both patients and responders and include an automated stretcher lift, more secure passenger restraints, improved IV storage and use, privacy window functionality, and overall increases in equipment reliability and comfort.

The new vehicle replaces a 2004 ambulance owned by the township, which was made available for use by CFT when Harris joined it several years ago. CFT strategy and budget decisions, including the fleet upgrade, are affirmed by its five-member Fire Commission, two members of which are Harris board member Jeff Broadwick and trustee Ken Lindsay.

The upgrades over the last few years include a ladder truck, new main fire engines capable of bringing more water to every fire, and another new ambulance in 2016. The ambulance replaced by the 2016 unit also owned by Harris township and subsequently donated to the county police for use as a SWAT vehicle.

## Pickleball tournament a success

The All in for Alzheimer's pickleball tournament, coordinated by the Michiana Pickleball Association was held at the University of Notre Dame's Compton Center in August. Based on the strength of player registrations and local sponsors, the event raised \$4,000 to fight the disease.

Pickleball is a growing sport, suitable for all ages. It can be fun, competitive and good exercise. Four courts were included in the construction of Harris Township Park at Elm Road, as developed by the Harris Township board and trustee Ken Lindsay. The park is located just south of the Harris branch library, where paddles and balls can be checked out at no charge.

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