

Potential Property Acquisition from Northfield Township -Horseshoe Lake Wetlands-

Where & What:

The area we are talking about is the vacant wetland properties off the northeast corner of Horseshoe Lake, approximately bounded by 6 Mile Rd., the railway bed and the farm fields to the north of the lake. Northfield Township (N.T.) owns and has decided to sell several lots of wetland properties (approx. 82 parcels) located within the boundaries of Horseshoe Lake Corporation. The Township has given Horseshoe Lake Corporation (HLC) the right of first refusal to purchase these properties. If we decide not to purchase them, N.T. will offer them to the public to the highest bidder. The HLC Board of Trustees is exploring the purchase of these properties in order to preserve them from development by declaring them a non-taxable HLC private park.

How did we get here?

As we currently understand it, in the 1930s, a developer had purchased this property but later abandoned the project when he discovered the property was undevelopable as they are wetlands and his initial road sank into the bog. His lots went into property tax foreclosure. This began a revolving cycle of foreclosures with these properties. As that cycle continued, tax foreclosure lots went to the State of Michigan and the DNR. In 1999, the State of Michigan gave these properties to N.T. at no cost. The N.T. Board planned to keep them as a public nature preserve. However, the properties cannot be used as a public preserve because they are contained within the borders of the private property of Horseshoe Lake Corporation. Consequently, a few years ago, the N.T. Assessor determined that they had to begin paying property taxes on these lots because they were not being used for a Public Purpose. With the land not usable and N.T. having to pay property taxes each year, N.T. decided to sell. In an effort to simplify the sales process, N.T. approached the HLC to sell all the properties as a whole to the Horseshoe Lake Corporation.

Why would we want to purchase these properties?

- 1.) Purchasing the township-owned wetland properties would allow Horseshoe Lake Corporation to formally classify and designate them as HLC Parkland / Wetland Nature Preserve with a deed restriction stipulating no development. This new ownership and designation would protect them from any attempt at private development. If, on the other hand, these properties were to be sold individually and developed, the impact on our seasonal flooding would likely increase drastically. The preservation of these wetlands is critical to the health of the entire ecosystem of Horseshoe Lake. They are needed to provide expansion and holding during times of flooding. This function they provide us is also critical to N.T. in terms of not only HLC, but also to Whitmore Lake, the Huron River, Main St, Six Mile Rd., and Whitmore Lake Rd.
- 2.) Additionally, if these parcels were purchased privately, each new owner would also have the right to access Horseshoe Lake to fish and recreate on their watercraft which would increase traffic. This increased usage could negatively impact the lake quality, and it could also harm property values which have been increasing nicely these past several years.

What about taxes?

Once these properties are acquired by HLC, they will be formally declared a HLC park, like Leocadia Park, Shady Beach and the other lake accesses, and will therefore not be taxed.

How much will this cost and how will it be paid?

The purchase price is still under negotiation. Recent developments may lower the asking price QUITE a bit. However, the price will be communicated to the HLC membership prior to voting. The township has suggested a small millage over 10-25 years so that the financial impact per household will be minimal and factored into our taxes. See the accompanying millage explanation.

Are there any future expenses to maintain these properties?

None anticipated.

If the Horseshoe Lake Corporation purchases these properties, are there any plans to utilize them?

Only during times of high water flooding when no motorized boating is allowed, these wetlands are accessible via kayak and canoe and are absolutely beautiful to explore.

What is the future timeline of actions?

Negotiations are ongoing, but the township has stipulated that if we, as a corporation, are interested, we must have a formal commitment and deal in place by mid-June. This agreement cannot be approved solely by the HLC Board of Trustees. It will require a vote of the entire Membership of the Horseshoe Lake Corporation, which will take place by ballot in late spring / early summer.

Please attend a Special Meeting to discuss this important topic

Tuesday, May 3, 2022 at 7pm.

Northfield Township Public Safety Building, 2nd floor

If you have questions and cannot attend or would like more information, please e-mail your questions to:

horseshoelakecorp@yahoo.com