

COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP  
PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021







# INTRODUCTION

The 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission was comprised of five citizens who were elected in November of 2020. The new board was seated at the December 14, 2020 meeting- Judy Joling, Marc Rizzolo, Marla Schwartz, John Weir, and Teresa Young. At the same meeting, officers for 2021 were selected: Chair, Judy Joling; Vice-Chair, Marc Rizzolo; Secretary, Teresa Young; Treasurer, John Weir.

As 2021 began, the Covid Pandemic continued to be a factor in all walks of life- including the operation and usage of the parks. The year also brought several significant changes within the Park Staff. Yet, the Board has remained focused on our mission and committed to the responsibilities given to us by the community.







# ABOUT THE COMSTOCK PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT



## Mission

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission works on behalf of the citizens of Comstock Township to build a healthy community and a sustainable environment by promoting active lifestyles and strong individuals and families through parks, programs, and partnerships.

## Vision

Comstock Township Parks will be:

- viewed by Township residents as valued components to enhance the quality of life
- considered valuable assets for recreation, relaxation, and learning in Comstock Township
- considered as a source of pride for our community
- recognized as safe and healthy environments in which individuals, families, and friends choose to spend time



# MERRILL PARK

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on May 26th to officially celebrate the completion of the Merrill Park Improvement Project. The renovations and upgrades to Merrill Park have been transformational in numerous ways. The park is used and enjoyed by the community at a level that has not been seen for many, many years.

Unfortunately, vandalism and litter also increased and required vigilant monitoring. We were fortunate to have a staff person who opened and closed the restrooms daily, provided light maintenance, and most importantly, engaged with parks users and encouraged more responsible behavior.

New posts were installed at the DNR boat launch to facilitate backing up trailers and providing a place to tie boats while trailers are being retrieved.

In November, an ADA pathway to the playground was completed. This allowed us to obtain the remaining \$30,000 from the grant funding.

In late fall, work began to renovate and repurpose the old restroom and garage/storage building.

In addition to providing recreational space and opportunities, Merrill Park was also used for several community events. The Parks Department partnered with the VFW to host an Easter Egg Hunt and the Memorial Day Parade. Following the parade, the community was invited to Merrill Park to enjoy games, food, and fellowship. Merrill Park was used in conjunction with the Fire Department for National Night Out. We also partnered with the Library in offering family programs including Art in the Park.





# GREEN MEADOW PARK

Green Meadow was utilized during the spring and summer months as a practice field for area youth baseball and soccer teams. Over 40+ dates were secured for practices.

In late fall, the old railroad ties were removed from the parking area and replaced with new barriers.

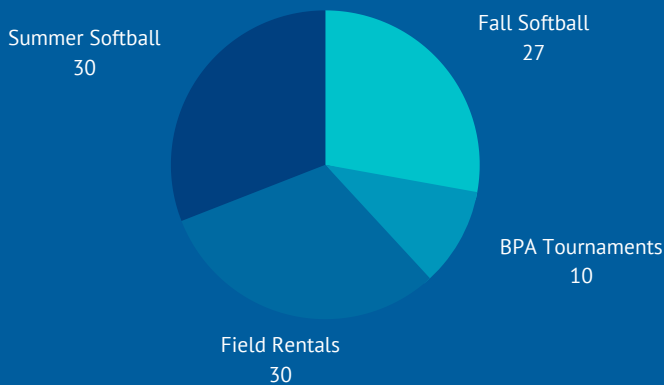




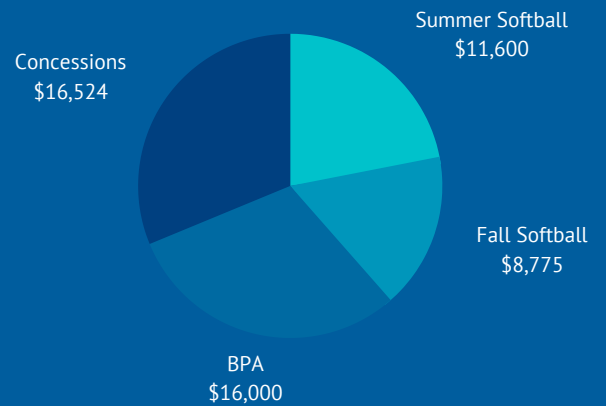
# WENKE SOFTBALL COMPLEX

Due to the pandemic, programs at the Softball Complex were streamlined significantly in 2020, and tournaments were cancelled. By spring of 2021, the Complex required a considerable amount of repair and maintenance. Programs resumed with Co-ed and Men's teams. BPA Tournaments began the first weekend of May. Summer softball tournaments were held in August, and the Fall Softball program ran for eight weeks.

## PROGRAMS/RENTALS



## REVENUE







# FLEETWOOD PARK

In May, an asphalt company was hired to fill the gaps within the walking path. A considerable amount of tree trimming was done in the fall to allow for easier mowing and a cleaner look for the park.





# CELERY STREET PARK

The old basketball court was removed and replaced in September. New basketball hoops were installed and the court was striped. The area around the court was groomed and reseeded.







# NORTH & SOUTH WENKE PARKS

In March, the Township Board of Trustees approved a "Site Access Agreement" for South Wenke Park. STS Hydropower LLC conducted a dredging project of the Kalamazoo River that continued for several months. The agreement allowed for substantial clearing of trees and brush within the park and the removal of parking lot posts. At the conclusion of the project, the park was restored to our satisfaction, and a stone retaining wall was added to address erosion.







# ROBERT MORRIS PARK

The Comstock Fire Department used the park in February to conduct cold water rescue training.

The Disc Golf Course continued to be well used and a source of revenue. In April, volunteers assisted with installing 18 "short" tee pads which opened the course to players not experienced enough for the longer course.

In July, a number of dead trees were removed from the park. We were fortunate to have very few issues with E. Coli during the summer months. In early fall, a new playground structure was installed providing a very welcome and attractive upgrade. In November, the parking lot was paved and striped.

At the suggestion of the Park Director, the Board voted not to increase park fees

for 2022. However, a decision was made to remove the distinction of Resident/Non Resident in terms of posting fees. Park fees: \$20 annual pass/ \$10 annual senior pass/ \$5 daily pass.

Events hosted at Robert Morris Park included Build-a-Bird House and the Dino Dig.

Plans to add a fishing dock at Robert Morris Park were met with several obstacles and the feasibility of this project continued to be determined as the year ended.

Pass sales were up from 2020 by roughly \$3,000. We sold approximately 475 annual passes, 20 senior passes, and over 3,000 daily passes to the park. Our total pass revenue was approximately \$30,000.





## OTHER PARKS & PROPERTIES

Other parks and park properties include: Neal Street Diamonds and Football Field, McLinden Nature Trails, River Villa Preserve and Jan Schau Wildflower Walk, Cooper and Peer Parks, Community Garden, and the DNR Landing.

Much work was done within our nature trails and walking paths to remove refuse, trim overgrown areas, and clear fallen trees.

The Community Garden still draws interest so we intend to continue offering this program.

Residents with an interest to honor or memorialize family members prompted a discussion in 2020 about creating a memorial plaque program within the parks. In 2021, we were able to more fully develop a program where plaques are placed on existing park benches with

inscriptions indicating the name of who is being honored. Currently, five plaques have been placed on benches- four at Merrill Park and one at Cooper Park.







# STAFF

We were fortunate to have some very dedicated and dependable seasonal staff members, although the Parks Department clearly experienced what has become an issue for so many employers- the inability to hire enough workers.

Joe Grabowski completed another year as our full time maintenance person. Our Program Coordinator, Rachel Roon left in June after accepting a position in Harbor Springs. On June 28th, Vanessa Street, Park Director for the past 11 years, resigned her position but graciously agreed to stay on until her replacement was found. In September, Danielle Myrkle was hired to fill the Park Director position. We anticipate hiring a new Program Coordinator in 2022.





# 2022 Goals

1

Actively communicate  
with residents

2

Maintain current parks and  
park properties with high  
standards while providing  
good stewardship of the parks'  
natural resource environment

3

Seek opportunities for  
collaborative partnerships,  
enhancements, and utilization  
of park properties

4

Continue to develop and  
implement community  
programs and activities

5

Mindful and  
conscientious spending  
of financial resources

6

Continue with designated  
CIP projects

