

April 12, 2007

Highland Conservancy E-Newsletter

So much has been happening these past few weeks I thought I'd send out an update of our E-Newsletter. In this issue are two recent newspaper articles. Also mark your calendars for Huron Valley's first annual Earth Day Festival and the Hi-White Parade. Both events should be a lot of fun for the whole family. Below is the article from the March 29th Milford Times.

Highland Conservancy works to keep township green

By Alyson Iott
STAFF WRITER

For the many residents who hope to see Highland stay green and rural, the Highland Conservancy offers guidance and a helping hand.

The conservancy is an independent, 501(c)(3) non-profit group dedicated to conserving land for both residents and local wildlife to enjoy.

"The main thing that we're trying to do is preserve the rural character of Highland Township," said Dave Pollard, Highland Conservancy vice-president.

The Highland Conservancy was founded in 2004 by Highland Township Supervisor Triscia Pilchowski.

Pilchowski said she founded the group in response to residents' wishes to preserve the township's public parks and other green spaces. Surveys issued by the planning department in 1998 and 2005 confirmed that land conservation topped residents' list of priorities.

One of the group's primary goals is to increase conserved land. Conservancy members were instrumental in creating Highland Oaks Park, the Huron Valley's first county park, which is now in the final stages of purchase.

In 2007, Pollard said, the group is stepping up efforts to promote conservation easements, which conserve all or part of a property by perpetually restricting its development. Until Dec. 31, the Internal Revenue Service is offering greater-than-normal tax incentives for these easements.

Once land is conserved, the conservancy may act as a steward, checking the land to make sure its natural resources and conservation value are maintained. Stewards, which may be land conservancies or local government bodies, do not acquire any development or ownership rights. The land does not become public.

The group also represents conservation interests during planning commission meetings. One or more members attend every meeting, acting as the conservancy's voice during development decisions.

This watchdog role is one of the group's most important functions, Pilchowski said.

"This is time-consuming, this is demanding, and these folks see the value of that and commit themselves to being there," she said.

Most recently, Pollard said, the conservancy has focused on developing a green infrastructure plan for Highland Township. The group is working with other township and county groups, including the Highland Downtown Development Authority and the Highland Business Association, to create a map outlining and linking natural areas that are especially important for conservation.

The plan will give the planning commission a guideline for conservation-friendly planning and development, Pollard said. Conservancy members can also use the information to target specific areas for conservation efforts.

If maintained, the green infrastructure will help create corridors for wildlife and conserve natural environments such as prairie, wetlands, woods and meadows. The conservancy and other groups hope to finalize the plans in April, Pollard said.

Besides its township presence, the conservancy stays involved in the community by hosting seminars and getting involved in activities such as the Hi-White Parade in May, where members will hand out 500 pine seedlings.

The group has about 45 members, with a core team of eight to 10 volunteers. Its current president is Jim Lloyd. To learn more or to volunteer, visit online at www.highlandconservancy.org or stop by the group's regular meeting, held at 7 p.m. on the first Tuesday of the month in the Highland Station House.

Alyson Iott is a reporter for the Milford Times. She can be reached at (248) 685-1507, ext. 21, or by e-mail at aiott@gannett.com.

This next article is from yesterday's Spinal Column:

Tree preservation ordinance for Highland

By Josh Jackett

April 11, 2007 - Highland Township planning department officials and planning commissioners are in the process of completing language to be included in its new zoning ordinance, which is also in progress, that would limit the destruction of trees in the township for new developments.

According to Highland Township Planning and Development Director Beth Corwin, the Natural Resources Preservation Ordinance, which will be a chapter within the zoning ordinance, will only apply to pieces of property that have to go before the planning commission for a site plan approval, like a residential plat or a condominium plan.

"If you come to the planning commission with a property that's already wooded to propose a new site plan — including a commercial property or a subdivision — they're going to evaluate the existing woodland cover," she said. "They haven't come up with the exact coverage requirements yet, but people will only be allowed to remove a certain portion of the trees and will be required to preserve a certain portion of the trees."

The ordinance, she said, could lead to the planning commission providing some flexibility on the locations of setbacks and roads in order to preserve the highest preservation priority stands of trees, such as native trees.

According to Corwin, the idea for the tree ordinance stemmed from a Huron River Watershed Council recommendation and a proposal from the Highland Conservancy.

Katheryn Krupa, a Highland Conservancy board member, who along with conservancy president Jim Lloyd, presented a proposal to the township planning commission based on other similar ordinances in Brighton and West Bloomfield townships, said she was excited the commissioners

are taking the idea seriously, even if they've streamlined the concept.

Corwin said planning commissioners deemed the other communities' ordinances heavy-handed and have worked to tailor it to Highland.

She said that according to ordinance, trees will be maintained along public roadways, such as M-59.

It will be similar to what's in place at open-space subdivisions such as Timber Ridge, she said, where the subdivision is located behind trees, but a sign near an entry roadway is still visible.

"I think it will go a long way toward preserving more of the natural areas and green space within the township, particularly the diversity of the trees," Krupa said. "One of the key elements of it is calling on the preservation of a diversity of native Michigan trees, which is so crucial to the ecosystem.

"If you plant any old tree from anywhere, that doesn't work toward preserving what we have, which provides habitat and food for the native wildlife."

Corwin agreed about the environmental benefits to the community.

"When you're talking about stands of trees — not necessarily individual trees — they provide so many environmental protections in the form of soil erosion control, help mitigate flooding, preserve air quality, buffer noise, and give a good visual buffer," she said. "Plus, it's consistent with the community's goals to maintain a more rural feel."

[Josh Jackett is a staff writer for the Spinal Column Newsweekly](#)

Hi White Parade

We are looking for volunteers to march with us in the Hi-White Parade or to help pass out 500 pine trees. Please contact Katheryn Krupa 248-887-4643 evenings for details on how you can help. We especially are looking for extra hands to help wrap and bag the trees we will be passing out. If you are busy and still just want to drop by for a free tree, stop by our booth by the Highland Senior Center that morning, May 19th. Mark your calendars!

Huron Valley Earth Day

The First Annual Earth Day Festival will be held Sunday, April 22, 2007 from 1-3 at Milford Central Park (rain location will be Milford Presbyterian Church at 238 N. Main Street.

Activities will include Earth-Friendly activities and games for all ages. Give-aways, earth friendly vendors and organizations, music, munchies and more! FREE to the public. It should be lots of fun for the whole family!

Contacts: Linda Crawford 248-889-2734
Heather Grace 248-250-1557