

**BINGHAM TOWNSHIP**

**RECREATION PLAN**

**2019-2024**

**Draft**

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## **Introduction**

The Bingham Township Recreation Committee has prepared this Community Recreation Plan under the guidelines of Publication IC 1924 (Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans, revision 09032014) prepared by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Grants Management Division. The purpose of this 5-Year Recreation Plan is to provide Bingham Township with guidelines to evaluate and plan the recreation opportunities and needs of its community. This Recreation Plan is required by the DNR Grants Management Division to be eligible for grants. This Plan supersedes the previous 5-Yr Plan written in 2011.

## **Community Description**

Bingham Township is a rural community in Northwest Lower Michigan, on the Leelanau Peninsula, in the Grand Traverse Bay area. As part of Leelanau County (2010 population census: 21,708), it is a distinct economic region prized for its scenic natural resources and abundant recreational opportunities. The area is considered a recreational destination during summer months.

Situated between West Grand Traverse Bay on the East and Lake Leelanau on the West, the village of Suttons Bay to the North, and the city of Traverse City to the South, Bingham Township has seasonal and year-around single-family homes, together with a few condominiums and seasonal rentals. Most of the beachfront areas have been developed and the rolling scenic hillsides are also prime development areas. The Suttons Bay school district serves all of Bingham Township.

Orchards (cherry and apple) and wine producing, together with agricultural lands are defining attributes for the Township. The main north-south highway is M-22, a two-lane road connecting Traverse City to Suttons Bay and beyond. This road has seen significant increase in traffic. In 1997 at one location, there was a recorded average daily traffic (ADT) count of 6900 vehicles. At peak times it can be as high as 12,000 (6/2014) and is expected to see an annual growth of 1.5%.

Bingham Township shares a portion of the TART Trails System, a paved recreational path (walking, biking, skiing) that crosses through both Leelanau and Grand Traverse Counties, connecting eight multi-use trails together in a network that is used extensively by residents and visitors.

## **Administrative Structure**

### Parks and Recreation Committee Role

The Parks and Recreation Committee (Recreation Committee) plays an advisory role to the Bingham Township Board. It is composed of township volunteers and a member of the Township Board and acts as stewards of the parks by visiting each park regularly to determine if any repairs or improvements are needed. The Recreation Committee presents its findings and requests to the Township Board for consideration and approval. The Community Recreation Plan is developed by the Recreation Committee and provides recommendations to the Township Board based on a public-input process. The Township Board makes the final decisions regarding funding and expenditures and the approval of the committee members.

### Current Funding Sources

State shared revenue provides approximately 55% of the Township funds. A 0.5707 mil tax levy (max.) provides the balance of the funds. Outside grant sources will be developed, and the possibility exists for voter approval for revenue for special projects

### Annual and Projected Budgets for Operation and Maintenance

During the fiscal year 2018, just over \$6000 was budgeted from the Township General Fund for park use. This includes costs for supplies, waste pick-up, and porta potty rentals. Of that \$6000, approximately \$1500 was budgeted for park improvements (one new bench and grill, repair and painting of picnic tables, signage in 2018).

The Township employs its own personnel for light park maintenance (e.g. carpentry, sign installation) while other tasks (lawn mowing) are hired out. Some maintenance is done by citizens and neighborhood volunteer effort.

### Township Organization

Bingham Township Board of Trustees:

Midge Werner, Supervisor

Kathy Morio, Clerk

Sandra Grant, Treasurer

Gary McGhee, Trustee

Bradley Saxton, Trustee

Planning Commission: Seven Member Board - Michael Park, Chair

Zoning Board: Five Member Board - Steve Patmore, Chair

Parks and Recreation Committee:

Mary Bush, Chair

Patricia Ard

Erica Austin

Mary Erwin

Dan Rose

Theresa Rose

Bradley Saxton, Township Board Member

Jan Stone

Todd Stone

Robert Walton

Jim Weigand

Relationship with Other Agencies

The Bingham Township Board works closely with Suttons Bay Township and Elmwood Township Boards and the Department of Natural Resources to provide shared recreation facilities and services. In addition, it is likely to expand its relationship with TART Trail System, County Road Commission, and Michigan Department of Transportation to provide safe access to community recreation facilities. Also, volunteers, from By-The-Bay Garden Club of Suttons Bay tend to the flowers at Hendryx Park (the other parks do not have designated gardens) and the United Way's "Day of Caring" brought out volunteers from local businesses for a spring park cleanup.

Parks and Recreation Policies and Procedures

Input from the residents in Bingham Township is one of the major sources for the Parks Committee to continue to make improvements to the parks. Some of the recommendations, once agreed on, require changes to the Park Ordinances (example; allowing pets in the parks). Consequently, the Recreation Committee drafts a revision of the Park Ordinance to amend any of the defunct or nonapplicable sections. The new Ordinance is presented to the Township Board for approval. The regulations address behavior in the parks, swimming, hunting, pets, and fireworks. Metal signs stating each park's policies were created by the Committee and are clearly posted at the entrance to each developed park.

## Township Recreation and Resource Inventories

There are five recreational properties owned by Bingham Township (designated by \*), as well as other recreational opportunities owned by Leelanau County and the State of Michigan.

- **Bougey Park\*:** This is a three-acre park located at the east end of Bingham Road, on the shores of West Grand Traverse Bay. It was formerly owned by Traverse City Regional Psychiatric Hospital. It is along a main route (M-22) and lies in a residential area. It has a nice sandy beach and access for good swimming. It has a covered pavilion, an expansive tree canopied picnic area with picnic tables and grills, swings, horseshoe pits, and facilities for volleyball or badminton. Parking is limited and has been addressed in the site plan. It will be implemented as funds become available.
- **Bingham Township Hall (Bingham Historic Schoolhouse):** This two-acre property is located on the southeast corner of South Center Hwy (County Road 633) and Bingham Road. The surrounding area is mainly rural/agriculture with pockets of residential development. This facility serves as the township hall and houses the township offices. It is heavily used as a community meeting room and other activities such as school meetings, reunions and other private events. The schoolhouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Sites.
- **Bingham Park\*:** Located on South Lake Leelanau, off Park Road, this 1.5-acre park is a very popular swimming and picnic area and is heavily used in the summer. In the winter it serves as an access route for movement of fishing shanties onto the lake ice. The park has grills, picnic tables, restroom facilities, together with trash receptacles. A small cement break-wall protects the swimming area and there is a cement slab with a basketball hoop. The area is mainly residential with a lot of summertime homes.
- **Bingham Boat Launch:** The State maintains a 3-acre boat launch on South Lake Leelanau at the west end of Bingham Road. This area also has a picnic area and self-contained toilets. Parking can be limited during busy summer times.
- **Groesser Park (Undeveloped)\*:** This is a 0.5-acre Township owned park located on M-22 near Hilltop Road, just south of the DNR fish site/boat ramp and north of the State roadside park. This park, a bequeath from a long-time Township resident, has sandy shores and a lovely view of West Grand Traverse Bay. At this point the park is undeveloped, but under the agreement it requires certain improvements. The area around this park is a mix of residential and commercial (shops/restaurants).
  - The DNR fish site/boat ramp is used extensively by boaters and fishermen and has restrooms and very adequate parking. Discussions have been ongoing with the Michigan DNR about improvements to this area together with further development of Groesser Park.
  - The State roadside park has access to West Gran Traverse Bay and provides a picnic table and trash receptacle. It is used often by tourists traveling along M-22.

- **Hendryx Park\*:** This 0.2-acre park, located on Lee Point Road, has been leased by the Township from the County Road Commission for 99 years. The park is very small and is bordered by private residences on both sides. From its sandy shores there are breathtaking views of West Grand Traverse Bay and Power Island. It has a great swimming area and as such sees heavy use during summer months. It has a grill, picnic table and restrooms are provided, together with trash removal. The area is totally residential, with a mix of permanent and summer homes.
- **Mebert Creek Natural Area\*:** A 155-acre parcel of unimproved wetlands on the eastern shore of Lake Leelanau at the end of Donner Road, this area is a prime natural resource, important in preserving the water quality of the Lake. The marshy wetlands, with unique vegetation and terrain, is suitable for hiking and snowshoeing, with some natural trails that were created by logging activities. There are also some upland areas suitable for parking and an entrance. The area is residential.
- **Leelanau Trail:** A privately owned former rail corridor, this trail extends a length of 17 miles from Traverse City to Suttons Bay. As part of the TART Trails System it connects to an extensive network of ever-expanding trails in the region. It is used for walking, biking, and cross-country skiing, while motor vehicles are prohibited.
- **The Leelanau Club on Bahle Farms:** This is a privately owned 18-hole golf course off Otto Road in the center of the Township.
- **Veronica Valley Park:** Formerly a 92-acre privately-owned golf course, along South Leelanau Drive (County Road 641), this area is now a Leelanau County Park. It is immediately surrounded by residential/agriculture but close to villages of Suttons Bay and Lake Leelanau. It is characterized by rolling hills, wetlands, a trout stream, and ponds. Plans are for a passive recreational site, including trails, picnic and play areas, and a proposed nature center/educational center.

## Description of the Public Input Process

Public input during the preparation of this 5-Yr Recreation Plan was obtained through a survey and a planned public meeting. The response from these sources represents the whole community. It was determined that the stakeholders that have an investment or may be affected by the recreation and open space opportunities in Bingham Township include taxpayers and residents of Bingham Township and surrounding areas. As discussed below, every effort was made to ensure that input from and representation of these groups was included.

- **Township Survey:** A survey/questionnaire was developed by the Parks and Recreation Committee in the Fall, 2018. For reference, the survey had a map showing the locations of all parks. The questionnaire asked the community which recreational properties they use, the frequency of use, ages of the users, as well as ideas for improvements to the

park. The survey was not limited to Bingham Township residents, but more to anyone using the parks, including both residents and visitors to our area. As such, the survey also included two questions regarding user's location (zip code/Bingham Township residency). The survey did not ask for user identification. To get broader support with the parks, we also asked the user if they were interested in volunteering with the Park Committee in any manner (clean-ups, work bees, etc.).

The survey was mailed to Bingham Township residents with their December tax bill and newsletter. Additionally, the same survey was developed through SurveyMonkey and posted on the Township website (<http://www.leelanau.cc/binghamtwp.asp>) from 8/27/18 to 12/27/18).

The mailed survey was returned by 57 people, with 88% being Township residents. There were 37 on-line respondents, with 73% being Township residents. There was good public input as to ideas for park development.

## Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Township Parks and Recreation Committee is to provide recreation opportunities for the local community as well as those traveling to our region. In order to do this, it's necessary to identify the community needs and desires which were done through public input (survey, meetings, and review). Once done, the Committee then identifies more specific opportunities (Goals/Objectives) to make the parks more available and user friendly.

- Goal #1: Improve existing park facilities and provide barrier-free access to meet requirements of the American Disabilities Act (ADA).
  - Objective: Identify deficiencies at each park and create a plan to make necessary changes in order to be compliant.
  - *It is desirable that all Township parks be open to those with disabilities.*
- Goal #2: Create a long-term maintenance and facilities improvement program for each existing township park.
  - Objective: Identify maintenance needs at each facility and create a plan to implement the program.
  - *In order for the public to safely enjoy the parks it's necessary that they be properly maintained. This would include grounds clearing/cleaning as seasons dictate, and structural upkeep as identified. This goal was identified during the recent Township survey.*
- Goal #3: Purchase playground equipment for Bingham Park.
  - Objective: To construct a playground where local children can play.



- *During the Township survey and public input session, the community expressed interest in having a playground set at this park. It was also previously identified in the Park Site Plan.*
- Goal #4: Meet the conditions for the granting of Groesser Park to the Township.
  - Objective: Remove detritus, invasive species, and create clear access to the beach. Erect north/south fences to delineate boundaries. Erect and maintain suitable signage identifying it as Dorothy Groesser Park.
  - *The park is currently undeveloped and overgrown. The terms of Township ownership dictate that we make the identified changes to the park so that the public can access and enjoy it as a park.*
- Goal #5: Develop Site Plan for Mebert Creek Natural Area.
  - Objective: Identify development opportunities while maintaining the current identity of the park.
  - *During the public input meeting and results of the survey, the community expressed interest in responsible development of the park, including pathways. At the same time, it is recognized as a natural area rich in biodiversity that should be protected.*
- Goal #6: Research condition of existing septic system to enable us to use existing bathrooms at Boughey Park.
  - Objective: Identify deficiencies and determine if they can be economically corrected. If so, create a plan to put them back into service.
  - *The Park has existing toilets that were closed for use due to a budgeting initiative some years ago. If they can be brought back into service within budget constraints, it would fit in with long term renovation plans created through public input meetings with the help of Gosling Czubak Engineering.*
- Goal #7: Establish protocol for pavilion use at Boughey Park.
  - Objective: Identify community needs for pavilion. Establish terms for rental. Possibly make necessary upgrades to pavilion.
  - *The community has expressed the desire for use of the pavilion, which is currently closed for use. Providing community use under a rental agreement would also help offset the costs of maintaining the structure.*
- Goal #8: To recruit and maintain a healthy volunteer organization.
  - Objective: Identify structure, growth, and fundraising means of organization.
  - *In order to maintain the Township parks under budget, it's necessary to have a volunteer group to assist where possible. Hendryx Park currently has a small volunteer group that assists in upkeep.*
- Goal #9: Conduct site studies at each park to determine use capabilities.
  - Objective: Identify parking needs/limits, occupancy limits/controls in order to better serve communities while maintaining local identity of each park.

- *The township parks see heavy use during peak summer months. In order to better serve users, while keeping a “local flavor” and maintaining harmony with residents, it’s necessary to determine use capabilities. Based on our findings we can identify ways to improve them.*
- Goal #10: Acquire any large tracts of land that become available for provide open space in the township.
  - Objective: Identify needs beyond existing parks. As suitable parcels become available, identify moneys to help acquire them.
  - *The Community expressed interest in parks that were large enough to enable hiking opportunities. The existing Township parks do not offer those chances.*

## **Action Program**

The Parks and Recreation Committee will submit an annual plan for the township Park and Recreation budget for the coming year by April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year for the allotted township funds. The funds that are actually allotted will determine which projects move forward that year.

The Parks and Recreation Committee will actively pursue grants and matching funds to meet the 5-Yr Plan’s Goals and Objectives as appropriate.

Site Plans have been completed for Hendryx, Boughey, Bingham. Funding will be sought to carry out these plans.

### **Park Improvement Action Plan**

A schedule has been developed as a result of the planning process. The timetable is based on information available at the time this document was put together. Actual implementation will depend on the availability of funds and the ever-changing needs of the community.

#### **Year 1**

- Goal #1: Form a sub-committee to review the ADA rules, identify park deficiencies, and report findings to full Committee. Determine projects for subsequent years based on township funds available. Write grants to fund larger projects if applicable.
- Goal #2: Committee to review current maintenance program and identify the specific needs for each park. Create a plan to capture those needs. Implement the program.
- Goal #3: Committee to determine scope of playground and get cost estimates. If the cost is outside of the Parks Committee budget, consider grant opportunities.
- Goal #4: Review conditions for getting Groesser Park and develop plan for implementation. Get cost estimate for entire project and determine how to get partial or complete funding.

- Goal #5: Committee to identify development opportunities and create a plan. Because of possible impact to park consider outside input.
- Goal #6: Review historical Committee information and Gosling Czubak Engineering report on Park for details on bathrooms. Determine existing problems with system, and if there is an opportunity to get it back in service, including costs. Develop plan and look at funding options and pursue them if appropriate.
- Goal #7: Parks Committee to identify the needs for pavilion use and determine if upgrades/changes are necessary in order to rent it. If plausible, establish rental terms and get Township approval. If upgrades needed, determine funding.
- Goal #8: Committee meet to decide what volunteer organization should be and how to move forward with recruiting people.
- Goal #9: Parks Committee meet to discuss/study issues, implications, and options for parks. Research what other communities are doing. Consider public input through meetings. Look at necessary funding if needed.
- Goal #10: Committee meet to review needs for additional open space and discuss funding options as appropriate.

## Year 2

- Goal #1: Start smaller projects that can be done without outside funding. Use grant funding to work larger projects if applicable.
- Goal #2: Review the plan after in place for a year to ensure the parks are being maintained. Adjust plan as needed.
- Goal #3: Purchase and install playground equipment if money acquired. If not, look for other money opportunities.
- Goal #4: Based on acquired funding, review plan and start changes in park.
- Goal #5: Lower priority, put on hold.
- Goal #6: Review plan and funding. Start work if appropriate.
- Goal #7: Review success of renting and make changes if needed.
- Goal #8: Review success of recruiting volunteers. Use volunteers for identified projects.
- Goal #9: Implement controls if determined necessary and possible.
- Goal #10: Review land options as they become available.

## Years 3-5

- Goal #1: Complete projects to become ADA compliant if funding is available.
- Goal #2: Work maintenance program.
- Goal #4: Complete Groesser Park development as money becomes available.
- Goal #6: Complete project as funding becomes available.