

Harris Township Park at Elm Road now offers neoteric playground

By Christine Parkhurst

Harris Township Trustee Ken Lindsay recently unveiled the latest addition to Harris Township Park at Elm Road, a playground centered around a climbing dome designed by Kompan. The park was conceived by Lindsay, who is in the third year of a four-year term.

The new playground consists of unique play structures. There are no teeter-totters or traditional slides on the playground.

“Instead, the towering Explorer Dome can be seen from blocks away, bowls are spinning, and check out YouTube for the fun you can have on a SuperNova,” said Lindsay.

Harris Township Park at Elm Road is connected to the Granger Path, the next phase of which is under construction to link the intersection of Adams and Elm roads to the intersection of Adams and Gumwood roads, where a walkway heads south to Heritage Square. Many subdivisions lie along the path, making it convenient for residents to walk, run or bike to the park and new playground. The park is located on Elm Road between the fire station and Harris Branch Library.

It's exciting to see people using the park, and now the playground,” said Lindsay. “I thought about posting signs declaring the park a 'rectangle free zone' (referring to smart phones), but so far it seems people are naturally having enough fun playing to forget about their phones for a little while. I think that is great.”

Lindsay said he believes the northeast portion of St. Joseph County is underserved by the county parks system and the City of

Mishawaka's park system. He pointed out: “The county parks system owns land in Harris Township, but has no plans to develop it. Mishawaka continues to annex land in Harris Township, whose southern boundary is Douglas Road and western boundary is Gumwood Road. It is a little unusual that such a populated area has so little park space, and a township steps in to fill the gap. Harris Township's entire operating budget is \$144,000 per year, which isn't much, but I've been able to generate non-traditional revenues and trim the budget. No new taxes were used to build the park or playground.”

Lindsay believes that most residents don't know the details about why there is so little park space in the area, and who might provide it. He just hopes the township's efforts - including those of the township board - are appreciated. If park use is any indication, perhaps they are. The park opened late in 2016 and has been busy ever since. The first phase linked the park property to the Granger Path, and provided courts for basketball and pickleball, and a ball diamond. Recently, a game of cricket was played at the park.

“As playground construction ended (on Friday afternoon, July 21), a number of children were not-so-patiently waiting for the construction fencing to come down so they could play,” said Lindsay.

Lindsay added that the playground is just the next - and hopefully not the last - step in planned development of the park. He said there have been some growing pains, mostly related to “people not respecting the park.”

Ken Lindsay, Harris Township Trustee, can be reached by phone at 574-272-2371 or by email at HarrisTrusteeLindsay@gmail.com.



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Granger Gazette • PO Box 16 • Granger, IN 46530

Kerry Byler, Editor • 574-277-2679 • fax 574-277-1734
grgazette@comcast.net

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