

## Get involved to improve your quality of life

By Kenneth E. (Ken) Lindsay, Harris Township Trustee

It's easy to get frustrated with politics and government these days, but what if your phone call could make a tangible difference, for you and for your neighbors? It's possible. Read on for the secret.

One thing I've known as a long-time resident is that our immediate area lacks green space—places to walk and play. Don't get me wrong; there are places including at elementary schools when they are not otherwise in use. But that isn't ideal and overall demand simply far exceeds the supply. In my role as trustee, I'm responsible for two parks, which is unusual for a township. What I observe underscores the need.

When I conceived of the Harris Township Park at Elm Road, vacant land already owned by the township and surrounded by subdivisions and just a short distance from a new Granger Path extension, sat unused. At one time, Harris Township Fire Department extrication training was performed there but since joining in the Clay Fire Territory, such training moved to a site on Auten Road.

That year, I placed a soccer goal and some picnic tables on the land. People came.

The next year, phase 1 of the park build was completed. People came to use the basketball court, pickleball courts and ball diamond.

The next year, a playground was added. Last year, a pavilion and seating areas.

That small park is busy, busy, busy, 12 months of the year.

Harris Township Park at Brummitt Road offers 30 acres of land, playing fields, wildlife habitats and a new pavilion. It too is a busy place, especially the Sue Dylewski playground, which has been around for two decades. Soccer, lacrosse and cricket teams continually seek places to play.

Inching closer to that secret, or little-known fact: For well over 20 years, the St. Joseph County Parks Department has owned 100+ acres near Anderson and Beech roads in Harris Township. I've met with the parks department—and reached out to elected officials who could make use of it—to suggest, to plead, to offer to buy or lease. So far, no dice.

While there are planning processes meant to solicit public input and guide long-term development, the parks department went through two five-year planning cycles since I've been advocating, and still has absolutely no plans to use the property to serve the public, other than leasing it out as farmland.

If you live or work in the township, you pay a lot of taxes for county services. There is a county tax, plus a local income tax. You should expect a return on all the taxes you pay.

The amount of money raised, just for the parks department, dwarfs funding available to the township. It is their job to deliver services to residents, but that doesn't mean you get a fair share of the benefits. In the case of county parks, your options are St. Patrick's, Ferrettie-Baugo Creek or Bendix Woods. Each of these is a long drive, and they are closer to (respectively) Michigan, Elkhart County and LaPorte County than they are to you.

*(Continued on Page 20)*

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(Continued from Page 18)

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How can you get more “return” for the taxes you already pay? Here’s a hint: Those whom I’ve tried to convince say, “We don’t hear a demand for parks in Harris Township.” How can that be? I see it all the time.

Want to make something happen? Let them hear the demand. Make four phone calls. Tell them you want more green space in Harris Township, or at least in the northeast of the county. Specifically mention the Anderson Road land. County Parks Department (574-277-4828), County Parks Board (574-277-4828), County Commissioners’ Office (574-235-9534), County Council Office (574-235-9658).

I know, why four calls? Trust me. With no calls, it’s all too easy for anyone with any amount of authority to point to another as the one(s) who need to get on board. But with a relatively small number of calls flowing in, it will be more likely for folks to get on the bandwagon. Once the idea takes hold, something good might happen. Also, for some, this is an election year, which makes it an even better time to have your voice heard.

As an aside, I typically write about Harris Township in terms of what it does and how it does it. This article is slightly different, but the intent is the same—to provide information for the benefit of residents. Previous articles can be found at [www.HarrisTwp.com](http://www.HarrisTwp.com) (/articles-1, and /get-involved).

If you’re also interested in one of those long-range planning projects, St. Joseph County Comprehensive Plan process intends to build a 10-to-20-year vision. You can participate at <https://re-site.mysocialpinpoint.com/plansjc>. Or, instead of waiting 20 years to see some results, just make those calls!

## Notre Dame Federal Credit Union’s Moreau Branch

Interactive Teller Machines (ITMs) are the newest feature at Notre Dame Federal Credit Union’s (Notre Dame FCU) Moreau Branch. The ITM functions as a “credit union in a box,” providing access for members to make transactions from the comfort of their car using video-based interactive technology and interacting with a live teller located remotely in a video call center. The live tellers can assist with traditional banking such as withdrawing funds, depositing checks, ordering a debit card, and providing general account management.

Live tellers will be available on the new machines from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, with Saturday hours from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. The machines have the added feature of functioning as a self-service ATM both during and outside of regular business hours.

Construction began on July 12, with the Moreau ITMs officially active on July 14. Notre Dame FCU partners will spend the first week of service outside aiding first-time ITM users to assist with the transition. The Moreau Branch joins the branches in Portage and Granger as the third Notre Dame FCU location using ITMs. For more information on the new ITMs, visit [NotreDameFCU.com/interactive-teller-machines](http://NotreDameFCU.com/interactive-teller-machines).



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