

Desiree Stanfield
Chief – Marketing & Communications
248-705-4108 | stanfieldd@oakgov.com

Troy School District Board plans to commit additional funding needed to secure grant for developing Turtle Woods into a county nature preserve

Board confirms broad support for decreasing sale price of the beautiful 70-acre property during workshop earlier this month and will vote on the matter Feb. 27

OAKLAND COUNTY, MI – Feb. 9, 2024 – In early January, the Troy School District Board of Education (BOE) discussed a potential 50 percent discount on the sale price of a 70-acre plot of land known as Turtle Woods, located north of Square Lake Road between John R Road and Dequindre Road in Troy. This reduction in the sale price would allow Oakland County Parks (OCP) to reapply for a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) with a larger percentage of local match funding (in the form of the discount provided by the Troy School District BOE) to purchase the property and create a county nature preserve for the community to enjoy. OCP recently learned that its 2023 application – which included a 25 percent discount on the sale price – was not selected for funding, and the increased discount would make a 2024 grant application significantly stronger. OCP is very committed to making the property a county nature preserve and remains optimistic that, with the continued support of the Troy School District BOE, it will be able to secure the necessary grant funding this year.

“I am so grateful – on behalf of myself and my constituents – to the Board of Education for their generous support of this exciting project,” Oakland County Commissioner Ann Erickson Gault (D-Troy) said. “If we are successful in securing the necessary grant funding to create the Turtle Woods Nature Preserve, it will be the first ever county park in the City of Troy and will no doubt benefit our community for generations to come. This beautiful property has always been a sprawling natural space and Oakland County Parks has the passion and the expertise to preserve it as a healthy, green oasis amidst our thriving city.”

“We have held onto the land and previous boards have made clear their hope to preserve it as some type of natural space,” Troy School District BOE President Karl Schmidt said. “Environmental analysis in more recent years has shown that our lack of land management expertise has put additional pressure on the ecosystem... we need an expert like Oakland County Parks who can remove invasives and encourage native species to thrive. The only

way we can preserve this amazing educational resource for our students and the broader community is to partner with a trusted organization with the know-how to make that happen.” Schmidt worries that future boards may be less committed to preserving this beautiful land. “Shifting ownership to Oakland County Parks in 2024 is our best chance to guarantee preservation of Turtle Woods in perpetuity.”

“The vision for the proposed nature preserve is to create a vibrant, thriving green space where people can relax, restore and quietly enjoy nature,” OCP Manager of Planning and Development Melissa Prowse said. “We anticipate having some trails, possibly some boardwalks, and bathrooms near the parking lot, but beyond that the intention is to cultivate a healthy ecosystem that will naturally support native flora and fauna, improve stormwater management and water quality, and increase shade cover.” These elements will net a benefit for the surrounding community and its residents, Prowse added.

OCP, Six Rivers Land Conservancy and the Troy School District are seeking community input regarding the plan for Turtle Woods and invite the public to an open house:

Turtle Woods Public Open House – Wed., Feb. 21, 2024 (4-7pm)
Hosted by Evanswood Church at 2601 E. Square Lake Road in Troy

The open house will include an update on the status of the 2024 grant application and attendees will have an opportunity to sign a letter of support and share their thoughts. Those with questions or feedback but unable to attend can email Prowse directly at prowsem@oakgov.com. More information and a flyer are available on the OCP website at www.OaklandCountyParks.com.

Turtle Woods is currently owned by the Six Rivers Land Conservancy on a land contract from the Troy School District. This arrangement allows Six Rivers to negotiate the sale through the MNRTF. The Troy School District – which purchased the land in 1967 as a potential site for a new high school that was never needed – can reclaim ownership of Turtle Woods if they don’t approve of the next proposed buyer. OCP plans to reapply for the MNRTF grant in April and will find out in December of this year whether the project was approved for funding.

####