

Berlin Twp. discusses multiuse trails

By

GARY BUDZAK

-June 1, 2023

Previous



A possible multiuse trail in Berlin Township could be along Africa Road, seen here from the Cheshire Road intersection. An aside: The Cheshire Market on the left corner was named “Retailer-of-the-Week” by the Ohio Lottery Commission on May 15.

Gary Budzak | The Gazette

The Berlin Township Parks and Trails Committee met on Jan. 18 and reviewed being chosen as one of the recipients of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission’s Technical Assistance Program for multiuse trails (MUT).

The committee received letters of support from the Delaware County Regional Planning Commission during the TAP application process. It was said that Berlin had the highest score among those applying for the TAP, although Berlin is not a MORPC member.

The TAP involves MORPC doing research on a plan and providing information on grant funding and other opportunities. Selected committee members will meet virtually with MORPC biweekly, with public workshops among stakeholders, such as AEP, City of Sunbury, DCRPC, Delaware Public Health District, Ohio Department of Transportation, Olentangy Local Schools and Preservation Parks of Delaware County. The first workshop was May 17 and the second is on July 19 at 6:30 p.m. in the Township Hall, 3271 Cheshire Road. A final report, which will include a comprehensive map, could be presented in joint meeting with the Zoning Commission and trustees in September.

Though abundant with natural resources, the township has no parks or trails under its own purview. The Parks and Trails Committee is working on a master plan, just as the township is also working on a comprehensive land use plan.

In January, the committee discussed MORPC's suggestion for trails following high-voltage powerlines — which are already cleared — with wildflowers planted along the way. The minutes read there could also be a trail looping around Alum Creek and connecting to the Ohio to Erie Trail and the city of Delaware constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

In February, The Gazette reported that Berlin Township is a step closer to having its own parkland or trails. On March 15, the Parks and Trails Committee met again. Members discussed the virtual meetings with MORPC and where in the township to place MUTs and a township park — the latter possibly on Africa Road.

Berlin Township Trustee Meghan B. Raehl also attends the meetings. "Trustee Raehl mentioned MORPC had proposed a MUT (multiuse trail) along Africa Road rather than Lackey Old State Road," the meeting minutes said. "It seemed to her, that if they recommend only one, Lackey Old State Road would present fewer challenges... Trustee Raehl recalled Africa has existing mountain bike trails that could be tied in on the southern portion of Africa Road... Trustee Raehl said they also discussed trails on N 3Bs and K connecting to the Kilbourne Project 37 and Hogback Park. There could be a pedestrian bridge across 36/37, tapping into N 3Bs and K. Shanahan Road was also discussed according to Trustee Raehl. The county and schools would like to see Shanahan Road extended. Orange Township has committed to a MUT on the south side of Shanahan. She believes Berlin Township then does not need to consider MUTs on the north side."

On the north side, there are MUTs through Berlin Meadows and Evans Farm.

Other committee members said that a MUT on Lackey Old State would have more connections to schools, and the Cheshire Road causeway could connect Lackey Old State Road to Africa Road.

Putting MUTs through established homeowners' yards may be the "biggest challenge," the minutes of the meeting said, but communities like Genoa Township have worked out agreements with the owners on privacy plantings to screen their homes from the trail.

The committee consists of President Zach Brown, Vice President Hillary Cerny, and committee members Eileen Faulds, Summer Marshall, Colynda (Coli) Lucas and Mark Rowland.

Another word for MUTs is greenways, and MORPC is also looking at another type of trail, called blueways — "designated trails in waterways," the meeting minutes said. In Berlin Township, that would be in Alum Creek Lake, which is part of the state park.