



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

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THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Thomas D. Watkins *TW*

SUBJECT: Report on Camp Tuhsmeheeta

In December 2003 the State Board of Education (Board), acting upon a request from consumers and advocates, directed Department staff to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) for summer camp options at Camp Tuhsmeheeta (Camp) for Summer 2004. The Camp is situated on property purchased in the early 1970s by the State of Michigan for programming for students who are blind or visually impaired (Attachment A). The Department maintains the property with funds from an unrestricted Trust Fund. The Trust Fund is held by the Department and the Michigan School for the Blind, with oversight by the Board, and managed by Bank One (Attachment B). The Trust Fund Committee oversees these expenditures on behalf of the Board. Yearly maintenance costs for the Camp are approximately \$60,000.00. No state general funds are available for Camp programming, maintenance or capitol outlay, or any other expense.

Staff prepared an RFP soliciting proposals for summer camp operations with a due date of February 2, 2004; one proposal was received from the Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind. A summary of the outcomes of the proposal is found in Attachment C.

Consumers and advocates have voiced strong concerns about the future of the Camp. Additional concerns have been expressed about parent groups and advocacy organizations gaining access to the Camp. The Trust Fund Committee has directed the Department to focus on maximizing the use of the Camp and maximizing the impact of the Trust Funds to benefit as many students as possible. In response to the concerns of consumers and advocates, and in meeting the charge of the Trust Fund Committee, the following actions have been taken:

- Preliminary conversation has been initiated with the Commission for the Blind (Commission) regarding the possible transfer of the Camp to the Commission, as one possible avenue for securing the future of the Camp for its intended purpose.
- Preliminary conversation has been initiated with the Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind (OUB) regarding possible ownership of the Camp by OUB, as another possible avenue for securing the future of the Camp for its intended purpose.
- A meeting is scheduled on October 12 with OUB to discuss use of the Camp for activities during this school year and for the summer of '05.

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- A meeting is scheduled for October 19 with representatives of parent groups to discuss activities at the Camp supported by these groups
- An interagency meeting is scheduled for October 20 with both the Commission for the Blind and the Commission on Disability Concerns to pursue maximum use of the Camp.
- Development of a Facility Use Process with staff from the Department of Management and Budget, Real Estate Division (DMB) was begun on October 8 and is expected to be completed by the end of the month, thus providing a mechanism for use of the Camp by consumers, agencies and organizations.
- The Trust Fund Committee met on October 7 and recommended funds continue to be spent to support annual maintenance of the Camp.
- The Trust Fund Committee has requested that a survey be developed to assess priorities for the use of the Fund among all families of children who are blind or visually impaired; this is expected to be accomplished by the end of January, 2005.

The Department is committed to supporting services to students who are blind or visually impaired and is committed to maximizing the effective use of the Camp and the resources of the Trust Fund.

CAMP TUHSMEHETA ("Camp T")

According to records available to the Department, in 1971 the Lions of Michigan advocated for legislation allowing Dr. Robert H. Thompson, then Superintendent of the Michigan School for the Blind (MSB), to use trust funds to purchase 297 acres on the Morgan Mills chain of lakes five miles west of Greenville, Michigan. The camp was intended to be a year-round facility dedicated to the outdoor recreation and environmental education of blind and visually impaired children.

The camp includes a variety of buildings, including: Roth Cabin, an original log structure on the property at the time of purchase; a Boat House, built in 1974, used for waterfront storage; a Unit Shower Building, built in 1983, which houses bath & toilet facilities for the camp; two Pavilions (Arts and Crafts, and Picnic, both built in 1977); White Pine Lodge, built in 1976 and renovated in 1997-99, which holds the camp kitchen, dining facilities, living/recreation area around a fireplace and enclosed porch; Tamarack, built in 1979, which includes a living and kitchen area and three small sleeping rooms; Birch, completed in 1999, has a walkout basement, a main floor with divider to separate sleeping areas and two accessible bathrooms; Maple, completed in 1996, is similar to Birch in design, with a finished basement for use as a meeting room; Elm Hall, a pole barn, was built in 1996 to house maintenance equipment, supplies, office, bathroom and paint room.

The waterfront area consists of a small sandy beach area leading to a dock. The dock has a central section leading to a rectangular section that encloses a metal bottom pool; the pool has a shallow and deep end and access stairs. The dock has railings on all sides. It is one of the earlier structures built on the property, the exact date has not been determined.

The tent area includes three cleared areas in the vicinity of the Unit Shower Building. These areas were originally used for platform tents for student housing prior to the completion of Maple and Birch cabins.

The Camp has an extensive network of trails throughout the grounds. The type and quality of the trails range from roadbeds suitable for vehicles to narrow paths.

TRUST FUNDS

The State Board of Education (Board) currently oversees three trust funds for the Michigan School for the Blind (MSB). Three members of the Board sit on the Trust Fund Committee in addition to the Superintendent.

Bank One Trust

This trust is a composite of gifts that have been received as cash or converted from stocks, bonds, land contracts, or property over many, many years. These gifts were held by the Department of Treasury until 1984 when the State Board of Education invested them with the National Bank of Detroit (NBD). Bank One purchased the National Bank of Detroit effectively transferring this trust to Bank One. This fund currently generates approximately \$110,000 per year in earnings. Research by the Department's Internal Auditor has confirmed these trust fund monies are unrestricted.

The goal of this trust as defined in the Gift Fund and Trust Fund Policies and Procedures for Michigan School for the Blind and Michigan School for the Deaf (Policies and Procedures), approved by the Board in December 1993, is to achieve a consistent total rate of return (income and appreciation) that will provide for a reasonable level of growth, generate sufficient income and preservation of principal. As determined by the State Board of Education the trust fund, and others covered under these Policies and Procedures, "shall be utilized for the benefit of visually and/or hearing impaired students who are residents of the State of Michigan. Such expenditures shall provide enrichment of school programs and services, training of parents, caregivers, teachers and other professional staff, recreational and social activities for students, financial aid and scholarships, emergency needs of students and other uses and activities intended to enrich the experience of attending MSB/MSD and not provided by another funding source."

Stanley Herman Trust

This trust is held by the Fifth Third Bank and includes a restriction that the funds be used "to help indigent persons who need treatment and training." In the mid-1990s the State Board of Education defined "indigent" for the purposes of this trust fund as someone who is eligible for free/reduced school lunches or possesses a Bridge Card (eligible for assistance through the Family Independence Agency).

Roy Johnson Trust

The Lapeer County Bank and Trust hold this trust. The purpose of this trust is to promote and further the education of blind persons by providing funds to blind college graduates who are pursuing graduate studies. Students apply through their financial aid office with the applications going to the Commission for the Blind.

SUMMARY OF OUB SUMMER CAMP 2004 PROPOSAL

One proposal, from Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind (OUB), was received by the due date. Staff reviewed the proposal, identified questions and areas needing clarification within the proposal, and scheduled a meeting with OUB to address these issues. The meeting was held on March 11, 2003. As a follow-up, OUB agreed to provide necessary documentation and additional information as requested. On March 23, the Superintendent signed a memo sent to OUB documenting his intent to enter into a negotiated agreement, between the Department and the OUB, allowing the OUB to move forward with plans for summer camps while the agreement and its details continued to be developed.

Staff from the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services began working with the Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Management and Budget's (DMB) Real Estate Division to develop an agreement that would satisfy all necessary components for use of state properties, including liability, insurance, and other requirements that the Department would need to consider. This interagency work led to the determination that the negotiated agreement would be a lease or rental agreement, at no charge to OUB, for use of the Camp for a period beginning June 9 and ending August 4, based on the dates requested by OUB. The lease would conform to all specifications required by DMB staff and address all issues identified by the staff from the Office of the Attorney General. The Department's Office of Financial Management was then delegated to handle the rental and related business with OUB.

Obligations on the part of OUB included providing proof of liability insurance that named the State of Michigan as an additional insured party (received June 4 by fax at DMB); documentation of its tax-exempt status as a non-profit corporation through its Articles of Incorporation and Certificate from Consumer and Industry Services (received June 16 at DMB); a resolution from the OUB naming Mr. Larry Posont of OUB as its authorized representative (dated June 3, 2004 and received June 16 at DMB); and a security deposit (\$500.00) payable to the State of Michigan (dated June 15, 2004 and received at the Department's Office of Financial Management on June 16).

Per the rental agreement, the OUB was provided access to the Camp on June 9. This allowed preparation and staff orientation and training prior to the first of six weekly camp offerings by OUB that began June 20 and ended July 30.

In late May and early June, staff from the Schools for the Deaf and Blind (MSD/B) traveled to the Camp to prepare the property for use. The OUB operated six week-long sessions from June through July. A summary report on the summer camp operations for 2004 has been discussed with a representative of OUB and should be received by the end of October. The report will be made available to the Board upon receipt.