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Shelby Twp. collaborates on combatting invasive plant species

By **SEAN DELANEY**
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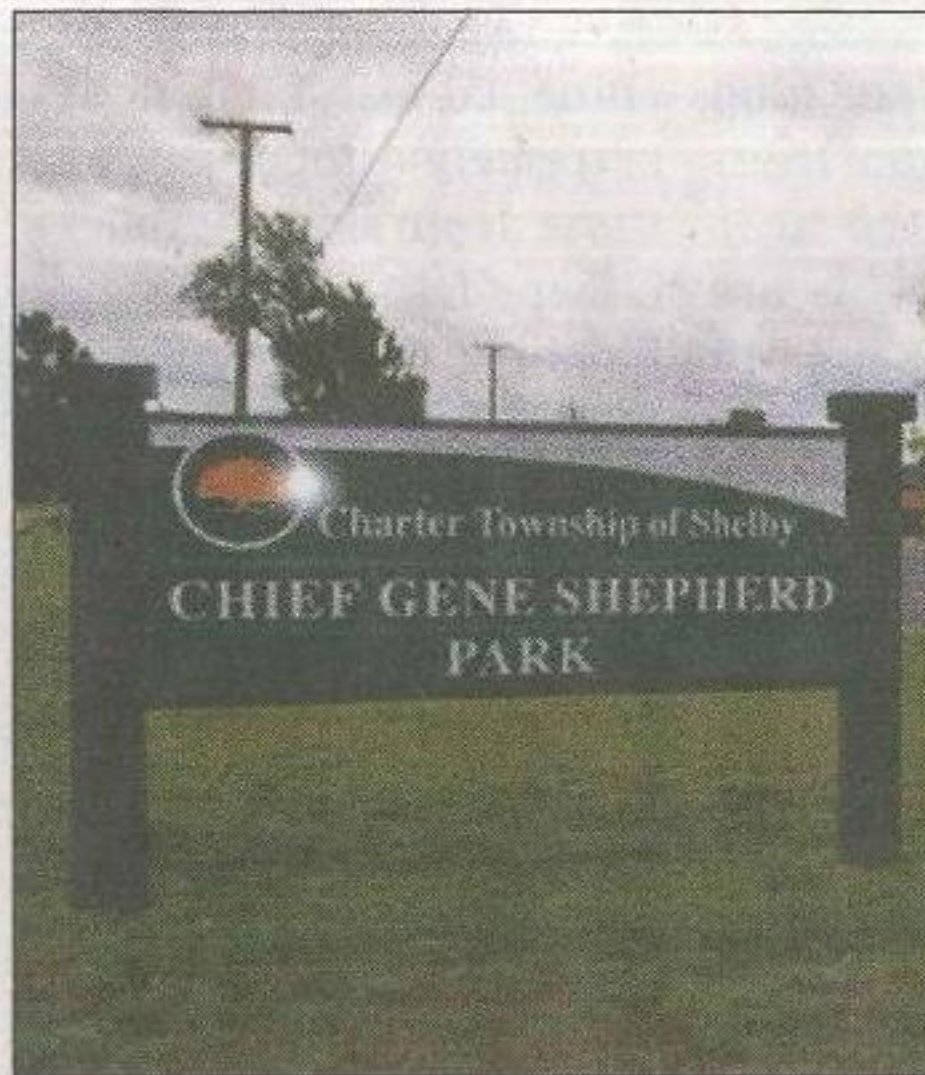
The Shelby Township Board of Trustees recently authorized Supervisor Richard Stathakis to send a letter conveying the township's support for the Lake St. Clair Cluster/CISMA Collaborative, which represents the first significant regional collaboration of local governments, organizations and individuals in invasive species management in southeast Michigan.

"Controlling invasive plant species is a concern in Shelby Township for a number of reasons," Stathakis said. "The township is home to many wetlands that provide wildlife habitats and recreation opportunities that are enjoyed by our residents, and it is important that we protect these assets from the threats posed by plants such as phragmites, black and pale swallow-wort, Japanese and giant knotweed,

European frogbit, flowering rush and Chinese yam."

Also known as Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas, CISMAs contribute to ecological restoration in which numerous local governments are now engaging for purposes of improved recreation, tourism, public safety, property values, and fish and wildlife biodiversity.

"The CISMA is a cooperative invasive species management area," said Shannon Filarecki of Fazal Khan and Associates, the township's engineering firm. "The state has come out with a grant opportunity through the Department of Natural Resources that would afford municipalities an opportunity to get funding to help with the control and treatment of the phragmites that we have growing throughout our area. Unfortunately, the grant is really only available for large cooperatives. As they work together, they're



Shelby Township's participation in the Lake St. Clair Cluster/CISMA Collaborative allows it to be eligible for grants that could be used to help keep invasive plant species at Gene Shepherd Park under control.

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SEAN DELANEY

going to get the highest priority because they want to see jurisdictions working together to combat this invasive species. So CISMA is being formed so we can apply for a grant from the DNR and try to get funding."

According to Deputy Supervisor Brad Bates, the township became aware of the Lake St. Clair Cluster/CISMA Collaborative while researching grant opportunities for invasive species

control at Gene Shepherd Park, which is located on the site of the former Soccer City complex near 23 Mile and Dequindre roads. It features a covered pavilion, tennis and sand volleyball courts, a bocce ball and horseshoe pit, a soccer field and indoor restrooms.

"The problem we kept running into with it was that a lot of the programs that fund invasive species control are looking for very

large, sustained management programs," Bates said. "We had a project at Gene Shepherd Park, but we didn't have the program that these grants were looking for. What (CISMA) does is set us up as something very similar to the programs that those grants look for."

Stathakis thanked Filarecki and Bates for their efforts to help the township address what he called "a major need."

"They filled out the applications and did everything they were supposed to do," he said. "It's great that we're now going to have some protection from invasive species at Gene Shepherd Park, because we've always said that we've needed it."

According to Stathakis, involvement with the Lake St. Clair Cluster/CISMA Collaborative will cost approximately \$80,000.

"Shelby Township would be committed to providing in-kind services to map

the large areas of invasive weeds, and approximately \$15,000 toward herbicide treatment as a local match," he said. "This level of local match represents approximately 30 percent of the total project cost."

According to Filarecki, the township is currently treating for phragmites at Gene Shepherd Park as part of a consent agreement with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

"This agreement allows us to continue to do that, and get some funding back from the state to continue the treatment against phragmites at Gene Shepherd Park, as well as other areas," she said.

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