**Michian Municipal League Foundation**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Thomas B. and Lynn M. Irvine  8273 S. Solon Park Rd.  Cedar, MI 49621  (703) 615-5429  Tbirvine3@gmail.com  May 24, 2023  **Michigan** |  |

**1675 Green Rd.**

**Ann Arbor, MI 48105**

**Attn.: Rachel Skylis**

Dear Ms. Skylis,

We are writing in support of the Northern Michigan Rowing Club’s (NMRC) application to your MML Bridge Builders Neighborhood Microgrant Program. We are the owners of the property immediately adjacent to the Solon Township Park, which is located at the south end of Lake Leelanau in Leelanau County, or the Lower Peninsula’s “little finger.” The NMRC has used the township property for the past year and half for their rowing club operations. We understand that the purpose of the grant program is to help organizations like the NMRC to build a strong sense of location-specific community through activities, or other appropriate means. We also understand that you are likely to also receive a supporting letter from a Solon Township official, in addition to our letter of support.

We can’t be more enthusiastic about the club having set up in the park. Prior to their arrival, the park was minimally maintained by the township, primarily for use by boaters and swimmers. The park needed a significant facelift, which the NMRC provided. They re-purposed and spruced-up several run-down small buildings, which they use primarily for equipment storage. Their members invested numerous hours in beautifying the park. And in their first year of operation, they held several learn-to-row events, which seemed well-attended, thus indicating both an interest and a need in this kind of outdoor activity in the surrounding community.

The club’s volunteer board and officers have gone out of their way to communicate with us and with other neighbors who have homes and property near the park. As a show of goodwill and appreciation, they hosted a neighborhood picnic toward the end of last year’s rowing season. As you can imagine, this location is one of those up-north gems in our state. The club’s members and leadership have been exceedingly respectful of the physical setting and as tenets in the park, we see them as striving to positively engage with the neighbors and the broader surrounding community in a most positive way. They really do encourage outdoor recreation and use of the park and the lake. To us, they been a great addition to the park and to our neighborhood. We’ve enjoyed getting to meet many of their members and hope that they turn out to be long-term residents of our neighborhood. Our belief is that an organization that is worthy of receiving aid through a grant program such your bridge-builders neighborhood program are ones who have already demonstrated the initiative, and have a spirit, which aligns with the purpose of the grant program. The Northern Michigan Rowing Club checks those boxes, and we enthusiastically support their application for your micro-grant.

Best Regards,

/s/

Thomas & Lynn Irvine

Hello Rachel,

I am writing on behalf of the Northern Michigan Rowing Club.

I am a Co-chair for the Solon Township Parks committee.  The Solon Township park system contains Solon Beach park which is located on the shores of Lake Leelanau.  Last year the club approached our Township Board about using the Beach Park to operate part of their rowing club.  We entered into a concession agreement and the park has been transformed.

Not only has the group helped by painting and updating buildings on site, but they have also helped rake and pick up trash, keeping the park presentable.  Local neighbors have befriended the club and have come out to help volunteer with park maintenance as well.  Even after there was a complaint from a community member that didn't like sharing the park with anyone else, the club behaved responsibly.  NMRC attempted to address concerns and then elevated the issue to the Township Board.  The Solon park neighbors came out and defended the club.  At no point was there any negativity from any members of the club.  The NMRC has also sponsored a few days of open to the public; "learn to row" days.  This helps to make rowing accessible to all people.   I think any grant funds presented to the NMRC would be used responsibly and would help to further the sport of rowing.

Please consider them for this opportunity.  Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Kelly Claar

Solon Township Parks Co-Chair

cell (231)835-1535