

COUNTY OF MANISTEE

Manistee OFFICE OF CONTROLLER/
ADMINISTRATOR

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MANISTEE COUNTY RECREATION COMMISSION

Monday, May 2, 2022 Manistee County Courthouse & Government Center 6:00 P.M. Board of Commissioners Meeting Room and via Zoom

MINUTES

Members Present: Wayne Beldo, Chair; Margaret Batzer; Erin Secord; Linda Cudney; Gary Schwaiger; Bryan Dunlop; Eleanor DeYoung; Robert Schulke

Members Absent: Devin Wagner

Others Present: Kristyn Malkowski, Recording Secretary; Marc Miller, Director of Economic Development of Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce; Doug Barry, Michigan DNR; Mike Szokola, Planning Director; Mark Coe, Snowbirds (Via Zoom)

Wayne Beldo called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, roll call was taken.

Approval of the May 2, 2022, Agenda.

There was a motion by Mr. Beldo, supported by Ms. DeYoung, to approve the May 2, 2022, Agenda. All in favor, motion carried.

Approval of the April 4, 2022, Minutes.

There was a motion by Mr. Beldo, supported by Mr. Schwaiger, to approve the April 4, 2022, Minutes. All in favor, motion carried.

No public comment.

Trail Champions: Mr. Barry mentioned some of the members of the Friends Group had a tour of the new trail from Chief to the bridge north of Kaleva. The group was able to make it through with their vehicles, except for a few areas. Discussions were had regarding these greater need areas where the vehicles are unable to pass through.

Mr. Barry explained that the trail starts at Chief Road, goes North through the community of Kaleva, then a long stretch through state land then ends up in the village of Thompsonville. This was an old railroad stop that connected different sections of the railroad, which can be a hub for trails. For example, the Betsie Valley Trail comes from Frankfort, goes through Thompsonville and to Yuma. Yuma is not far from the White Pine Trail which can connect to Grand Rapids. The trail going North from Thompsonville is own mostly by the DNR with three landowners. The DNR has a real estate company that is negotiating with the landowners to find the route to get to Interlochen. There is hope to connect the Interlochen State Park to the Orchard Beach State Park. Mr. Schulke suggested the Smart Trails Group to stay on track with the newly adopted Manistee County Recreation Plan. It was explained that the group, eventually, would like to see an intricate series of trails that connects all communities such as Arcadia, Bear Lake, Onekama, Thompsonville, Kaleva, City of Manistee and even Wexford County. Although projects that are being completed are the ones that are placed before them first.

Mr. Coe stated that the recent completion of the trail from Chief to the Kaleva grade was done as an example to show the County the type of trail that the group can put down and hopes they realize that many people will look to utilize the trail and something that we can have as an economic boost for the future. Mr. Miller stated that there could be several hundreds of million dollars of impact statewide for the use of trails. Also, a lot of trail usage days that Manistee County is missing out on because we don't have through trails, so we have a lot of recreational assets. If studies were done, it could show that the daily average spend for people going on these trips could be several million dollars a year, extra, if we focus to have the trails as an amenity that connects us to the other regional trails through the network. From the economic development standpoint, the business community, and the chamber, they have recognized the importance of these trails and supports the additional trail development through out the County.

No Staff Reports

Friends of Smart Trails Report: Ms. Cudney stated they went through their strategic plan. The second one was done on March 10, 2022, the third was on April 5, 2022, and the last one was on April 25, 2022. Waiting for finalization. The group went through their vision, mission, and values. The next regular board meeting is scheduled for May 9, 2022. Work is still being done on the website. The letter of support was discussed for the grant writer and the support position. The group identified some segments in hopes to have an advocate for the segments, as a memorandum of understanding will be signed with the DNR. The snowbirds have support from the DNR 4 months a year, then the Smart Trails can have the remaining part of the year. In the Smart Trails strategic plan, it states they are an advocate group for the Manistee County Recreation Commission to write grants for trails. Mr. Beldo state the distributor of the grant money is very important and hopes to bring concerns to the county board meeting in favor of the grant writer and other support. With many tasks involved, more support is needed from people that can lend support to these projects to ensure the strategic plan is followed.

Ms. Secord mentioned that in 2020, the Friends of Smart Trails was set to be the partner for the Iron Fish Derby Party fundraiser, but it was cancelled due to COVID-19. This can be a beneficial fundraiser so they will try for 2023 which will give time to find enough volunteers for the event.

Old Business: Ms. Batzer stated she did not have communication with the Benzie County Parks. There was not an update on the Grant writer position. Ms. Batzer mentioned a grant was

submitted for AARPA funds to be used for the feasibility study. Since then, there has been conversations of where the money should be best used, whether that would be for the feasibility study or hiring a person. Ms. Batzer stated the use of funds can be presented at the upcoming Special Board of Commissioners meeting. She will find more information regarding the AARPA funds.

New Business:

Ms. Malkowski introduced herself, she will be the new administrative support for the Recreation Commission.

Mr. Szokola would like the commission to review a packet that was created for them that includes two phases on moving forward, the bylaws, and the resolution that was adopted for the Recreation Commission.

Other Items from Committee Members: Mr. Schulke would like keep momentum on the relocation of the railroad to the southern end of Manistee Lake. The completion of the trails can be a huge economic impact for Manistee. Mr. Miller stated it is a tremendous transformative idea. There are many areas that need to be completed to ensure the project can be a possibility. The state legislature put in an appropriation for the feasibility study, so the State can start their recent study. Mr. Schulke would like to see improvements on the safety for bicyclists. In Manistee County there is not enough shoulder on public roads. The Recreation Committee should be advocating the creation of bike paths when roads are redone. Mr. Szokola mentioned the beginning process should be brought to the township councils and commissions. There are certain resolutions that can be adopted to ensure these projects can be completed or at least begin the process. Ms. Secord reiterated that ideas and communication will have to begin at the township level.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:54 PM.

There was a motion by Mr. Beldo, supported by Ms. Cudney, to adjourn the meeting.

Yeas: Beldo; Batzer; Secord; Cudney; Schwaiger; Dunlop; DeYoung; Schulke

Nays: 0

Absent: Wagner

Next meeting will be held on June 6, 2022, at 6:30 pm, in the County Board of Commissioner's

room.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Secord, Recreation Commission Secretary

Date