

MANISTEE COUNTY RECREATION COMMISSION

December 2, 2024
6:15 P.M.

Manistee County Planning Department Conference Room
and via Zoom

MINUTES

Members Present: Wayne Beldo, Chair; Margaret Batzer, Vice Chair; Eleanor DeYoung; Bob DeYoung; Robert Schuelke; Devin Wegner; Linda Cudney

Members Absent: Tom Williams; Jeff Lawrence; Gary Schwaiger, Secretary

Others Present: David Jarvi, Manistee County Planner; Katie Gruenberg, Manistee County Planning Director; Sara Herberger, Manistee County Community Foundation; Scott Slavin, Michigan DNR; Tim and Sherry Knoper, Benzie- Manistee Dirtbirds; Mark Coe, Benzie- Manistee Snowbirds

Mr. Beldo called the meeting to order at 6:18 PM, roll call was taken.

Approval of the December 2, 2024, meeting agenda.

Ms. Cudney enters at 6:20.

There was a motion by Mr. Beldo, supported by Mr. Schuelke to approve the December 2, 2024, meeting agenda. All in Favor, motion carried.

Approval of the November 4, 2024, meeting minutes.

Ms. Gruenberg added that Bob DeYoung is not included in members present.

Mr. Jarvi will fix the misspelling of Beulah.

There was a motion by Ms. Batzer, supported by Ms. Wegner to approve the November 4, 2024, meeting minutes as amended. All In Favor, motion Carried.

Public Comment:

Ms. Herberger from the MCCF:

- Ms. Herberger sent requested edits to Mr. Jarvi regarding Lifejacket Station letter of support and had some suggested edits for Parking and Street Design document.
- Ms. Herberger asked to change wording in letter of support to not reference Minger grant, and only use wording referring to the MCCF.

Scott Slavin, DNR:

- Ms. Gruenberg prompted discussion by asking Mr. Slavin about the process which would come with abandoning forest road portions along the Kaleva-Thompsonville Grade.
- Mr. Slavin briefly explained that forest roads are open to motorized vehicles and are used for logging operations ran by the DNR.
- Mr. Slavin wanted to hold off on community efforts to improve Kaleva-Thompsonville grade with limestone etc., before there is a director's order along entire grade system not allowing

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motor vehicles. Don't want to spend time improving surface if motor vehicles can't be kept off.

- Mr. Beldo asked how soon a directors order banning motorized vehicles may happen, if ever. Mr. Slavin said they are in talks with the Forest Resource division of the DNR. Areas need alternate ways of access by motor vehicles which currently isn't available. Mr. Slavin stated it isn't high on his priority list.
- Mr. Slavin detailed how a director's order would be passed through. Requires local department approval, field level review, then go Infront of the Natural Resource Commission for approval. Once approved it then can be enforced by conservation officers.
- Mr. Beldo asked if a dual road, allowing both non-motorized and motorized traffic would be doable. Mr. Slavin said it would be possible in some locations, but the DNR would want to restrict motor vehicle access off grade completely. Dual use trails would have to have some kind of divider to separate from improved surface. Would have to fill in wetland areas in some portions, wouldn't be feasible to do side by side trail.
- Ms. Batzer asked if new roads allowing access to logging would have to be built by DNR if current forest roads excluded motorized use. Mr. Slavin said yes. Depending on surface, temporary process permits could be issued to logging operations needing to use grade to access timber.
- Mr. Coe asked if there was a chance that the snowbirds could get a maintenance contract along the Chief to Manistee grade, as the group has the equipment to maintain the trail. Mr. Slavin said that it was a possibility through a friends group agreement.
- Ms. Gruenberg asked if the rec should focus on trail segments to the south of Kaleva. Is the DNR supportive of, or would the DNR like to see all the figuring for the full Thompsonville to Chief segment be answered? Mr. Slavin explained that he really relies on community involvement, if there is community involvement and donors and staff to capture grant dollars for a project on a state-owned railroad grade, it helps. The trail in question is low on the DNRs priority list.
- Mr. Slavin advised that we look at the full trail segment, and start with design and engineering work, so the DNR can better understand the cost. Move forward and look for design work funding. Could break up segments into phases.
- Ms. Batzer asked if there were any trail segments in Manistee County that were priorities for the DNR. Mr. Slavin explained that the top priority now is to fix high use, improved, trail segments with failing/old infrastructure.
- Ms. Gruenberg asked if a low-priority trail would score lowly on a trust fund grant. Mr. Slavin said it would not cause a low score, community involvement/support is important when ranking and scoring higher.
- Additional discussion followed about location of forest roads.
- Ms. Gruenberg asked Mr. Slavin how the DNR would prefer we tackle smaller trail improvements like signs and benches? Mr. Slavin is not in favor of small projects until it is an improved trail.
- It is considered an improved trail when it is open to bicycles and other non-motorized uses.
- Mr. Slavin said the DNR is in favor of improving, but don't have the means to maintain. A maintenance plan has to be figured out before improvements are done.

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Friends of SMARTrails Update: Ms. Cudney gave an update on behalf of the Friends of SMARTrails.

- Ms. Cudney stated that there was not a quorum at the November SMARTrails meeting, therefore, no meeting took place.

Benzie – Manistee Snowbirds Update: Mr. Coe Gave an update on behalf of the Benzie – Manistee Snowbirds.

- Season opened on December 1st.
- Working on a bridge that went out in Benzie County.
- Members are finishing up opening all the gates.
- Open clubhouse/warming house on Saturdays, 10-3.
- Long Lake Marina is having a snow show December 7th and 8th in Interlochen.

Benzie/Manistee County Dirt Birds Update: Mr. Knoper gave an update on behalf of the Benzie/Manistee County Dirt Birds.

- The Dirtbirds season has concluded. Except for a few board meetings that will happen over the winter.
- A lot has been accomplished this year. All township and village letters of support have been gathered.
- Trail proposal forms have been filled out.
- Dirtbirds are asking for a letter of support from the rec commission. Once complete, they will be able to send all info over to the DNR.
- Discussion ensued about details of letter of support for DNR approved ORV route.

There was a motion by Ms. Batzer, supported by Mr. Schuelke, to direct the Planning Staff to create a letter of support for the Dirtbirds application for a DNR approved ORV Trail route.

All in favor, motion Carried

Municipality Update: No one was present to give update.

Planning Department Staff Update:

- Discussion ensued about annual presentation that will be made to be presented at a future board of commissioners meeting.

Old Business:

Parking/Street Design Document:

- Ms. Herberger from MCCF provided Mr. Jarvi with another round of suggested edits.
- Mr. Jarvi will do additional edits and bring the document back next month.
- Ms. Batzer asked if the complete street image can be sharpened up and had additional suggestions for wording.

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Discussion ensued about Rec Commission appointment, terms, and resignation procedures.

Chamber of Commerce Leadership Group – Lifejacket Stations Grant Opportunity:

- Mr. Jarvi asked the commission for a motion to pursue the grant opportunity.
- Mr. Jarvi also showed letter of support, discussion ensued about LoS.

There was a motion by Ms. Batzer, supported by Ms. Cudney to submit MCCF Grant application for replacement lifejackets for stations not to exceed the total budget of \$19,000 and to provide match funding of 20% (\$3,800) of grant amount submitted. All in favor, motion Carried

New Business:

2025 Meeting Dates:

- Discussion ensued about 2025 meeting dates.

There was a motion by Ms. Batzer, supported by Ms. Wegner to approve the 2025 meeting dates as edited. All in favor, motion Carried

Economic Development Document:

- Mr. Jarvi introduced the document to the commission. Asked for them to look it over provide him with edits/suggestions if needed.

Other Items Before the Board:

Ms. Gruenberg suggested that we have a work session at an upcoming meeting to discuss future goals and objectives. 1 year plan, short term and long-term goals.

Mr. Beldo requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 P.M.

Next meeting will be on January 6, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Schwaiger, Recreation Commission

Date