

MANISTEE BOARD OF COMMISSIONER'S
6:00 p.m., Monday 415 Third St. November 1, 2021 Manistee, Michigan

RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

The Recreation Commission is operating remotely and electronically by Zoom under PA 254 of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

❖ Call to Order and Roll Call.

- ❖ Ms. Margaret Batzer, Commission Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

Recreation Commission Members Present: Margaret Batzer, Erin Secord, Devin Wegner, Sharon Goble, Gary Schwaiger, Robert Schulke, Bryan Dunlop, and Linda Cudney

Recreation Commission Members Absent: Wayne Beldo

Others: Douglas Barry Michigan DNR, Katie Mehl, Manistee County Planning Department, Rob Carson, Networks Northwest

❖ Approval of the Agenda

Dr. Dunlop moved, seconded by Mr. Schwaiger to approve the October 4, 2021 Agenda as presented.

Voting yes: Ms. Batzer, Ms. Secord, Ms. Wegner, Ms. Goble, Mr. Schwaiger, Mr. Schulke, Dr. Dunlop, and Ms. Cudney

❖ Approval of the Minutes

Ms. Cudney moved, seconded by Dr. Dunlop to approve the October 4, 2021 Minutes as presented.

Voting yes: Ms. Batzer, Ms. Secord, Ms. Wegner, Ms. Goble, Mr. Schwaiger, Mr. Schulke, Dr. Dunlop, and Ms. Cudney

❖ Public Comment

- Doug Barry provided an update on the capping of the section of trail from Chief to Kaleva. He reported that construction undemay with Team Elmer's adding the gravel level It is expected the trail surface will complete within the 90-day time frame of the state of Michigan securing the land. Doug Barry reported that the cost of material is between \$200,000 and \$300,000. Mr. Schulke recalled the price to be \$80,000 per mile of trail which would mean this section cost approximately \$272,000.



- Doug Barry also shared that this trail corridor does parallel privately owned hunting land and landowners have complained that a gate should be added to prevent vehicle traffic on the trails. Dr. Dunlop suggested that signage be added. Mr. Schwaiger recommended bollard posts. Doug Barry added that the Betsie Valley Trail utilizes both bollards and gates. He then provided a summary of the seasonal maintenance that the DNR currently provides in regard to gates, mowing, etc. Ms. Batzer added that she was in favor of bollards and signage rather than gates for cost effectiveness. ● Ms. Batzer asked if there would be a press release once the trail was complete and open to the public. Doug Barry replied that there currently was not, but that he would make arrangements with the Manistee News Advocate to do so.
- Doug Barry ended his report by recognizing Mark Coe and the Snowbirds for their efforts to develop trails and their handling of the finances.

❖ Staff Updates

- Katie Mehl provided a staff update on behalf of the Manistee County Planning department. She shared a sample memo with an accompanying script for the local units of government to use in adopting the recreation plan. The packet is designed to help make sure the plan is easily adopted the correct way on the night of each meeting.
- Ms. Goble asked if each community and township has received a copy of the recreation plan. Katie Mehl replied that yes, they have. Ms. Goble and Ms. Batzer then encouraged that members of the Recreation Commission to attend these meetings if able and support the adoption of the recreation plan.
- Doug Barry' shared that the community of Onekama contacted him and asked if they would be able to connect with the trail system that the Recreation Commission is developing. Rob Carson responded that the plan lays out broad goals for each community to develop trails and connect into the network. Priority routes have been identified and then the plan details future connections. Rob added that there is desire for a Lakeshore route from Manistee, through Onekama and Arcadia eventually connecting into the Betsie Valley Trail and Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail. This route is not in the current plan because no conversations have taken place with private landowners. The largest challenge with this Lakeshore route is identifying where it will go. Ms. Batzer asked if the township resolutions should include verbiage that allows for this development later on. Katie Mehl recommended adding the proposed goal of connecting these regional trails "however the township sees fit." Mr. Schwaiger added that there is an old railroad grade in Onekama and suggested that the community look into using that.

❖ Old Business

- Friends of SMART Trails: Linda Cudney provided a summary of recent activities of the group which included generating a conflict of interest policy, applying for a charitable

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solicitation license, acquiring insurance, they have established a bank account with the MCF handling the money for now, the group is seeking legal representation from a firm in Hart, Tamara Budzwinka will be contracted for strategic planning, and they plan to work on a Facebook page and website.

- Rob Carson added that he is trying to facilitate a grant application with Scott Slavin to apply for and have Networks Northwest act as the grant writer and fiduciary for the EDA grants that are available through the American Rescue Plan Act pertaining to outdoor recreation. He added that the EDA has grant stipulations very similar to the Natural Resources Trust Funds where the applicant has to have site control or own the property. Rob Carson expects this to be an extensive grant application and expects to start drafting soon. He reported that an engineering firm is in place and will be completing a preliminary engineering report. A Project Manager has been in touch with Mark Coe and they are making arrangements to visit the various trail corridors.
- Ms. Goble asked how much funding they are seeking. Rob Carson replied that he is waiting for the preliminary engineering report but is trying to package both routes Thompsonville to Copemish and Thompsonville to Kaleva with replacement of the bridge over Bear Creek included. They may be seeking as high as \$2,000,000. He added that they are in communication with Laura Heintzelman and MCF to work on a match. If the EDA were to award the grants funds, a match of 80/20 would be required.
- Ms. Batzer posed a question about the Friends of SMART Trails Facebook page. She inquired if the group would be utilizing the page that was previously created or making a new one? Rob Carson replied that no one is currently an Admin, nor do they know who is. Ms. Batzer commented that if we cannot figure out who is an Admin of the current page, a new one should be established.
- Doug Barry shared that he is aware of three bills that are through the state legislation that award grant money and asked Rob Carson if he is applying for one of those. He added that the State Park grant is only for previous infrastructure problems rather than new projects. Rob Carson clarified that he will be applying for a grant through the EDA, not the State of Michigan. Doug responded that he will be sure to share the state grants with us as additional funding opportunities.
- Mr. Schulke offered a recommendation; he recommended Brandon Jenson from Right Side Design for the Friends of SMART Trails we design. He commended Brandon's work and added that he is an avid trail user himself.

❖ New Business

- Dr. Dunlop initiated a discussion of the Recreation Plan. He read some of the outlining responsibilities and characteristics of the Recreation Plan's goals and found some inconsistencies between the plan and the way the Recreation Commission is currently operating. Ms. Batzer provided some background information on how the Recreation Commission was formed and some changes that have occurred since the inception (pertaining to staff support and a proposed grant writer position that is currently in

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the county budget). Added that Networks Northwest received a grant through the MCF to update the Recreation Plan which is needed in order to seek additional grant funds. She feels we are currently working through an interim situation and once the Recreation Commission receives additional staff support, we will be able to operate in a way that aligns with what Dr. Dunlop outlined. More discussion regarding the proposed grant writer position followed.

❖ Other Business •

None.

❖ Adjourn

Mr. Schulke moved, seconded by Ms. Secord to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Voting yes: Ms. Batzer, Ms. Secord, Ms. Wegner, Ms. Goble, Mr. Schwaiger, Mr. Schulke, Mr. Dunlop, and Ms. Cudney

The next meeting will be held December 6, 2021 in the County Commissioner's room at 6 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Secord, Recreation Commission Secretary

Date: November 1, 2021