

Chassell Township Planning Commission
February 8, 2024
Minutes

Attendance: Brian Waters, Doug Hamar, Steve Spahn, TJ Palosaari, Rich Smith, Lynn Gierke (for Dan Palosaari), and Keith Meyers. Absent: Dale Peterson and Daniel Niemela.

Brian convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Agenda: Brian moved approval of the agenda. Steve provided the second. The agenda was approved unanimously.

Minutes: Doug moved approval of the January minutes. Brian provided the second. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comments: None

Road Commission Report and 5-Year Road Plan Discussion: No report

Capital Improvements Committee: Lynn noted that she is cleaning up the inventory based on the DPW staff input.

Recreation Committee: No report

Recreation Facilities Issues: Brian and Keith discussed their conversation with Sigrid Resh at the Keweenaw Invasive Species Management Area (KISMA) about the buckthorn issue along the historic trail. Keith described what they learned from Sigrid about how buckthorn crowds out other species and that its berries cause diarrhea in birds. The berries also do not draw insects which means what birds that do nest in the area have to fly longer distances to find food for their young. The female buckthorn trees (with the berries) are the ones that need to be removed and this is done by cutting them at eye-level and not by cutting them or pulling them at the roots. Sigrid offered KISMA's help with remediating this invasive and her husband Rod Chimner offered help with introducing native species to compete with the buckthorn. Doug provided his approval to move forward with a project to remediate the buckthorn. Brian and Keith also talked with Sigrid and Rod about who at MTU we could talk to about a potential brook trout restoration project on Hamar Creek and they indicated that we should contact Casey Huckins. Keith will reach out to Casey to see if he would be interested in helping us with this. We will also put out a call for photos that community members might have showing the historical path of the creek below US 41.

Old Business:

- a. **Chassell Mercantile Update** – Brian talked with Ron Gray about the possibility of leasing space from him to create additional parking spaces for Dan Palosaari's project. Ron is potentially interested. A variance will still need to be sought for the parking (one

space per one-bedroom apartment and two spaces per two-bedroom apartment). The public meeting on the project will take place at the Fire Hall on Wednesday, February 14, 2024. Public notice was provided in the Daily Mining Gazette, on Chassell.net, on the Chassell Township Facebook page, and through posters put up within the community.

- b. **Snowmobile Trail Update** – The committee met this past Monday. We are working on getting maps to take a closer look at potential routes. Pete Torola will join us at our March 4th meeting so we can get Houghton County Road Commission perspective on use of township roads as part of the route.
- c. **Centennial Park Engineering Study** – Chris Holmes reported that they will finish soon. Their focus is currently on completing the SPARK grant specifications by next week. Chris noted his discussion with Dan Crane from the Lions Club regarding his walkway input.
- d. **Future DNR Grant for Launch Site Amenities** – Bob Anderson and Karen Fraser attended this evening's hearing to provide public input on the project. Needs discussed during the meeting included signage on US 41, a guardrail to mark the entrance as well as asphalt at that location, and posts to keep site users from entering Bob's property. Chris Holmes will be sharing the design used for the pit toilet at Hunters Point.
- e. **Bridges Out of Poverty** – Keith indicated that he will be meeting with Kevin Store from the Copper Shores Community Health Foundation on Tuesday, March 13th, to finalize our relationship with them on the Blight Remediation Fund.
- f. **Old Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and adjoining property RFP** – No additional movement by the Raasios on the project. There was discussion about improving the tapping around the church to help keep people out of it.
- g. **Portage Paddle Sports** – Discussed the Lions Club opposition to locating them inside the pavilion over concern about the location of the compressors and the heat they create.
- h. **Water Trails Program** – Keith indicated that the focus is on building the Baraga County linkage. Keith provided Barb McEwen at the Baraga County Convention & Visitors Bureau the Letter of Inquiry he had provided to the Foundation when sought the recreation grant for the kayak launch and offered to help her with a proposal to establish a launch below the Otter Lake outlet.
- i. **Bark Park and Historical Trail Signage** – Lynn reported that Industrial Graphics will be installing the signs tomorrow.
- j. **DNR SPARK Grant Project Schedule** – We now have a fully executed grant agreement with the DNR. UPEA is finalizing the specifications for the boardwalk and the walkway. Brian and Keith talked with Sue Anderson with the Superior Alliance for Independent Living (SAIL), and she provided input to Chris Holmes at UPEA. Dan Crane and Steve Palosaari have provided Lions Club input on the walkway. The DPW staff also provided input on the walkway. The bathroom renovation design is still in process.
- k. **Baraga/Chassell Trail Project Collaboration/Trail Inspection** – Dave Mattson brought in a crew from the south and Ryan Kuntze came in from the north to chainsaw and clear the fallen trees on Snowmobile Trail 15. They got to within a quarter mile of each other. Barb McEwen at the Baraga County Convention & Visitors Bureau will be notified about the remaining work required. There is no additional word from MDOT or the DNR about the rail corridor except that we now know that the DNR owns it (they originally indicated that MDOT did) and MDOT has the transportation easement. The rail removal must be bid, and spring brushing will be needed.

- l. Centennial Park Rules Sign Update** – Lynn reviewed the text for the updated sign. A small grammatic change was suggested.
- m. Long & Short-Term Rental Registration Form** – Brian reviewed the form and commission members suggested final edits. This is expected to be either a Google form or a fillable pdf.
- n. Veterans Banners** – Follow up needs to occur with the VFW Auxiliary.

New Business:

- a. DNR Trust Fund Grant Public Hearing Review** – Covered under Old Business d.
- b. Visit Keweenaw Destination Grant Opportunity** – Keith will be talking with Chris Holmes at UPEA about how we might attach an ADA accessible kayak launch to the re-built waterfront boardwalk. If feasible and within available grant funding, Keith will develop a grant proposal by the April 1st deadline.
- c. CD3 Boat Cleaning System – Sigrid Resh Ph.D MTU Forest Ecology** – Brian and Keith reported that they did a conference call on January 29th to discuss a grant opportunity presented by Sigrid that could support securing a CD3 boat wash system for the boat launch at Centennial Park to help control the spread of invasive species like milfoil. The grant would pick up 50% of the cost of this \$40,000 unit. As improving fishing is one of the top priorities in the recreation survey, Brian and Keith recommended to the board (by email on February 5th) to tap \$10,000 this year and \$10,000 next year (which is when the grant would be awarded) from the recreation millage to meet the match requirement on the grant. Dan Palosaari asked for more information and Keith secured a list from Sigrid of communities in Michigan that have acquired the unit. The communities Keith has spoken to so far have all indicated a positive experience with the equipment along with significant use by boaters. Doug expressed concern over the milfoil related expenditure given the recent refund from the Special Assessment District. Brian and Keith will seek formal approval from the township board on the match commitment at next week's township board meeting.
- d. SAIL – ADA Park Review with Sue Anderson** – Covered under Old Business j.
- e. Historical Trail Flora Restoration Project** – Covered under Recreation Facilities Issues
- f. Kick Sled / Skating Track on Pike Bay** – Consistent with our Master Plan Strategy to consider using Centennial Park for additional winter activities, Keith has discussed the concept of a 200m oval on the bay during the winter with the Recreation Committee (Brian and Steve) and Supervisor Dave Mattson. Keith indicated that while he was doing the Border to Border Ski in Finland last March, his wife Julie had the opportunity to go to a lake with one of Keith's cousins where a member of the Hämeenlinna community had created and groomed an oval on a frozen lake then provided kick sleds that members of the community could use on the oval. Residents also walked and ran on the oval wearing spikes on their shoes. A similar concept in Chassell on Pike Bay would be a wonderful way to keep residents who do not ski an opportunity to stay active and to draw more visitors to the community during the winter both locally and regionally. Dave has indicated that he would have tracks if we could find a vehicle for grooming and that he would also have a drag that he could provide for grooming purposes. Steve suggested that once groomed the oval could be flooded using a sump-pump through holes in the ice. Keith has also talked with Marco Guidotti at the Chassell Township Schools on a

potential partnership with the construction trades class to build kick sleds. The Recreation Committee will work toward implementing a kick sled oval on Pike Bay next winter.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Bentley 3-7-24