

Chassell Township Planning Commission

Minutes

November 2, 2023

Attendance: Brian Waters, Steve Spahn, Dale Peterson, Daniel Niemela, and Lynn Gierke
Absent: Doug Hamar, Dan Palosaari, TJ Palosaari, and Rich Smith

Brian opened the first public hearing on the MDNR 5-Year Recreation Plan at 7:00 p.m. No residents had attended by 7:34 p.m., so Brian closed the hearing.

Brian called the regular planning commission meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. and the pledge was given.

Agenda: Keith moved the approval of the agenda. Dale provided the second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Minutes: Dale noted that his last name is spelled with an o and not an e. Brian moved the approval of the October minutes. Dale provided the second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Road Commission Report: Dale reviewed the 5-Year Plan. He also reviewed the drainage issue that had arisen in front of the Fire Hall with the paving of 7th Street. It was a favor for the HCRC to pave and they will not come to repave. Lynn noted the \$181,500 road repair bill from HCRC. Water pooling by Liimatainen's on Hancock Street was discussed. Brian moved acceptance of the plan. Steve provided the second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Capital Improvements Committee Report: DPW staff needs to go over the list.

Park and Recreation Board: The committee met on October 12th to review the recreation survey results and identified the priorities to be included in the MDNR 5-Year Recreation Plan. Keith developed a draft plan. Hearing dates were set and links to the 57-page draft plan were posted on the Chassell.net website and on the Chassell Township Facebook page. Tonight's hearing was the first opportunity for residents to provide input. A second hearing will take place on December 4th at 6:00 p.m. We will discuss the results of the hearings at our next meeting in December and seek final approval from the Board at its December meeting.

Old Business:

- a. **Chassell Mercantile Update** – Discussed the possibility of incorporating Finnish exterior design for this project and future development projects downtown. Keith will reach out to James Marusich with examples.
- b. **Snowmobile Trail Update** – Brian and Keith walked the north leg of Trail 15 on October 18th. It looks good except for blowdowns along the Snake River. We are awaiting a go ahead from Barb McEwen. Keith talked with Stephen Bosio about looking at connecting

Chassell to Tapiola. We need a strategy here and then to before the HCRC on either a Chassell-Painesdale route or possibly a Chassell to Tapiola route.

- c. **Centennial Park Engineering Study** – Chris will incorporate the 5-Year Recreation Plan recommendations in their final report.
- d. **Future DNR Grant for Launch Site Amenities** – Keith and Lynn talked with Merrie Carlock with the MDNR about our interest in pursuing a Natural Resources Trust Fund or Passport Grant for this purpose. Merrie will process our 5-Year Recreation Plan, so it is approved by April 1st which is a requirement for us to apply for either.
- e. **Bridges Out of Poverty** – Keith still needs to finalize this with Kevin Store. It looks like Calumet may be looking at a similar approach.
- f. **Old Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and adjoining property RFP** – Raasio's are working a custom build, so the process here has slowed.
- g. **Portage Paddle Sports** – nothing new
- h. **Sturgeon River Launch** – The launch was removed from the river on October 26th. The process went smoothly with Feighner Dock present to demonstrate how to mount straps and Craig removed it from the river using DP's lift. In the clearer water, a block of concrete became evident on the downstream side of the launch. We will want to ask Dan if he could pull this for us in the spring.
- i. **Water Trails** – Keith is pulling the needed elements together. Barb McEwen with the Baraga County Convention & Visitors Bureau is interested. Keith will help them apply for a recreation grant for a launch below the outlet at Otter Lake and possibly Frohberg Road.
- j. **Bark Park and Historical Trail Signage** – The board is in the process of approving. The draft signs were reviewed.

New Business:

- a. **Recreation Plan Public Hearing Discussion** – Since no one appeared at this evening's scheduled hearing, there was nothing to discuss. We will discuss input from the December 4th hearing at our next planning commission meeting.
- b. **DNR SPARK Grant Project Schedule** – Chassell Township was awarded \$495,000 for its SPARK Grant proposal on October 9th. There will be a kick-off meeting on November 9th. Keith plans to attend. We understand that specifications may take up to two months to be approved by the MDNR so we will want to move quickly. We are trying to get some clear answers on the topic of the Prime Professional from the MDNR.
- c. **Baraga/Chassell Trail Project Collaboration/Trail Inspection** – At the Houghton County Recreation Authority meeting on October 9th, Keith indicated our interest in partnering with Baraga County to developing a multi-use trail on the rail corridor between Baraga and Chassell. Ron Yesney from the MDNR was at the meeting and indicated that MDOT controls the leg between Arnheim and Chassell but felt this would be a possibility given their investment in Baraga to Arnheim. Brian and Keith met with Barb McEwen and a representative from the Baraga County Trails organization on October 18th and they have agreed to work with us. Jeff Ratcliffe engaged Andy Powers at MDOT on October 20th about our joint interest abandoning the corridor between Arnheim and Chassell as well as pulling the rails with goal of establishing a multi-use trail. Andy asked to have the MDNR to engage MDOT on this.

Announcements: Lynn brought up the need to have short-term and long-term rental landlords provide contact information so this can be made available to law enforcement as needed. It was decided that this should go out as a notification with the February tax bill.

Brian moved for adjournment. Steve provided the second. There was unanimous approval, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.