

Chassell Township Planning Commission
October 5, 2023
Minutes

Attendance: Brian Waters, Doug Hamar, Steve Spahn, Dale Petersen, Daniel Niemela, Rich Smith, and Keith Meyers Absent: Dan Palosaari and TJ Palosaari

Brian convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and the pledge of allegiance was given.

The minutes from the September meeting were reviewed. Dale moved approval of the September minutes and Brian provided the second. The minutes for the September meeting were approved unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Milfoil Report: Dr. Jennifer L. Jermalowicz-Jones, Certified Professional Watershed Manager with Restorative Lake Sciences presented the results of their survey. Key findings discussed included 58 current acres of milfoil with a significant presence of native plants. Jennifer noted between 30 and 33 species of native plants which is very diverse compared to other Michigan lakes which are typically around six. Jennifer also noted the presence of another invasive species called purple loosestrife. Jennifer recommended a systemic herbicide approach to address the milfoil and indicated that the purple loosestrife needs to be dug out at the root ball. Jennifer indicated that aquatic herbicides are effective. She cautioned against harvesting milfoil unless it is pulled out at the roots and vacuumed up as there is a significant risk of spreading it further. She recommended the use of the systemic herbicide called Galleon.

Road Commission Report and 5-Year Road Plan Discussion: Dale reported that the most recent Houghton County Road Commission (HCRC) meeting focused on the budget for the next fiscal year. Revenue is expected to be \$18.3 million compared to \$16.2 million in 2023-2024. They are forecasting a surplus of \$2.4 million next fiscal year and between \$970 thousand and \$2.7 million in 2023-2024. Discussion about projects focused on the area above the bridge. They are also increasing the line item for local roads. With many members of the public present, Dale addressed them indicating that if you have road needs to let us know. He went on to note the first come/first served approach taken by the HCRC. Dale noted that we were among the first townships to get a 5-year plan submitted and that we look at our plan annually. Dale went on to indicate that he would speak to Township Clerk Lynn Gierke about revenues available for roads. He indicated that she is still working on this but indicated that we will be spent down due to our projects completed in 2023. We will have a better idea in January as revenue comes in again in 2024. Dale talked with MDOT about the issue of speed coming into the south end of the township. MDOT is not supportive of signage to indicate reduced speed ahead to the south of the Sturgeon River bridge. Dale talked with MDOT about the dirty reflectors on the bridge and asked if they could be cleaned. MDOT indicated that they will investigate this. Dale indicated that he had Dave Mattson's approval to approach MDOT.

Capital Improvement Committee Report: The committee will meet on Tuesday, October 10th, at 5:30 p.m. at the Fire Hall. This meeting will be combined with the road committee meeting. The meeting will start with the road committee.

Park and Recreation Committee: The committee will meet on Thursday, October 12th, at 5:30 p.m. at the Fire Hall to review the results of the Recreation Survey that closed on September 30th.

Old Business:

- a. **Chassell Mercantile Update** – Keith indicated that Dan is continuing to work with architect James Marusich on the project.
- b. **Snowmobile Trail Update** – Brian indicated that Snowmobile Trail 15 is slated to re-open this winter. No developments on the reconnection to the Nichols Trail.
- c. **Centennial Park Engineering Study** – Chris Holmes reported that UPEA will be looking at the recreation survey results to determine what else should be added to their report.
- d. **Future DNR Grant for Launch Site Amenities** – Keith indicated that there is nothing new to report here but completing the 5-Year Recreation Plan by the end of the year and getting it submitted and approved by the MDNR will be required for us to be eligible to apply for either a Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant or a Passport Grant for this project.
- e. **MDNR SPARK Grant** – Keith reported that grant recipients will be announced next week.
- f. **Bridges Out of Poverty** – Keith explained to the audience that we are working with the Copper Shores Community Health Foundation on setting up a fund that individuals can contribute to from which grant awards can be made to help local residents with financial need address blight conditions with their homes.
- g. **Old Holy Trinity Church and adjoining property RFP** – Keith reported that Jeff Ratcliffe with KEDA has indicated that the contractor is costing out the project. Once the cost estimate is in place, they will need a bank commitment letter and proof of equity.
- h. **Portage Paddle Sports** – Brian reported that he had spoken to Branden at their plan is to have signage in place in the spring.
- i. **Baraga/Chassell Project Collaboration** – Brian indicated that the Recreation Committee will be calling Barb McEwen with the Baraga County Convention & Visitors Bureau before the Recreation Committee meeting on October 12th.
- j. **Sturgeon River Launch Parking** – The rocks were moved to allow access to the ramp going down to the launch dock.
- k. **Water Trails Program handbook draft** – Keith indicated we will come back to working on our proposal once we have spoken to Baraga County.
- l. **Bark Park and Historic Trail Signage** – Keith got with Industrial Graphics about the needed sign correction and they will provide us something we can put over the error on the Legacy of the Mill sign. Mat Moore is working on the sign design for within the park directing visitors to the historic trail and bark park. Mat has also completed the draft of the map that we will have printed and available at the trailhead.

New Business:

- a. **Membership Terms** – Brian reported that the Township Board approved all the planning commission term extensions at its last meeting.
- b. **Recreation Plan Survey Response Report** – The results were discussed broadly. Over 200 responses were received. The Recreation Committee will review these in detail at its meeting on October 12th, develop recommendations, and develop a draft 5-Year Recreation Plan for public review.

Brian moved for adjournment. Steve provided the second. There was unanimous approval. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

