

**Chassell Township Planning Commission**  
**September 5, 2024**  
**Minutes**

**Attendance:** Brian Waters, Steve Spahn, Dan Palosaari, TJ Palosaari, Rich Smith, and Keith Meyers **Absent:** Doug Hamar and Daniel Niemela **Guests:** Dale Peterson, Lynn Gierke, and Dar Gronevelt.

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

**Agenda:** Brian added garbage collection and sewage pond mowing. Brian moved the approval of the agenda. Keith supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Public Comment:** Dar Gronevelt advised the Commission that the recent ditching near Lindala Road, particularly on the other side of the rail-trail, will address the drainage issue that she faced with her property, but noted that the culvert to the lake is already blocked. Dar noted that she is grateful for the work completed.

**Road Commission:** Dale Peterson reported that he attended the August 19<sup>th</sup> Houghton County Road Commission meeting. Dale indicated that Bocco Construction will be overseeing the 4<sup>th</sup> Street FEMA project. Permits will be the extent of the HCRC's involvement with the project. Dale indicated that up to \$500,000 of additional funding may be made available to the county and there will be a meeting in two weeks if they get it. Dale noted a meeting coming up on September 16<sup>th</sup> for the HCRC's annual budget review. He will be interested in seeing their intentions on larger projects and how we can get involved. Our current road funds will be depleted after the 4<sup>th</sup> Street project. Dale indicated that he would do a drive around to see what needs to be done to keep the 5-Year Road Plan current. He indicated that the Township should aim for a January update. Brian suggested soliciting input from township residents.

**Capital Improvements Committee:** Brian noted that the committee needs to meet.

**Recreation Committee:** No Report

**Recreation Facility Issues:** Keith reported that he is seeking estimates to have the large maple and the yellow birch taken down that are threatening the scoreboard, dugout, and storage shed on the third base line of Misslitz Field. The trees also represent a safety hazard to players and spectators.

**Old Business:**

- a. **Chassell Mercantile Update:** Keith reported that the Houghton County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (which he is a member of) met on August 14<sup>th</sup> and recommended the establishment of a housing TIF and a \$100,000 3% 10-year Revolving Loan for the project. A draft development agreement has been submitted and the Authority approved the hiring of the brownfield consultant for the project to prepare the

appropriate agreement between the authority and the developer to address meeting this reporting requirement. The total capital investment for the project is expected to be \$4.5 million which includes \$100,000 to address brownfield conditions from the revolving loan. \$1.5 million is being sought from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and \$1.25 million from the housing TIF.

- b. **Snowmobile Trail Update:** Jeff Kakuk has provided talking points for conversations with landowners. The DNR can cover costs of gates and fencing. Annual payments for leases of easements are available at \$300/mile or \$75/quarter mile. Purchase of an easement is possible. The Commission discussed landowner conversations that need to occur.
- c. **Centennial Park Engineering Study:** No report.
- d. **Old Holy Trinity Lutheran Church:** Jeff Ratcliffe from KEDA will be hosting a contractor walkthrough on September 12<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. The proposal deadline is September 27<sup>th</sup>. Mason Motors recovered the 1954 Chevy from the basement of the church for a contribution of \$500.
- e. **Sturgeon River Launch:** Keith reported that he worked with UPEA on a sign permit application which has been submitted to MDOT and is in process. Scores should be coming out soon for the Natural Resources Trust Fund and Recreation Passport Grant proposals submitted seeking to make further improvements to the kayak launch site. We will have two weeks to respond with supplemental information. Keith noted the Visit Keweenaw video that has come out on social media and the Visit Keweenaw website which included the interview he gave about the launch site. Keith has shared this with Merrie Carlock at the DNR. He also briefed Merrie on the sign permit application and shared Feighner Dock's contact information with her as she believes other U.P. communities would be interested in looking at them as an option. Keith will follow up with Lowell on the remaining items on the launch. Craig will be installing the mailbox and no jumping/diving sign.
- f. **Kick Sled Track on Pike Bay:** Keith has been in contact with Corey Soumis. Keith indicated that he needs to get back with him on a design and his plan is to apply for a Keweenaw Community Foundation grant to help with the cost of materials. That deadline is October 21<sup>st</sup>. We also need to talk with Steve about the repair needs with his Explorer as this is a potential project as well.
- g. **Youth Bike Trail:** We are waiting on a proposal from Brett Palosaari.
- h. **Water Trails:** Keith has talked with Brad Barnett with Visit Keweenaw. Brad has indicated that Pat with the Keweenaw Land Trust is interested in reinvigorating the Keweenaw Water Trail and Brad is coordinating a meeting for this fall for us to incorporate the Sturgeon River and Sloughs into this water trail system.
- i. **DNR Spark Grant Project:** Bids came in beyond budget on the boardwalk. Sheet piling appears to be the issue. We are looking to modify the program by taking out the viewing platform and Chris Holmes plans to get this back on the street by next week depending on when it can appear in the paper. An early October deadline will be set with a performance period stretching out to June 30, 2025. How bids come in will drive the remaining program to be completed, including the ADA restrooms and adjustable boat ramp dock. The rink boards and curtains are likely out at this point.
- j. **Chassell/Baraga Trail Collaboration:** Keith had sent around the email from Andy Powers with MDOT, but provided a recap: 1) MDOT hired a local mower/brush clearing

contractor to open up access for the inventory/research (this was completed in July); 2) MDOT is cooperating with MTU on an inventory of assets (this will be completed during September and October); 3) MDOT is looking into the value and interest in acquiring the rails (currently); 4) once the rail is removed, DNR would lead efforts from there; and 5) MDOT and the DNR are working on an MOU that will govern this property.

- k. **Veterans Banners:** The ten utility poles coming into town will be used which will allow for two banners per pole. This is acceptable to the VFW.
- l. **Visit Keweenaw Destination Development Grant:** Need to implement by September 30<sup>th</sup>. As soon as the permit is approved, the sign will be produced and installed as soon as possible after that.
- m. **Historic Trail Buckthorn Project:** Keith shared the photos from the February walkaround showing the berries on the trees with Sigrid.
- n. **Hamar Creek Restoration Project:** Keith is still awaiting word from Casey Huckens.
- o. **Blight Mitigation Fund:** Keith shared a draft social media post. Brian noted the need to designate the fund on the check memo. Keith will proceed with posting this on the Chassell Township Facebook page.
- p. **Cemetery Mapping:** No report.
- q. **Cemetery Trees:** Lynn reported that everything is done with the trees.
- r. **Rail-Trail Priorities:** The township met with the DNR on August 15<sup>th</sup> on site where the DNR made it clear that the 48" pipe must be angled under the rail trail to the ditch on the other side. Jeff Kakuk also shared a draft agreement which has been reviewed by the township's attorney. The Bocco start date is set for September 19<sup>th</sup>. Keith moved that the Commission pass a resolution recommending that the township move forward with the agreement with the DNR to take over responsibility for maintenance of the rail-trail assuming they are okay with the cost of liability. Brian supported the motion with a second. The resolution was approved unanimously.
- s. **Mountain Bike Trail:** Waiting on proposal from Brett.
- t. **Screening Definition:** No report.

#### **New Business:**

- a. **Letters of Interest to Serve on the Planning Commission:** Brian presented Cindy Karvonen Cowell's resume to the Commission. The commission was impressed with Cindy's qualifications, particularly her grant background with KBIC. Brian moved that Cindy be recommended to the board for appointment to the Commission. Steve supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.
- b. **Boardwalk Bids:** Already discussed under Old Business.
- c. **Disc Golf Course Location:** Keith discussed this with school board member Pete Torola who will discuss this with Marco.
- d. **Mower Arm/Trash Discussion:** Lynn shared Bethany's review with the Commission. After some discussion, Brian moved that the Commission recommend increasing the garbage card rate to \$2.50/bag or \$25.00/card. Steve supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Brian moved for adjournment. Steve supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting ended at 9:15 p.m. Next meeting is 10/3 at 7:00 p.m.