

Chassell Township Planning Commission
October 3, 2024
Minutes

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

Keith convened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. and the pledge of allegiance was given.

Keith introduced and welcomed Cindy Cowell to the Planning Commission.

Agenda: Daniel moved approval of the agenda. Steve supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Minutes: Daniel moved that the minutes be approved. Steve supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Comments: Brett and Eric Palosaari proposed a mountain biking skills trails to be develop near the Misslitz Field. These would include a trail for strider bikes for 2- to 6-year-olds and progressing to beginners which would include features to help riders master corners, rollers, and jumps. It was proposed that the old basketball court be established as a hangout location for riders. The clay/sand mix of the soils on the township's property is seen as great for maintenance and building features. Cindy noted how this could add value to the community. There was discussion about recycling some of the old playground equipment for use near the hangout area to provide a place for younger children to play while parents would be riding. There was a good deal of discussion about the benefits of getting kids started with a healthy opportunity like this and that the opportunity would be here to establish more advanced trails. Lynn asked about the possibility of doing classes. Steve noted the possibility of having the community breakfast support this initiative. Cindy mentioned the possibility of seeking foundation funding to support the effort. The Natural Resources Trust Fund through the MDNR was discussed as a potential source. With the rail-trail so close by, linkage to the MTU Trails was also discussed. The Planning Commission was supportive of the proposed concept. Keith asked Brett and Eric to provide a cost breakdown and offered to help pursue grant funding for the project.

Road Commission Report and 5-Year Road Plan Discussion: Dale attended the Houghton County Road Commission's recent 2024/2025 budget review and regular meeting. Dale indicated that he questioned the HCRC about the 15% increase in property tax revenue (from \$950,000 to \$1,073,169), but they did not know where it came from. Township contributions have increased from \$300,000 to \$604,000. Dale noted a 50% increase in dust control. The projected surplus dropped from \$1,900,000 to \$1,500,000. Section 19 funding totals \$436,000 and will go into the overall budget. During the regular meeting, Dale asked why the Sturgeon River Road is not ditched and it is because doing so would aggravate spring water flow. Dale noted that the Rajala Road case was dismissed by the court in Marquette. The next HCRC meeting is November 4th. Dale indicated that after doing a drive around, he sees no major changes to our currently established priorities.

Recreation Committee Report: Will discuss under new business.

Recreation Facility Issues: None reported.

Old Business:

- a. **Chassell Mercantile Update:** The County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority is waiting on a brownfield plan from its consultant to establish the Housing TIF. This will then need to be approved by the Authority, the Township Board, and the County Commission. Once approved this will go to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) where grant funding is being sought. These will be market-based rents (not Section 8 housing). Construction plans are in process.
- b. **Snowmobile Trail Update:** Still need to work through landowner conversations.
- c. **Centennial Park Engineering Study:** No report.
- d. **Old Holy Trinity Lutheran Church:** Only one bid had come in for the demolition and it was too high. It is going out for bid next week with a November 9th deadline.
- e. **Sturgeon River Launch:** Keith reported that he and Lynn worked to get the supplemental submission in for the Natural Resources Trust Fund and Recreation Passport Grant proposals by the October 1st deadline. Dan Palosaari helped us with figures needed for the budget. The total project cost increased to \$135,000. UPEA updated the site drawing which now also includes widening at the bottom and providing an ADA parking space with a paved walkway to the headwall and a paved ADA parking space at the top of the ramp with a paved walkway to the vault toilet and picnic area. Craig also installed the mailbox with the “no diving” sign. Keith included the logbook.
- f. **Kicksled Track on Pike Bay:** Need to determine repair needs on Steve’s vehicle.
- g. **Youth Bike Trail:** Covered during public comment.
- h. **Keweenaw Water Trail:** Visit Keweenaw provided a letter of commitment for our DNR proposals to add the Sturgeon River and Sloughs to a reinvigorated Keweenaw Water Trail. Meetings on this will occur later this fall.
- i. **DNR Spark Grant:** DP Construction completed the accessible walkway between the pavilion and the waterfront. The re-bid of the waterfront boardwalk closes next week on October 7th. Keith worked with Lynn to submit the quarterly report, and it was accepted earlier this week.
- j. **Baraga/Chassell Trail Project Collaboration:** Andy Powers from MDOT was up recently to review the corridor. He is developing an RFP that will have three options for proposing: 1) pull rails; 2) pull ties; and 3) pull both rails and ties. The plan is for this work to be executed in the spring.
- k. **Veterans Banners:** Nothing new since the decision was made to use utility poles.
- l. **Visit Keweenaw Destination Development Grant:** The sign is produced. Industrial Graphics is waiting on a base related part and then installation will occur. Keith communicated back and forth with MDOT, and no permit is required for the sign since it will be over seventy-five feet from the center of US 41.
- m. **Buckthorn Project:** Sigrid Resh will be out tomorrow to continue the remediation project. Volunteers are needed between 1 and 5 p.m.
- n. **Hamar Creek Restoration:** Still waiting on Casey Huckens.

- o. Blight Mitigation Fund:** Keith posted information on Facebook after our last meeting. He also indicated that he will be discussing it with the Chassell Women's Club at its meeting next week.
- p. Cemetery Mapping:** No Report.
- q. Cemetery Tress:** No Report.
- r. Rail Trail:** The township is entering into an agreement with the DNR to take over maintenance within the township.
- s. Disc Golf Course:** Keith talked with Pete Torola about the care of the course behind the school and he got out to mow it. He will work with Marco on identifying a new champion for its care.
- t. Boardwalk Bids:** Covered under DNR Spark Grant.

New Business:

- a. X-Country Ski Trail:** The Recreation Committee is continuing to work with Jim Tervo on the transition of the non-profit organization to the Recreation Committee. This includes the bank account and the equipment. Jim is the committee will be looking at the old ice rink warming building as a potential location for storage along with the DPW staff.
- b. Mountain Bike/Pump Track Trail:** Covered during public comment.

Steve moved for adjournment. Dan supported the motion with a second. The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Next meeting is Thursday, November 7th, at 7:00 p.m.