

Chassell Township Planning Commission

MINUTES

03 April 2025 / 7:00 PM / Chassell Fire Hall

ATTENDEES

Brian Waters, Keith Meyers, Cindy Cowell, Steve Spahn, Dan Palosaari, Dan Niemela, and three guests

AGENDA

1. Call to Order 7:02 pm

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of the Agenda B. Waters motions, K. Meyers seconds, all aye. Agenda approved

4. Reading and Approval of March 6, 2025 Minutes B. Waters moved to approve March 6, 2025 minutes with discussed edits, S. Spahn seconds, all aye. March 6, 2025 minutes approved.

5. Public Comments Guest Sam Tidwell with American Red Cross. Mr. Tidwell spouse also present as a Red Cross volunteer. S. Tidwell shared that he is a retired Red Cross leader after 46 years of service. The Tidwells retired in the local area and are now Red Cross volunteers. Mr Tidwell has had a conversation with Curt Judson, fire chief about increasing Red Cross disaster response presence in the local area. Mr Tidwell shared that he has shared a Red Cross fire relief fund number with area Fire Chiefs to give local residents another resource after experiencing a fire. Mr. Tidwell also outlined a new collaborative in the planning stages for the local area. A COAD-Community Organizations Active in Disaster. An organizational meeting is scheduled for April 24. The intent is that the COAD meets regularly to devise a comprehensive disaster plan involving all area orgs and municipalities before a disaster strikes. Mr. Tidwell concluded by sharing that Red Cross volunteers are needed. Volunteers must be trained prior to being able to respond to disasters. B. Waters inquired if Chassell Fire is in communication with this group. Mr. Tidwell is affirmative. B. Waters point out that C. Judson is a member of the Township Board-so a communication line will be in place for the township.

6. Road Commission Report and 5-year Road Plan Discussion no update

7. Zoning A general discussion was held regarding splits on 40 acre parcels. A discussion was held regarding the definition of a short term rental. Page 40 of the The zoning Ordinance contains a typo and defines a STR as: - A dwelling in which transient guests are provided with a place to stay on a short-term basis, which is less than 365 days, in return for payment. - B. Waters moved that the

definition of a STR on page 40 of the zoning ordinance needs to be corrected to be defined as a place to stay which is less than 30 days. K. Meyers seconded. All aye. Motion approved.

8. Capital Improvement Committee Report no update

9. Recreation Committee Report Move to old business

10. Recreation Facility Issues Nothing new to report. No emergent issues to discuss at this time.

11. Old Business

a. Chassell Mercantile Update D. Palosaari reported that the clean up of the lots containing the former mercantile and the neighboring property will begin on April 20. D. Niemela questioned if US 41 traffic will be affected. D. Palosaari indicated no, all work will be done from 4th street. Palosaari reported that the program supporting the project has been changed by the county from the Revitalization and Placemaking program to MI Community Revitalization Program. The final county vote will be on May 22, 2025.

b. Snowmobile Trail Updates No update other than an update that no grooming was done on the trail for the 2024-25 snowmobile season.

c. Centennial Park Engineering Study The map is still in process of updating to reflect the acquisition of the McIntyre property. This will be the final update prior to finalizing the map.

d. Old Holy Trinity Church The building removal will take place as soon as the winter weather breaks.

e. Sturgeon River Launch Improvements The DNR Trust and Passport grant applications were updated and submitted in response to the most recent call for proposals. Updates included adjusting the budget to meet costs, which also will reflect in an updated required match cost. The Township Board held a special meeting to approve a new resolution to authorize the application. K. Meyers reports that the new applications will be even stronger than last year's applications due to the availability of supporting documentation reflecting all of the work done in the past year including accessibility features and the forthcoming addition of the Sturgeon River and Sturgeon River Sloughs to the Keweenaw Water Trail Map. Awarded applications will receive funding in 2026. B. Waters requested that K. Meyers contact the manufacturer of the launch now that spring is imminent to request repair of the features that received damage from normal water movement last season.

f. Kick Sled Track on Pike Bay Project not realized in the 24-25 winter season, but is still being researched. Discussion has also included a possible addition of an oval kick sled track in the park.

g. Keweenaw Water Trail The group promoting the water trail is currently remapping assets along the trail. The website is scheduled to be reactivated in the next month. Discussion is ongoing among the promoters as to what agency will maintain the website.

h. Baraga/Chassell Trail Project Collaboration Will discuss under item n.

i. Veterans' Banners Banners will be available to put up this summer for the period of time between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

j. Historical Trail Buckthorn Project B. Waters shared that the Keweenaw Native Plant Symposium is next week. K. Meyers indicated that he will touch base with Sigrid Resh to kick off the 2025 season of Buckthorn removal with her MTU classes. Scores of loads of Buckthorn have already been removed, but there is still more to mitigate. S. Resh indicated that the trees can be eradicated fully after about three years of returning to cut new sprigs off of old plants. K. Meyers shared that Rod Chimner (who is S. Resh spouse) is the advisor for the Wetlands Club at MTU. The club is making wetlands education signs to place on the Historical Trail. A goal of the removal project is to reintroduce native plants along the trail.

k. Hamar Creek Restoration Project No update. DNR will be back out to evaluate the creek when the snow has melted. The MTU class can be scheduled to begin restoration work after the DNR evaluation.

l. Cemetery Mapping No update

m. Cemetery Landscaping No update

n. Rail-Trail First section of rails removed. D. Palosaari asked if the rails are hauled away or stacked on location for removal. PC members do not have first hand information to respond. Andy Powers from MDOT shared that no bids were received to remove the second section of rails. MDOT is creating a RFR for removal of remaining rails. Discussion was held regarding continued attention and promotion of this project. The ORV traffic that an open trail will accommodate would create a positive ROI.

o. Disc Golf Course S. Spahn reported that Mark Ware from the Chassell School said he will have classes conduct a spring clean up on the disc course. Maintenance personnel from the school will keep the course mowed. S. Spahn advised the school staff to contact the PC if any maintenance becomes necessary on the course.

p. X-Country Ski Trail Marinette Street Access K. Meyers reported that the Marinette Street access worked well this winter. Discussion is ongoing with a property owner regarding ownership of a small piece of land near the two track trail. D. Palosaari inquired how often the trails need winter grooming. S. Spahn responded that grooming happened about 3x per week during peak season. B. Waters expressed gratitude for the hours of volunteer time given by S. Spahn, K. Meyers and J. Tervo on the trail grooming.

q. Old Rink Warming Shack Upgrade Meyers and Spahn report that all of the grooming equipment fits inside of the old warming shack and will be stored there. D. Palosaari reports that the new roof will go on when winter ends. B. Waters inquired about the 501C3 transition to the Chassell Trails. K Meyers reports that the transition is being worked on. The trail designation as a 501C3 will open up new funding opportunities. Finally, S. Spahn shared that the grooming snowmobile is operational, but 17 years old, and replacing the machine should start to be looked at.

r. Park Bathroom Remodeling The bathroom project is currently under construction. The floor has been poured. Discussion of including the slop sink in the construction was held. Engineer Chris Holmes reports that the slop sink is being looked at to add to the utility closet. The bathroom partition doors have been upgraded to a powder coated door to increase longevity. A discussion about the current ice rink warming shack at the rink was added to this agenda item. D. Palosaari shared that he will look closely at the shack this summer to determine value of the structure and needed renovations.

s. X Country Ski Trail Signage S. Spahn reported that Chassell Schools class will make the trail signage. Spahn brought samples of sign products that the school laser engraver can produce. The PC agreed that they thought the acrylic sign would work well. The signs can be made 20" wide by however long the PC chooses the signs to be. Spahn suggested that the students create some sign designs and pitch their ideas to the PC. Spahn volunteered to coordinate the sign project.

t. Marina Development The updated park map discussed in 11. c. is needed to take the next step with the marina project. The new contact from EGLE is M. Lubejko. K. Meyers reports that he is completing the application to request an initial meeting with EGLE. The map will be attached to the application. Required permitting for the project will be the topic of the EGLE meeting. A discussion was held regarding the type of partnerships that the township will want to pursue to support the marina project. Public/private partnerships are effective. A discussion ensued regarding the high demand for marina slips that came out in the recent recreation survey.

u. Mountain Bike Trail/Skills Track/Visit Keweenaw Destination Grant A grant application for the \$17500.00 project cost has been submitted to Visit Keweenaw. The award notification period is slated for early May. D. Palosaari inquired if the grant requires a match. K. Meyers responded yes, a 50% local match. If the grant is awarded in early May, the project could be completed by Strawberry Festival weekend.

v. Great lakes Scuba Diving & Lake Preservation Group Clean Up Project Don Fassbender attended the PC meeting via telephone. The PC discussed an underwater clean up at the Portage Entry Federal Dock with D. Fassbender. The Scuba Diving group will donate their diving time and asked the township to partner with the group on material removal and handling after removal. The township can retain any of the material that they want. Value to the township would lie in scrap value. The dive club has a boat with a cherry picker installed. The township would need to supply on land person power and trailers and/or dump trucks. The PC reported that they have people and equipment available to complete the clean up partnership. D. Fassbender requested that the date be late in August. B. Waters is going to watch the calendar and identify a date that works for both parties.

11. New Business

a. RentFun Kayak Rentals/Revisit The RentFun Kayak company contacted B. Waters a second time to promote their product and pitch a unit purchase for Centennial Park beach. B. Waters reports that it is a kind of paddle board/kayak vending machine. A discussion was held on the pros and cons of purchasing and using the unit. The PC decided to pursue other ideas based on the upfront cost, maintenance and ROI of the RentFun unit. A discussion was held brainstorming if there would be an existing Chassell business that would be interested in partnering with the township to provide paddle boards and kayaks for rent. It was decided to set this project aside and to continue to explore other options for water recreation rentals.

b. Splash Pad K. Meyers reports that Copper Shores Foundation has a grant application open that is due in May. A splash pad at Centennial Park would fit

the type of projects that are eligible for the opportunity. K. Meyers did some research by speaking to the L'Anse Village Manager, Bob LaFave, about the L'Anse Park splash pad. B. LaFave gave Meyers all of the information and contacts for the company that L'Anse used for their project. D. Palosaari inquired about the engineering features of installing a splash pad at Centennial Park. The PC discussed water source and draining. Meyers will contact the company that L'Anse used to get input.

c. Rural Business Development Grant Tabled

d. Disaster Emergency Program Resident Randy McClellan asked the township what village natural gas customers would do if there was a disaster that cut off the availability of natural gas? The PC discussed disaster and emergency planning. The PC agrees that contingency planning is valuable. K. Meyers pointed out that there are many plans located in the municipalities. The PC could identify all of the local, township, county and state plans and help residents be aware of what to do in the case of an emergency. The PC agreed to keep disaster emergency program and planning on future agendas and start compiling available and sample plans.

Before adjourning, B. Waters shared that a discussion on short term rentals was a topic at the recent area Wake Up Keweenaw event. As an outcome of that discussion, the township is going to include the STR form in upcoming water bills to help make owners of STR aware of the requirement to register their rental with the township.

NEXT MEETING

May 8 , 2025 7 pm Chassell Township Fire Hall

Adjourn B. Waters made a motion to adjourn. S. Spahn seconded. All aye. Motion approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:53 pm.