

Chassell Township Planning Commission

MINUTES

11 August 2025 / 7:00 PM / Chassell Fire Hall

ATTENDEES

Brian Waters, Doug Hamar, Cindy Cowell, Steve Spahn, Keith Meyers also attending five community member guests

AGENDA

1. Call to Order 7:02 pm

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of the Agenda B Waters motion to approve agenda with changes. K Meyers second. All Aye. M/C.

4. Reading and Approval of June 5, 2025 Minutes (June minutes approved in August due to lack of quorum at July 2025 meeting) D. Hamar moved to approve June 2025 minutes as presented. B. Waters second. All aye. M/C.

5. Public Comments Lynn Artman introduced herself and shared that she is a resident of Lakeshore Drive. L Artman shared personal history of flooding at her property on Lakeshore Dr over the past 20 years. Artman outlined a Chassell Flood Victims Coalition that she is working to form to address entities responsible for water infrastructure containing rain water in Chassell. Artman shared the Coalition the group will present a unified front to entities to address infrastructure needs. Artman states that the coalition is formulating a complaint process. Artman asked the Planning Commission to prioritize reviewing how to address flooding issues. Artman asked that interested residents be referred to her to join the coalition.

A broader discussion ensued over possible actions to take in cases of flooding and activities that can mitigate debris obstruction of current drainage systems. Artman shared that she called the county emergency management office after the July 2025 flood. The personnel stated that they don't have a response, nor a budget. Artman stated that it is apparent that we are going to have to help ourselves in the Township.

K. Meyers stated that Dan Dowdy from the Baraga State Park would be the MI contact person to assist with issues on the rail trail that enhance flooding.

A meeting guest shared her experiences in trying to work with the DNR to get an easement repaired that was channeling flood water into her property.

A meeting guest inquired as to who in the Township is responsible for the blight ordinance. K Meyers indicated that a part of the approved agenda for the PC meeting was to start the process to amend the zoning ordinance.

A meeting guest offered a property update regarding maximum grass height.

A meeting guest inquired about property owners having the right to cut the grass in the right of way. A discussion was held.

A meeting guest inquired about a piece of roadway that was paved using property owner private funds. The supervisor indicated that water and sewer upgrades are included in the Township five year plan. Road repairs are being held until after the water and sewer upgrades are complete. B Waters inquired if roads are included in the five year plan and the Supervisor affirmed.

A meeting guest shared a blight issue. The PC indicated that issues such as the one brought forth would be included in the new ordinance being proposed.

A meeting guest questioned zoning and short term rentals. K. Meyers shared that the Township is seeing an expansion of STR. K Meyers shared that Township requires that a person responsible for managing the property be available locally. The PC shared that there is currently a requirement to register both LTR and STR.

A meeting guest inquired if the updated, proposed ordinance will permanently preclude a property from being developed into a motel. K Meyers affirmed that the current ordinance caps STR properties to four units. B Waters stated that every person has the right to appeal to the Zoning Board for a variance.

6. Road Commission Report and 5-year Road Plan Discussion The Supervisor inquired if Dale Peterson's role with the Road Commission will be filled. The Supervisor shared that she attends the HCRC meetings.

7. Zoning No report

8. Capital Improvement Committee Report K Meyers reports that a meeting is being planned to work on the Capital Improvement Plan as part of the Redevelopment Ready Community designation being sought.

9. Recreation Committee Report No report

10. Recreation Facility Issues B Waters said that a plan is needed to fix the bridge over the ski trail. The most recent flooding moved the bridge further out of place. Waters shared that a large culvert is needed to repair the area and bridge. Discussion was held to plan on how to best complete the needed repairs.

The Supervisor shared that DPW indicated that the ski trail grooming equipment can be moved from the old warming shack on Hancock Street to the vault at the cemetery.

11. Old Business

a. Chassell Mercantile Update D. Palosaari is no longer the developer. Jeff Ratcliffe from KEDA is researching for a new developer. The project is in a good place with DP's site work and the MEDC funding, and it is felt a developer will be identified.

b. Snowmobile Trail Updates K. Meyers gave a project historical update to meeting guests. Meyers will request a meeting with Barb McEwen from Baraga Tourism to move the project forward. Easements are being examined to connect the trail to the Toivola/Painesdale trail.

c. Centennial Park Engineering Study The final study has not been turned over to the Township. The final study will need to have the initially planned seawall removed as EGLE indicated it will not be permitted.

d. Old Holy Trinity Church Demolition complete. Jeff Ratcliffe from KEDA has approached the MI Land Bank for additional funds to raze the neighboring property blighted structure. Proposals for a green space development on the lots will be sought.

e. Sturgeon River Launch Improvements The launch was put in last week. This was possible after permits from EGLE and a Corp of Engineer approval to dredge the the launch area. An outhouse and barrel for garbage will be placed at the launch. Two grant proposals have been submitted for further improvements to the launch public space.

f. Keweenaw Water Trail K. Meyers gave a historical update on the project to meeting guests. Meyers indicated that he will discuss additional launch sites along the Sturgeon River with Barb McEwen from Baraga Tourism.

g. Baraga/Chassell Trail Project Collaboration No updates. K. Meyers gave a historical review of the project to the meeting guests.

h. Historical Trail Buckthorn Project K. Meyers gave a historical update on the project to meeting attendees. Meyers updated PC that the Buckthorn has substantially been remediated in the wetland areas. Upland Buckthorn is still having new sprigs removed to cause die off. Meyers reported that one sign on the historical trail was taken and will be replaced.

i. Hamar Creek K. Meyers gave historical update on project to meeting guests. Meyers reports that he has reached out to Casey Huckins to check in on restoration plan progress.

j. Cemetery Mapping Included in minutes for k. below

k. Cemetery Landscaping D. Hamar provided cemetery maps and the radar survey report to PC members and meeting guests. Hamar reports that the sexton information available is incomplete. Hamar indicated that the radar survey identified a number of unmarked graves in an area. Landscaping planning will be held until a plan is approved on how to recognize the unmarked grave sites. A high level discussion was held regarding recognition possibilities and consequent landscaping options. D. Hamar asked the PC and guests to share any ideas they have as to how the unmarked graves can be recognized.

l. Rail-Trail K. Meyers indicated that the most needed action at this time is discussion with the DNR. Meyers also reiterated that the Pike River Bridge decking is on the DNR master project list. Meyers shared that one resident has expressed interest in funding the project. The Township is responsible for the engineering study for decking and the DNR will install the decking. Meyers asserted that he will get guidance for the study RFP. A discussion ensued regarding the potential to create a 501C3 group to fund projects that are outside of the Township budget. Partnering with Copper Shores was suggested as a possibility.

m. Park Bathroom Remodeling Project is complete. Item will be dropped from future agendas. K. Meyers gave a historical update on the projects at Centennial Park and the DNR grant funding.

n. Marina Development Discussed under above agenda items. No further updates.

o. Mountain Bike Trail/Skills Track K. Meyers gave a historical update on the project to meeting attendees. Project is still in progress with a private foundation in discussion regarding funding.

p. Great Lakes Scuba Diving and Lake Preservation Group Clean Up Project Project has been moved to 2026. The group has added sonar to their equipment. Mapping of refuse will happen in 2025 and clean up project will be done in 2026.

q. Splash Pad K. Meyers reports that he is waiting for information from the WUPHD regarding health requirements to use lake water in the splash pad. WUPHD is researching this first request of its type.

r. Misslitz Field Improvements Township Board approved moving forward with projects proposed at the field. Marquette Fence will be giving a quote next week for a batting cage, foul ball fencing and fence repair at the dog park. S. Spahn shared that the Chassell Lions have indicated that their group is willing to help with some of the improvement costs at Misslitz.

s. Blight Violation 7.2-4 Discussed during public comment.

t. Fitness Trail Signage B. Waters and K. Meyers installed 16 sign poles for the signage. A 17th pole will be put in after bridge repairs. K. Meyers gave an overview of the fitness trail and features to meeting guests.

12. New Business

a. Ski Trail Bridge Repair Additional cobble and rock was brought down the creek by the most recent rain flood event. It needs to be removed. B Waters indicated that the rock could be used on the base of the bridge. Once rock removal and replacement is complete, the bridge can be put back in place.

b. Water and Sewer Ordinance Review Supervisor Gierke shared an update. The current ordinance dates back to the 1970's when the sewer was constructed. Gierke scanned the current ordinance and sent it to the lawyer. Feedback was that the ordinance should be redone instead of consolidated. The update would follow Board policy. A discussion was held regarding the current ordinance, fee schedule and the need to update the current system. B. Waters talked about future planning being done as part of the Capital Improvement Plan. This work will support a functional replacement and improvement plan in the system. Waters asked if the lawyer can attend the September Planning Commission Meeting.

c. Blight ordinance review A meeting guest shared an issue with a property. Discussion was held about the necessity to include health as part of the new ordinance.

d. CD3 Waterless Boat Wash System A discussion was held regarding the addition of the system. It was decided that due to size of project and cost, the system would not be pursued at this time.

e. Ditching Concerns within the Township The area by the old ice rink and warming shack on Hancock Street has been ditched. MDOT did a lot of ditching along the highway after the July flood. A meeting guest pointed out that all the natural debris lying on the rail/trail is washed into the ditch by every storm and blocks the culvert at Lakeshore Drive. K Meyers offered to reach out to DNR as to who will maintain the culvert when the Township takes responsibility for maintaining the trail. The resident suggested a township education campaign as to proper clean up and disposal of natural debris to mitigate culvert blockages. A discussion about options in mitigation of debris build up was held.

f. MEDC RRC Deliverables-PC Annual Report The draft annual report was presented by K. Meyers. B. Waters requested that PC member attendance be added. B Waters moved that the draft report with additions be approved. D. Hamar seconded. All aye. M/C

g. Eagle Scout Project A candidate for Eagle Scout from Houghton/Hancock Troop 207 approached the Township about a potential project. It was decided to build a gazebo in the dog park area, some features for dog recreation, and also to clean up the small dog park. The PC is waiting for estimated costs for the projects from the candidate. During this discussion, D. Hamar shared that a second board has warped up on the boardwalk. K. Meyers will contact OHM Engineer to have MJO repair the boards.

h. PC Membership Terms B. Waters and R. Smith current terms are expiring. R. Smith has expressed interest in continuing his membership on the PC. K. Meyers moved to

appoint Rich Smith to a new term 3 year term on the PC. D. Hamar seconded. All aye. M/C. B. Waters expressed willingness in continuing his membership on the PC with another 3 year term. S. Spahn moved to appoint B. Waters to a new term on the PC. D. Hamar seconded. Four support, One absention. M/C.

For the Good of the Order: B. Waters shared the cost of a storage shed package to place at the trail head of the xcounrty ski trails for equipment storage. K. Meyers expressed that using the vault at the cemetery for storage will solve current storage problems. Storage options will be considered. C Cowell discussed the MI Rural Prosperity Teams. Cowell outlined the membership collaboration required for a team. The PC agreed to move forward with creating a team. S. Spahn asked about an email from Copper Shores forwarded by K. Meyers. Meyers outlined email content regarding funding opportunities for larger projects. S. Spahn affirmed that he will approach the Chassell Lions regarding providing some funding toward the Misslitz Field project. S. Spahn suggested the PC put out a RFP that encompasses all needed recreation projects. No action was taken.

NEXT MEETING

September 4, 2025 7 pm Chassell Township Fire Hall

Adjourn B. Waters motioned to adjourn. S. Spahn seconded. All aye. M/C Adjournment at 9:29 pm.



