

## Chassell Township Planning Commission

# MINUTES

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07 May 2026 / 7:00 PM / Chassell Fire Hall

## ATTENDEES

Steve Spahn, Brian Waters, Keith Meyers, Cindy Cowell, Doug Hamar, Molly Ploe, Lynn Gierke, Dan Palosaari, Michael Messner

## AGENDA

### 1. Call to Order 7:02 pm

### 2. Pledge of Allegiance

**3. Approval of the Agenda** B Water motioned to approve the agenda. D. Hamar second. All aye. M/C

**4. Reading and Approval of April Minutes** D.Hamar moved to approve the minutes as amended. K. Meyers second. All aye. M/C

**5. Public Comments** K Meyers shared that Workforce Keweenaw will host a remote workers networking social on May 21 from 430 pm to 6 pm at 101 Quincy. Meyer requested PC to share the event.

Michael Messner spoke. M Messner has submitted a letter of interest to the PC Chair for the PC open seat. Messner told about himself, his reasons for interest, his experience in the past serving as the Chsl Township Houghton County Road Commission representative. Messner shared that he attended the April PC meeting and listened to the Quincy Materials presentation. That experience motivated him to apply for the open seat.

**6. Road Commission Report and 5-year Road Plan Discussion** No report.

**7. Zoning** Information will be discussed in 12a.

**8. Capital Improvement Committee Report** L Gierke reported that the Township Board has approved the purchase of the Silversmith Software. Gierke is in the process of reaching out to Houghton County entities to get their files to upload to the software. A discussion of all the features included in the software was held. The software is running now and a living process. The company is uploading and customizing our interface and is updating as new files are provided.

**9. Recreation Committee Report** The committee met prior to the PC meeting. K Meyers reported that the meeting included an update from Brett and Eric Palosaari on the bike park. Their company can start work immediately upon grant funding from a Visit Keweenaw Destination Grant. Discussed the Baraga to Chassell snowmobile trail and and reconnect of the trail to the Bill Nichols trail. Ryan LaPorte of the Keweenaw Snowmobile Club says club supports the

trail completion. Communication with landowners regarding easement along the gas line are ongoing. D Palosaari asked for an update on the Baraga/Chassell trail. Andy Powers from MDOT is reworking a RFP for the removal of the remaining rails. Upon removal of rails, the project will be under the jurisdiction of the DNR. K Meyers gave a historical outline of the project for M Messner.

**10. Recreation Facility Issues** A member inquired if the kayak launched got silted in this spring. D Palosaari indicated that he checked the site this week and it looks good. B Waters inquired about the kayak launch installation for the new season. L Gierke indicated that C Austin will put out the launch. D Palosaari reported that he repaired the walkway rails on the historical path that were broken by a fallen tree.

## **11. Old Business**

- a. **Chassell Mercantile Update** K. Meyers talked to Jeff Ratcliffe from KEDA. Ratcliffe reports that a potential developer is exploring the old church property. No updates on the Mercantile property.
- b. **Snowmobile Trail Update** B Waters indicated that he will reach out to Barb McEwen from Baraga Tourism to get a project update. D Palosaari suggested that a committee be formed to clear the trail from Chassell to Arnheim. A potential easement issue was discussed.
- c. **Centennial Park Engineering Study** K Meyers reported that updates have been made to the study, but issues to be addressed in the study remain. Meyers indicated that another meeting should be scheduled to review and update the study together with UPEA. Meyers will set up the meeting. A discussion was held regarding marina slip demand in the area in general and in light of a private marina project in the area. Demand appears to remain unmet.
- d. **Sturgeon River Launch Improvements** K. Meyers and L Gierke will set a meeting with Merrie Carlock for approval to move ahead with an engineering study. Not at construction phase yet. K Meyers gave an overview of the project for M Messner.
- e. **Keweenaw Water Trail** K. Meyers reports that he has contacted Jerry Wuorenmaa from WUPPDR to offer PC support to move the Water Trail project forward.
- f. **Baraga/Chassell Trail Project Collaboration** See b above.
- g. **Hamar Creek Restoration Project** K Meyers reported that he is working to get a meeting scheduled with Chris Adams, the MTU PhD student who will spearhead the project for Chassell Township. Meyers gave a historical overview of the project for M Messner. L Gierke reported that the culverts at the end of Hamar Creek are almost full.
- h. **Cemetery Landscaping** D. Hamar reports that he is in communication with a cemetery landscaping architect firm. Hamar sent pictures of the cemetery to the firm and will have information to share regarding landscaping in June.
- i. **Rail Trail/Pike River Bridge** K Meyers reports that a proposal to fund the engineering study for the Pike River Bridge deck has been sent to the Keweenaw Community Foundation. Meyers indicated that 70% of the cost would come from the grant award and 30% will be a cash match from community members approached by Meyers and Judy Evert. The cash match should strengthen the funding application. A strong letter of support for the project from the DNR was included in the application. KCF should report awardees in May or June.
- j. **Mountain bike trail/Skills track** A funding proposal is pending with a private foundation.

- k. **Misslitz Field Improvements** D. Palosaari has graded the field. He hopes to complete grading on Friday. JCS is completing the fencing now. Palosaari suggested leveling and reseeding the outfield in the fall after the season wraps up. K Meyers suggested addressing drainage in left field at that time.
- l. **Max and Evan Eagle Scout and Steve Szyszkoski Recognition** M Ploe submitted a story about the Eagle Scout Projects in Chassell to the Gazette and the story ran on the front page in today's paper. B. Waters still working on buying gas gift cards for recognition gifts. M Messner suggested getting Visa gift cards from Dollar General. Waters indicated that he would pursue that.
- m. **Tree Identification on the Fitness Trail/MTU Sierra Williams** D Hamar got a quote from Industrial Graphics of \$350.00 for fitness trail tree identification signs produced on weatherproof material. B Waters moved to approve \$350.00 of funds to order signs for the fitness trail from Industrial Graphics. M Ploe suggested adding additional small signs in places where trees reoccur. K Meyers Second. All aye. M/C B Waters shared that he did not hear from the MTU group this spring regarding placement of the signs.
- n. **Dumping at the end of Hancock Street** M Ploe reports that she hasn't seen new activity as of late. Ploe says that the snow pile from winter snow removal is still big and the snow and everything collected in it are melting into the ground and neighboring properties. Potential no dumping signage was discussed again.
- o. **Congressionally Directed Funding** K Meyers reported that the CDS request submitted to Slotkin's office was denied. Meyers described the strong competition for project funding. B Waters asked if CDS is an annual request. Meyers said yes. Meyers suggested that the township stay alert for all potential sewer project funding. D Palosaari shared that the sewer smoke study will be done in the summer of 2026.
- p. **Keweenaw Community Foundation Grant Ski Trail Signage** Zach Wilk is assisting with updating and re-doing all of the trail maps reflecting trail changes. The cost to print the signs will be just under \$1000.00. An application for grant funding to cover the cost will be submitted to the Keweenaw Community Foundation.

## 12. New Business

- a. **Zoning Amendments** K Meyers reported that updated zoning ordinances that came out of the committee reviews were sent to the PC members for review prior to the meeting. D Hamar and L Gierke are working on the Capital Improvement Plan which includes ordinances. Much of this work is also a requirement of being named a development ready designation by MEDC (DRD). Meyers commented that the Township and ordinances operate within the facets of state law. The Development Guide will allow interested developers to easily understand where their proposed project lies. K Meyers indicated that the next step for DRD will be Board and Commission training. The updated ordinances also inform the the Development Guide shared before the meeting. Meyers shared that the ordinance committee rolled stand alone ordinances into the full ordinance framework, solidified some of the existing ordinances, rezones 14 acres currently zoned as light industrial, and set up a system to address complaints. D Hamar asked if a new map with the proposed rezoning was available for review. Meyers responded that it has not been drawn yet. B Waters opened the floor for discussion on the zoning amendments and development guide. M Ploe inquired if an allowance for butterfly gardens had been added. Ploe also asked for clarification of what 60% developed term meant. K

Meyers outlined that the PC will need to recommend the zoning amendments to the Board. After the Board approves, a public hearing will need to be held to gain input on the amendments. Upon conclusion of incorporating public input the Township Board can give final approval. D. Hamar requested a copy of the final draft with zoning maps before holding an approval vote by the PC. Hamar further suggested to remove add from 2.2 and move to section 10.2. The zoning committee was amenable to the edit. B Waters requested that the Zoning Committee meet in the following week to make final edits. Wed. May 13 @ 11 am was set for the meeting. The final draft will be brought to the June 2026 PC meeting.

- b. **Chassell Township Development Guide** Discussed in a.
- c. **Centennial Park Boat Ramp** K Meyers reports that 3 bids were received. An award will be made from within those bids. Meyers affirmed that the new ramp will be on the left side and be adjustable and removable. B Waters mentioned that the first ramp has about 2.5 feet of rubble at the approach and asked if D Palosaari could assess and offer options to address the rubble. Meyers will send the ramp bid information to the PC by email.
- d. **Trailer across from South Entry** A community member expressed concern to the PC regarding a property across US41 from the South Entry Road. D Palosaari indicated that he will touch base with the owner to get some information. B Waters pointed out that there are some properties on the Sturgeon Road that are falling into blight. C Cowell pointed out a property on the Lower Woreham Road that also has blight issues. Cowell inquired if zoning ordinances apply to the entire township or just the town proper? PC indicated that they cover the entire township. B Waters asked if the zoning administrator oversees ordinance infractions. PC indicate yes. K Meyers discussed the township's responsibility for the health and safety of properties and the experiences that neighbors might have. Meyers offered that the current zoning ordinance updating addresses issues such as these.

B Waters asked M Messner for feedback after attending the May PC meeting. Messner replied that it is interesting and shows the challenges of managing in a free market. Messner further commented that he is impressed that a small community like Chassell has made themselves eligible and is participating in the MEDC Development Ready Initiative. Meyers said that it was timely because the initiative is closed to new participants now. D. Palosaari asked about the history of the PC and B Waters gave an overview. Meyers input that the PC volunteers are a working board. The township is so small that volunteers are always needed to move projects forward.

B Waters moved to recommend M Messner for the open PC seat. K Meyers second. All aye. M/C.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

June 4 2026 7 pm Chassell Township Fire Hall

**Adjourn** B. Waters made a motion to adjourn. S. Spahn seconded. All aye. M/C Meeting adjourned at 8:51 pm.

