

6:00 p.m., Monday  
March 7, 2022

MANISTEE BOARD OF COMMISSIONER'S  
415 Third St.  
Manistee, Michigan

## RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

The Recreation Commission is operating remotely and electronically by Zoom under PA 254 of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ❖ Call to Order and Roll Call.
- ❖ Mr. Wayne Beldo, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Recreation Commission Members Present: Wayne Beldo, Margaret Batzer, Erin Secord, Linda Cudney, Devin Wegner, Gary Schwaiger, Eleanor DeYoung, and Robert Schulke

Recreation Commission Members Absent: Bryan Dunlop

Others: Douglas Barry - Michigan DNR, Mark Coe – Benzie Manistee Snowbirds, Mike Szokola – Manistee County Planning Department

- ❖ Approval of the Agenda  
Ms. Batzer moved, seconded by Ms. Secord to approve the March 7, 2022 agenda as presented.  
  
Voting yes: Mr. Beldo, Ms. Batzer, Ms. Secord, Ms. Cudney, Ms. Wegner, Mr. Schwaiger, Ms. DeYoung, and Mr. Schulke
- ❖ Approval of the Minutes  
Ms. Cudney moved, seconded by Ms. Wegner to approve the February 7, 2021 minutes as amended.  
  
Voting yes: Mr. Beldo, Ms. Batzer, Ms. Secord, Ms. Cudney, Ms. Wegner, Mr. Schwaiger, Ms. DeYoung, and Mr. Schulke
- ❖ Public Comment
  - Doug Barry informed the group that a group is still working on a trust fund grant to complete the bridge over Bear Creek North of Kaleva. He noted that the quote last year was \$188,000 and this year it has increased to approximately \$235,000 due to increases in the price of steel. Increased costs are making it difficult to collect a match. He added that last year they applied with a match of 25% (the minimum) and the grant was not awarded. He believes a stronger match would increase chances of being awarded the grant. Doug Barry ended his comment by asking for a letter of support from the Parks and Recreation Commission.
  - Doug Barry added that there are other trust fund grants available. He knows that the



Betsie Valley Trail is applying for one to pave the section from Beulah to Thompsonville. They are seeking a \$300,000 match for a \$2.7 million grant.

- Doug Barry gave a summary on protections for landowners if they have an easement or trail on their property. One is the Recreation Trespass Act gives protections to landowners if the trail is a state designated trail. The second is Governmental Immunity. This applies to volunteers who are performing maintenance on the trail and performing a governmental function as recognized by the county. This provides coverage for gross negligence rather than just negligence.
- Mr. Schwaiger had a question regarding the cost of steel, he wondered if a timber bridge was considered in light of the costs. Doug Barry replied that the steel bridge is a pre-engineered design construct. This saves money because a consultant and designer are not needed. Yes, wood bridges are an option, but more engineering is required, so there is not much of a cost savings.
- A discussion regarding culverts and box culverts ensued. Mr. Beldo commented that bridges are the most favorable option. Doug Barry made some comments on the impact on wildlife.
- Ms. Batzer asked Doug Barry if the grant application was in, what match was needed, and if the match had to be collected before the application was submit. Doug Barry replied that Springdale Township is acting as fiduciary for this application and would meet and vote to formally submit it next week. He said a minimum 26% grant match is needed, but the greater the match, the greater the chance of being awarded the grant. Doug Barry then explained that the application needs to be submit by April 1, then in August you get a letter from the grant coordinator letting you know your status and what you can do to get more points, the Governor will announce the awardees in October, and then you have until the following April to start spending the funds. So, you have until August to increase your match figure.

- ❖ Mr. Batzer made a motion for the Parks and Recreation Commission to submit a formal letter of support for the trust fund grant application, seconded by Mr. Schulke.

Voting yes: Mr. Beldo, Ms. Batzer, Ms. Secord, Ms. Cudney, Ms. Wegner, Mr. Schwaiger, Ms. DeYoung, and Mr. Schulke

- It was decided that Ms. Secord would draft the letter and send it to Mr. Beldo and Ms. Batzer for review before submitting. Ms. Batzer will provide Ms. Secord with a template to work from.
- Ms. Cudney added that the Friends of SMART Trails group will provide a letter of support as well.
- Mr. Beldo commented on the topic of liability and asked if the commission needs to recognize our volunteers for liability purposes, what is our due diligence. Mike Szokola replied that the group should generate a blanket designation & waiver of negligence. However, there is no need to do this now, it can be done down the road when there are volunteer activities.
- Mark Coe commented on the topic of the trust fund grant by adding that the Benzie-



Manistee snowbirds are providing a letter of support and a \$10,000 in kind match for equipment and labor.

❖ Staff Updates

- Mike Szokola provided a staff update. The County wide recreation plan has been turned in to EGLE. Alexandra McBride commented that they are very busy and probably won't be able to look at it until May.

❖ Old Business

- Friends of SMART Trails: Ms. Cudney provided an update that the group met with Tamara Buzwinka for the first strategic planning session on January 27. The group established the phases the planning will take, who the team will be, and established a schedule. They also created a mission statement, which is still to be reviewed. The group will work on a SWOT analysis at the next meeting. They also will establish top 5 priorities and long-term goals. The next meeting will be held Thursday, March 10 at 1:00pm.
- Ms. Cudney also commented that they have been working with Jim Gribble for marketing and media promotion. Jim will provide the group with a bid.
- Mr. Beldo inquired as to the status of the County Grant Writer position. Ms. Batzer replied that personnel met and now there is a job description. Mike Szokola added that he was at the meeting and the topic will be moved to the full board for discussion. They are still determining if this will be a full-time or part-time position.
- Ms. Batzer added that the county board meeting would take place on Tuesday, March 15 at 5:00pm and encouraged public comment.

❖ New Business

- Mark Coe provided the group with an updated regarding a meeting that was previously held at the Benzie-Manistee Snowbirds with the core group of the Friends of SMART Trails to cover a list of topics on trail acquisition and how to go about it.
  - One of the most important things is identifying the trail type, route, what is in the route, who is going to use it, property searches/landowners.
  - Then there is the property owner contact aspect, in person is best, have an elevator speech.
  - Acknowledge and learn about the different lease options you might have, yearly lease, permanent easement, land purchase, etc.
  - Establish your trail maintenance group. Should be well versed in the trail, its needs, tools, and equipment needed.
  - Then the trail development comes in.
- Mark's goal for the meeting was to outline and identify the many steps. He acknowledged that the Friends of SMART Trails group is new whereas the Benzie-Manistee Snowbirds are experienced and willing to help.
- Ms. Cudney asked if there was a list/handout to share with the Friends group. Mark replied yes, he would send it before the next meeting on Thursday.
- Ms. Batzer asked about the possibility of tax abatement for tax abatement for



property owners. She shared with with Jeff Dontz and expects he will follow up with other state legislators.

- Mr. Beldo added that the meeting was appreciated and commented on the value Mark and the Snowbirds provide as a good resource for this trail effort.
- Mr. Schwaiger commented that there are options people could exercise in the purchase of an easement or the exact property, but there's always money typically involved with the option, and this can become complicated depending on how private parcels are aligned.

❖ Other Items

- Ms. Batzer requested that an agenda item be added called "Trail Partners" in addition to public comment for Doug Barry and Mark Coe.
- Ms. Cudney highlighted the recent newspaper article about the \$1,000 check presentation from NOMI Racing to the Friends of SMART Trails. The media exposure and donation itself is a positive for the Friends group.

❖ Adjourn

Mr. Schulke moved, seconded by Ms. Batzer to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Voting yes: Mr. Beldo, Ms. Batzer, Ms. Secord, Ms. Cudney, Ms. Wegner, Mr. Schwaiger, Ms. DeYoung, and Mr. Schulke

The next meeting will be held April 4, 2022, in the County Commissioner's room at 6 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Erin Secord, Recreation Commission Secretary

Date: March 7, 2022