

6:00 p.m., Monday
March 29, 2021

BIG BEAR SPORTSMAN CLUB
8927 Puustinen Road
Kaleva, 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, Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.
- ❖ Ms. Margaret Batzer, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Recreation Commission Members Present: Erin Secord-City of Manistee MI, Sharon Goble-Pleasanton Township MI, Margaret Batzer-City of Manistee MI, Gary Schwaiger-City of Manistee MI, Wayne Beldo-Kaleva MI, Linda Cudney-Copemish MI, Jacque Erdman-Pleasanton Township MI, LaVonne Beebe-Onekama MI, and Devin Wegner-City of Manistee MI

Recreation Commission Members Absent: Robert Schuelke and Dennis Cohoon

Others: Laura Heintzleman MCCF, Mike Szokola County Planning Director, Rob Carson Networks Northwest and Nancy Baker County Planning Department

Wayne Beldo entered the meeting. He resumed his role as Chair.

- ❖ Election of Officers for the Recreation Commission
Mr. Beldo opened the nomination for Chair.
Mr. Schwaiger nominated Mr. Beldo for Chair.
Voting yes for Mr. Beldo: Ms. Cudney, Ms. Erdman, Ms. Secord, Ms. Beebe, Ms. Wegner, Ms. Goble, Ms. Batzer, and Mr. Schwaiger.

Mr. Beldo is Chair for the Recreation Commission.

Mr. Beldo opened the nomination for Vice Chair.
Mr. Schwaiger nominated Ms. Batzer for Vice Chair.
Voting yes for Ms. Batzer: Ms. Cudney, Mr. Beldo, Ms. Erdman, Ms. Secord, Ms. Beebe, Ms. Wegner, Ms. Goble, Ms. Batzer, and Mr. Schwaiger.

Ms. Batzer is Vice Chair for the Recreation Commission.

Mr. Beldo opened the nomination for Secretary.
Ms. Goble nominated Ms. Secord.
Ms. Batzer nominated Ms. Goble
Voting yes for Ms. Goble: Ms. Beebe, Ms. Secord, Ms. Erdman, and Ms. Batzer

Voting yes for Ms. Secord: Ms. Cudney, Mr. Beldo, Ms. Wegner, Ms. Goble, and Mr. Schwaiger.

Ms. Secord is Secretary for the Recreation Commission.

❖ Approval of the Agenda.

Ms. Cudney moved, seconded by Ms. Goble to approve the March 29, 2021 Agenda as printed.

Voting yes: Ms. Wegner, Ms. Beebe, Ms. Secord, Ms. Erdman, Mr. Beldo, Ms. Cudney, Ms. Goble, Ms. Batzer, and Mr. Schwaiger.

❖ Approval of the Minutes

Ms. Batzer moved, seconded by Ms. Goble to approve the February 3, 2020 and March 17, 2021 Minutes as printed.

Voting yes: Mr. Schwaiger, Ms. Goble, Ms. Batzer, Ms. Wegner, Ms. Cudney, Ms. Beebe, Mr. Beldo, Ms. Secord, and Ms. Erdman.

❖ Public Comment

None. It was suggested to place a link for auto meeting notifications to the Friends Group.

❖ Old Business
None

❖ New Business

• County Replacement

Mr. Szokola has replaced Mr. Carson as Manistee County Planning Director. Mr. Carson is now with Networks Northwest (NWNW). Mr. Szokola provided his background.

• Trail Update

Mr. Szokola stated the nonmotorized trail plan has been completed and is available on the County website. There is work to be done regarding the Manistee Lake portions to connect it to the trail plan. The surrounding communities must accept this plan as required to be included in the plan. (Stronach, Eastlake, Manistee, City, Filer)

• MCCF Grant

Mr. Szokola stated due to staffing difficulties the remainder of the grant from the MCCF could not be accepted.

Ms. Heintzelman explained the initial grant of \$25,000 to the County. The foundation is working with the County regarding the balance of the remaining funds. The SMARTrails Friends Group has been established. Trail development is a priority for the foundation.

Mr. Carson gave a grant background. This was to be part of the Manistee Lake nonmotorized plan as the first part of the process and a County-wide use regional trail plan. Inputs from county entities/public were done the summer of 2019. A trail



summit did not occur due to COVID. Things moved forward with the 501c3 and were completed with the IRS. A public assembly cannot occur to refine routes to possibly obtain access across private land. It was impossible to go to private landowners in 2020 to move this process forward. It is not recommended to place trail lines across these properties until proper channels, process and connections can be done with the landowners. One regional trail route was mapped out: Thompsonville to Kemmer Road (Manistee Township). Another trail route goes north from Onekama to Arcadia and connects to Frankfort. This route will require public input. Funds for the remaining grant would cover printing costs, public gatherings, map printing, aerials, and engineering.

- Friends of SMARTrails 501c3

SMARTrails Friends Group is now 501c3 certified. This nonprofit group is now set up. A SMARTrails meeting should occur soon to elect officers. A record of past officers will be investigated.

- Networks Northwest County Rec Plan

The Planning Department was in the process of developing a County-wide Rec Plan for 2021 summer when it was discovered the plan had a short expiring window date. The DNR did not notify the department of this expiring date. The plan was for 5 years which made it good until spring 2021. A request for an extension was not granted. With staffing changes and the large knowledge of the plan not in the office, contact was made to NWNW for their assistance in obtaining additional grants through EGLE.

Mr. Carson stated the end of December work was to coordinate the entities into the original Rec Plan and to bring them on board with the updating process. Fifteen out of twenty-one resolutions from county communities for participation were received and hoping to receive the remaining 6. Each community will receive a document outlining structures of current inventory, maps, goals/objectives. As communities are available, meetings will be scheduled in the next month or 2 to review the initial goals. Communication occurred with the DNR for communities to adjust their requirements for rec goals. A survey will possibly be going out mid-April and be open until June. Work is planned for placing the nonmotorized plan into the document and take the determined trail routes of the Manistee Lake area and the Thompsonville to the City trail route for implementation for trail planning. The DNR would not accept more than 1 plan per community. They would not approve the nonmotorized plan as part of the 5-year Rec Plan. It was suggested to update the plan and have the County include in it as a whole. The nonmotorized plan did not contain all the information necessary for it be an all-encompassing plan for recreation. The County Board approached NWNW to assist the department with updating the County-wide Park and Recreation Plan. For over 6 months the department has not had the ability to do planning as office staff time allows for zoning only. The County Board and County Planning Commission are seeking ways to get planning back into the department as it is so important for the growth of the county. Presently, the Planning Department cannot take on anymore work.

Mr. Szokola stated the cost associated with a plan like this is extremely high. The



County was fortunate to have had Mr. Carson do this trail plan to its present level. He was an extremely great asset to the county plan. A community wishing to do a piece of the trail themselves can apply for a grant if the plan is already included in the Rec Plan. If a trail piece is not included in the plan, the plan needs to be amended to include it. NWNW, as a regional planning agency, can receive Federal planning grants to help support the community part of the organization. NWNW was contacted to assist with the County update. This helps off-set the cost of this large of a planning process. The local units of government were asked to assist with this cost (Townships, \$1,000; Villages, \$500; City, \$1,500; County \$8,000). Significant past staff time was put into preparing the plan which cannot count towards the grant. The Rec Plan is a great investment into the County. It is important to keep the trail plan moving forward. The trail from Thompsonville to Manistee will be included into the update. The DNR has purchased private ownership sections of the trail route. The Snowbirds applied for a grant to fix the Bear Creek bridge. This grant is believed to have been awarded. The trail route from Chief Lake to the Tribe area is going very well. The trail route issues from the Tribe area to Manistee are still being worked on. Once the plan is updated, things can begin to move forward.

- Staffing

The direction from the County Board and the County Planning Commission requires staff to fulfill the County contacts. The department currently does not have the capacity to assist with the Rec Plan. The recommendation is for the Rec Plan Commission and the SMARTrails Friend Group to appeal to the County Board regarding the ability to get planning back into the Planning Department. The County Board's next meeting is Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 9 am. The meeting can be attended by zoom.

- ❖ Adjourn

Ms. Goble moved, seconded by Mr. Schwaiger to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Voting yes: Mr. Beldo, Ms. Cudney, Ms. Secord, Ms. Erdman, Ms. Wegner, Ms. Beebe, Ms. Goble, Mr. Schwaiger and Ms. Batzer

The next meeting will be held the first Monday in May; May 3, 2021 by zoon at 6 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Baker, Recording Secretary for
Erin Secord, Recreation Commission Secretary
Date: March 29, 2021