



6:00 p.m., Monday
May 3, 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 and Roll Call.
- ❖ Mr. Wayne Beldo, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Recreation Commission Members Present: Erin Secord, Sharon Goble, Margaret Batzer, Gary Schwaiger, Wayne Beldo, Linda Cudney, Jacque Erdman, LaVonne Beebe, and Robert Schulke

Recreation Commission Members Absent: Devin Wegner and Dennis Cohoon

Others: Laura Heintzelman MCCF, Mike Szokola County Planning Director, Doug Baker, and Mike Coe Benzie/Manistee Snowbirds and Nancy Baker County Planning Department, Douglas Barry Michigan DNR

- ❖ Approval of the Agenda.
Ms. Goble moved, seconded by Mr. Schulke to approve the May 3, 2021 Agenda as printed.
Voting yes: Ms. Cudney, Ms. Secord, Ms. Beebe, Mr. Beldo, Ms. Erdman, Ms. Batzer, Ms. Goble, Mr. Schulke
- ❖ Approval of the Minutes
Ms. Secord moved, seconded by Ms. Cudney to approve the March 29, 2021 Minutes as printed.
Voting yes: Ms. Cudney, Ms. Secord, Ms. Beebe, Mr. Beldo, Ms. Batzer, Ms. Goble, Mr. Schulke
- ❖ Public Comment
None.
- ❖ Old Business
 - 501c3 Status for Friends Group
Mr. Szokola reported that the Friends of SMART Trails group have established their 501c3 status and Jacque Erdman finished the entity's 2020 taxes. Mike also shared the results of the Friends Group election of officers and asked for any questions or comments. Ms. Erdman shared that Al Taylor could not be present for this meeting, but he does plan to serve the Friends Group.



❖ **New Business**

• **Presentation by the Benzie/Manistee Snowbirds**

Mark Coe presented a trail map that represents trail systems that the snowbirds are working on. He specifically addresses a section of trail that spans from high bridge in Manistee County to Maple City in Leelanau County. The snowbirds have started discussions with the White Pine Trails group. The White Pine Trails group desires a connection to the Lakeshore. Another segment that was discussed was a route from Kaleva to Manistee, this is a priority of the Snowbirds. Mark also discussed the Snowbirds desire for a route through Interlochen to connect into the Grand Traverse Snowmobile Club trail system.

Mark reported that the Snowbirds applied for a grant to construct a bridge over Bear Creek. Unfortunately, they did not get the grant, but they did secure the land. The Snowbirds are moving forward with a trail proposal.

Mark also identified a segment of land that the DNR was to purchase just before the state mandated shutdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purchase would include a 3.5 mile segment of railroad W of Kaleva from 9 Mile Rd. to McMartin, then the next segment is from McLellan to Chief Rd. The Snowbirds are hopeful this sale goes through. The Snowbirds own a parcel containing a mile long segment and they will quit claim deed this parcel to the DNR. Upon completion of the purchase and quit claim process, the DNR would own a majority of right away between Interlochen and down into Manistee County. Mark ended by saying this would connect 23 rural communities.

❖ **Other Business**

• **Networks Northwest Memo**

Mike Szokola read a memo on Rob Carson's behalf as he was unable to attend tonight's meeting. The Networks Northwest Staff have been working to update the county wide recreation plan. 19 of 21 communities have approved resolutions; Dickson, Pleasanton, and Stronach are expected to approve in their next community meetings.

The process for updating the plan includes conducting two meetings with the local units of government in order to solicit information necessary to update individual community sections of the plan. We have completed 6 community meetings as of later this evening, with 3 meetings scheduled so far for the first two weeks in May. We plan on additional meetings to be scheduled over the coming weeks.

A survey was developed that closely mirrored the questions of the original survey distributed back in 2015. Responses are steadily coming in.

Recreation planning documents outside of the existing recreation plan are being broken down into appendices which will be directly linked to the primary recreation plan document. These include Manistee Lake Area and Manistee County Multi-Use Regional Trail Routes.

Next Steps include continuing to meet with local units of government, continue to monitor and spread awareness of the survey, update plan sections for individual communities, and continue communication to the State of Michigan as it pertains to



the document layout.

❖ Other Business

• Planning Department Support

Ms. Batzer shared that the Manistee County Parks and Recreation Commission no longer has Planning Department Support or staff support. Ms. Batzer expressed concern for the ability of this project to move forward without professional support whether that be from the county or contracted. She highlighted the tremendous impact and community support associated with this project. Ms. Batzer recommended that the Manistee County Parks and Recreation Commission contact Networks Northwest formally and independently.

Mike Szokola reported on the current staffing challenges of the Planning Department to explain why they are not able to support the commission at this time. He stated that the department is severely understaffed with 3 new employees with less than 6 months experience. Mike also stressed the large amount of work time and work that needs to go into implementing a trail plan. He expressed that supporting the commission is something they may be able to do again in the future if that is the direction of the Board and the Planning Commission.

Ms. Batzer added that the Planning Department is so busy because they are currently taking on zoning contract work that belongs to the City and the Townships and the result is an end to support for County initiatives such as trail development. She again stressed that in the interim the help of Networks Northwest is needed to keep the trail development project moving forward.

Mr. Beldo clarified that the Manistee County Parks and Recreation Commission cannot formally contract with Networks Northwest. Ms. Batzer added that we would need to recommend it to the Board.

Mike Szokola stressed the importance of the Friends Group beginning fundraising efforts to fund contracts such as these. Ms. Batzer agreed and identified the Minger Grant as an important opportunity.

• Motion

Ms. Batzer moved, seconded by Ms. Goble, that the Manistee County Parks and Recreation Commission make a formal recommendation that the Board seek a contract with Networks Northwest for professional support for trail development activities. Before a vote was called, Laura Heintzelman wanted the commission to be aware that a grant was awarded to Networks Northwest with the understanding that they would be working on the Manistee Lake Trail. She added that their understanding was that the trail from Copemish to Manistee was part of that. Mike Szokola added the recommendation that before contracting with Networks Northwest, the commission figure out what is already commissioned and underway so that we do not pay for work in duplicate.

Ms. Batzer wanted to stress that in contracting Networks Northwest for these services, the Commission is not seeking to spend new monies, but rather to replace services that were lost. All expenses were originally to be incurred internally.

It was decided that Mike Szokola will send a memo with the Commission's comments



and recommendations to the Board.

Voting yes: Ms. Cudney, Ms. Secord, Ms. Beebe, Mr. Beldo, Ms. Batzer, Ms. Goble, Mr. Schulke, Mr. Swaiger

- Friends of SMART Trails

Ms. Erdman spoke on behalf of the Friends Group and shared that members Dave Myer and Al Taylor were under the impression that the Friends Group was membership by invitation only. She sought to clarify that all are invited to partake in the Friends Group and stressed the importance of maintaining a presence/booth at local events this summer. Ms. Erdman also shared she thinks it is important to focus on the most easily obtained section of trail being the Betsie Valley Trail extension.

Laura Heintzelman offered to provide the Friends Group with advice and guidance as they get started.

- Trail Summit

Ms. Batzer called the Commission's attention to the subject of a trails summit. Pre-pandemic, there were plans to hold this event as a means of unveiling the trail plan and engaging potential large donors. At this time, she does not feel we are in a position to move forward with this, but it should remain part of the discussion. Mr. Beldo agreed to make this topic an agenda item.

- ❖ Adjourn

Mr. Schulke moved, seconded by Mr. Schwaiger to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Voting yes: Ms. Cudney, Ms. Secord, Ms. Beebe, Mr. Swaiger, Mr. Beldo, Ms. Batzer, Ms. Goble, Mr. Schulke

The next meeting will be held the first Monday in May; June 7, 2021 by zoom at 6 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Erin Secord". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Erin Secord, Recreation Commission Secretary

Date: May 3, 2021