

Chassell Township Planning Commission
November 7, 2019
Minutes

Attendance: Brian Waters, Pete Torola, Dale Peterson, Dillon Geshel and Keith Meyers

The meeting was called to order by Brian Waters at 7:02 p.m. and pledge of allegiance was given.

Minutes: The minutes from the October 3, 2019 meeting were reviewed. No changes were recommended. Keith moved that the minutes be approved. Pete seconded the motion. Unanimous approval was given.

Public Comment: None

Road Commission Report: Pete reported that the Half Moon ditching was put off due to wet weather. Maybe this winter when not plowing or maybe late spring. It is on their list. Chassell road ratings – there was a cross-up between WUPPDR and Kevin Harju. Brandon Jurmu at the Road Commission didn't know about it. Talked to Steve Rouser with WUPPDR and he didn't know about it either. Both have it on their list now. Creamery Road has been patched and Pete complimented the Road Commission's effort. There is \$16M in proposed FEMA work of which \$5.2M of the county's money has been spent. The county must spend first and submit its bills before it gets paid. A low interest loan from the state and traded federal aid funds to Muskegon Co. will help the county get through this work in five to six years.

Return to Public Comment: Frederica Gast arrived at the meeting and asked to be recognized for public comment to discuss her concern about Dollar General. She asked if there was any public hearing. The Commission advised her that it was not required. She indicated that she would like a better quality of business without pre-packaged food. She feels we are in a food desert and that allowing them in identifies us as economically depressed. It was Frederica's opinion that Dollar General targets economically depressed areas. She was concerned about them selling junk and would like a public hearing on their locating here. Her preference would be that a group be put together to create a co-op. She also believes it would degrade the churches by having alcohol sales in their face, suggesting there may be a better place. Brian and Keith explained that alternative sites were presented to the development firm, including one that was particularly shovel ready, but this is where Dollar General chose to locate. Keith explained there is a responsibility for a business planning to sell alcohol to notify the state's Liquor Control Commission when alcohol sales are going to be within 500 feet of either a church or a school. Those organizations within that distance would have the opportunity to object. Frederica expressed concern for the potential impact on alcoholism. Brian expressed that one more store would likely not make a difference in this regard. Frederica indicated that these were her feelings. Brian summarized that the township was not able to exclude Dollar General. Pete brought up his attendance last weekend at the U.P. Food Summit and discussion there about fresh local food. He indicated that he picked up ideas there for our Master Plan.

Return to Road Commission Report: Dale noted that there was no millage on roads in Portage Township. Dale asked about Lakeshore Drive and Keith noted that it had been patched. Pete investigated whether we can own the bridge. The township received the road from the county. There is a loophole that allows giving road back to townships. There must be a public hearing. If it doesn't go back to the township, it goes to the adjoining property owners. Dale asked if this should be raised with the board. Pete said we should secure it if we want it for the snowmobile trail and we should put up barriers. Brian indicated that Dave Mattson doesn't want to own it. Dale said that Kevin Harju indicated that it belongs to us. It was agreed that we needed a meeting of the minds regarding the status of the bridge. Brian indicated that we should request a meeting with Kevin Harju to make sure it is settled. Dale indicated that he had reviewed the 5-year plan and suggested that we look at updating and re-submitting it next summer. Dale also expressed his concern that the curve was not taken out of Paradise Road with the bridge replacement.

Old Business:

Logo: Steve is continuing to work this at the school.

Chassell Mercantile Update: The judge has not ruled on the motion for default judgment.

Historical Trail Update: Keith shared the poster that had been developed by James Schwaderer regarding the project that he presented at two recent archaeology events. James has donated a full-sized poster that will go to the Heritage Center. We need to get coordinated with Doug on the EGLE application on the wetland permit for the trail's boardwalk. As Hunter King had expressed, it was his recommendation that the permit come from the landowner.

Sturgeon River Engineering Report: The report should be complete about any time now. Keith indicated that he had recently presented to the MTU Ducks Unlimited Club and their president indicated he would complete a letter. Keith indicated that there are 52 members in their chapter and around twenty were at the meeting. Many indicated that they use the Sturgeon River for duck hunting.

Centennial Park Accessibility Report: Brian indicated we will hold off on this until spring.

Old Ice Rink & Warming Building: Brian noted that the board had approved using it for parking. Brian and Keith note that they had looked at the warming hut during the recent fitness trail project and discussed the potential of renovating the facility to function in a similar fashion to the chalet at the county fairgrounds. They discussed the possibility of looking at the next PHF grant round for funding. Keith talked about the possibility of coupling this with a community workout program and discussed the Dog Days concept in place in Lawrence, Kansas for the last 35 years led by a retired police officer/former Marine. We will bring this up with the township board.

Cemetery Church – Dangerous Building: Keith indicated that he had been in contact with Deven Harris about his interest in the church. He indicated that Heath Sundstrom had not reached out to him. He is no longer interested in the building but would consider other options

that become available. It was noted that the building, after previously being buttoned up, is in terrible condition again. Keith volunteered to reach out to Heath Sundstrom to get a written statement from him about the next steps he will be taking now that Deven Harris is no longer interested in the building.

New Business:

Zoning Ordinance Public Hearing Review: Brian reminded everyone that the second hearing on the updated zoning ordinance will occur Monday at 6:00 p.m. at the Fire Hall.

Fitness Trail Review: Brian expressed acknowledgment and thanks to Keith for his coordination of volunteers and time on the fitness trail project. We received excellent coverage by the Daily Mining Gazette on two consecutive days this week. Keith indicated that he established a Chassell Fitness Trail Facebook page where trail users could coordinate meetups and do check-ins when they use the trail. Nearly 50 people have joined it so far. Keith indicated that the Keweenaw Running Group is scheduled to meet up there on Saturday morning with coffee afterwards at Keith and Julie's. Keith also indicated that he prepared an October 31 report to the Portage Health Foundation on the grant activities and budget report.

Fitness Trail Signage: Brian indicated that we are working with the construction trades class at the Chassell Township Schools on creating signage for the fitness trail so trail users will know where to go.

Future Portage Health Foundation Grant Project: Discussed during the ice rink and warming hut discussion.

MTU Surplus Items: Brian passed around the list of surplus items currently available and asked that we look it over for anything we might need for planning commission purposes.

Master Plan: Brian highlighted that we will be working on the master plan with completion of the zoning ordinance. Pete got into more detail about the Food Summit. He indicated that Brad Newman would be someone good to work with from MSU Extension and discussed the possibility of developing a survey to steer us on the master plan component supporting local food development. One element discussed was the development of a cold storage facility for vegetables and fruit. There was also a discussion of having an online marketplace on the website where consumers can make purchases. We discussed bringing in MSU extension and Kevin Store to a future meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m. The next meeting will be December 5th at 7:00 p.m.

