Chassell Township Planning Commission
January 4, 2024
Minutes

Attendance: Brian Waters, Doug Hamar, Dan Palosaari (by phone for presentation), Steve Spahn, TJ Palosaari, Rich Smith, and Keith Meyers. Absent: Dale Peterson. Guests: James and John Marusich (both by phone for presentation) and Lynn Gierke

Brian convened the meeting at 7:02 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Agenda: Doug moved acceptance of the agenda. Brian provided the second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Brian moved the Chassell Mercantile Preliminary Design Concept Review from New Business to first on the agenda. James and John Marusich and Dan Palosaari were connected by phone into the meeting. James briefed the Planning Commission on the design concept that had been forwarded to the commission members ahead of the meeting. As background, James noted their initial visit in April 2023 looking to maximize the site with a restaurant element facing US 41. Sixteen conceptual layouts were produced with numbers of units as low as fourteen and as high as twenty-six. The preliminary design concept settled on twenty-two. There are twenty-nine parking spaces on the ground level with thirteen of those covered with the entrance on 4th Street to maximize the commercial space. Jeff Ratcliffe with the Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance is helping out with the pro forma to go to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for assistance which could be up to $1.4 million. Clean-up of the site will likely be over $100,000 and help with this could come from the county brownfield loan program. The building would have a brick exterior, three-story, thirty-six feet high, with a flat roof with the plan to incorporate Finnish architectural concepts. Spring to early summer construction is projected. There is definite interest in the commercial space. It was noted that the Zoning Board of Review has already approved variances on the rear yard setback and the multi-family nature of the project. Discussion with the Commission focused on an additional variance related to parking. John Marusich discussed the move with downstate zoning ordinances that now call for two spaces for two-bedroom units and one space for one-bedroom units. The current zoning ordinance calls for two spaces per unit, but the Commission members were open to pursuing the approach discussed by John. Dan suggested the possibility of a long-term lease with the township for ten to fifteen spaces in the southwest corner of Centennial Park. To develop this space a survey would be needed to determine the boundary to the DNR rail-trail. It was suggested that contact be made with Dan Dowdy and Jeff Kakuk with the DNR.

Minutes: Brian moved approval of the December 2023 minutes. Doug provided the second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Road Commission Report: No Report

Capital Improvement Committee Report: The DPW staff has identified redundancy in the inventory. Lynn will get us an updated report.

Recreation Facility Issues: It was discussed that the garage next to the pavilion is used for storage of pavilion related items like the boards for the ice rink (not DPW vehicles)

Old Business:

a. **Snowmobile Trail Update:** Brian will get with Barb McEwen with the Baraga County Convention and Visitors Bureau about Dave Mattson's available to clear trees.
b. **Centennial Park Engineering Study:** We will ask Chris Holmes to brief us at the February meeting.
c. **Future DNR Grant for Launch Site Amenities:** Keith reported that he worked with Lynn Gierke on getting out the 30-day advance notice for the public hearing on February 8th at 6:00 p.m. to gain public comments for the project. Keith is pulling together the necessary ownership information and boundary map. He will also be checking with UPEA for an off-the-shelf vault toilet design.
d. **Bridges Out of Poverty:** No report.
e. **Old Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and adjoining property RFP:** Raasios are still working other priorities, so nothing new to report except that the properties continue to be listed. It was discussed that additional measures should be taken to improve taping off the property.
f. **Portage Paddle Sports:** The Recreation Committee met with Branden Jacques just ahead of this evening's meeting. Brendan had expressed concern about insurance and emergency response. He reiterated his need for ice cream sales. We discussed trailer/pick-ups by appointment only. Staffing is his biggest concern. We discussed signage about by appointment only with twelve hours prior notice. We discussed the possibility of a food truck. He indicated these start at $50,000. He noted that they are doing forty-five ice creams and sixteen gelatos at Kestner Park which need 4' to 5' x 2'refriderated space and storage space as well.
g. **Water Trails:** Keith is continuing to work on the proposal and incorporating Baraga County through the Baraga County Convention and Visitors Bureau which plans to submit a recreation grant proposal this spring for a launch below Otter Lake.
h. **Bark Park/Historic Trail:** Lynn will be getting with Industrial Graphics on the status of the signage.
i. **DNR SPARK Grant:** We met last week with UPEA on the restroom renovation. The Township Board approved UPEA as the prime professional at its December meeting. Keith and Lynn submitted the required quarterly report on December 23rd, and we are providing follow up on the boundary map.
j. **Baraga/Chassell Trail Project Collaboration:** Keith followed up with Jeff Ratcliffe on the lack of response from Andy Powers with MDOT. Jeff will follow up with him. Dan Robillard is interested in proposing on the rail removal per Barb McEwen. Brian indicated that he would call Barb about the chainsawing, and Daniel volunteered to help.
k. **Centennial Park Rules Sign Update:** Discussion centered on no bikes on boardwalks and overnight parking by permit only. Lynn provided the updated draft which includes:

    1) Park Hours 5 a.m. – 11 p.m.
    2) Dogs should be leashed.
    3) Vehicles only permitted on paved surfaces.

4) No overnight parking or camping.
5) No bikes on boardwalk or dock.
6) Overnight parking by permit only.

l. **Long & Short-Term Rental Registration Form:** Brian will send out the updated form.

New Business:

a. **Chassell Mercantile Preliminary Design Concept Review:** presentation made earlier in the agenda.
b. **Zoning Committee Report:** No report
c. **5-Year Recreation Plan Submission:** Lynn and Keith got it submitted after the Township Board approved the required resolution at its December meeting.
d. **DNR Trust Fund Grant Public Hearing:** Will take place on February 8th at 6:00 p.m. ahead of the Planning Commission meeting. Lynn got the notice in the Gazette and Keith posted it on the Township's Facebook page.

Brian moved for adjournment. Keith provided the second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Next meeting date: February 8, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.