

Chassell Township Planning Commission
May 9, 2024
Minutes

Attendance: Brian Waters, Doug Hamar, Steve Spahn, Dan Palosaari, TJ Palosaari, and Keith Meyers. Absent: Dale Peterson, Daniel Niemela, and Rich Smith. Guests: Lynn Gierke and Brett Palosaari

Brian convened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Brian moved approval of the agenda. Steve provided the second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Doug moved approval of the April minutes. Steve provided the second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Comments: Keith advised the commission that Chassell Historical Organization is moving forward with installing stair-climbing units in the Chassell Heritage Center from the entrance to the second floor and from the entrance to the basement. The project will cost approximately \$32,000 and will be paid for with contributions made over the last several years. Keith indicated that he had secured an \$8,000 grant from the Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission which will go toward a wiring and lighting retrofitting project. This project will also be supported by \$3,600 from the April 20th Chassell Benefit Breakfast put on by the VFW, VFW Auxiliary, and the Chassell Lions Club. Keweenaw Power & Lite will do the work during June. Back Mobilities out of Escanaba will install the stairlifts during June or early July depending on when the equipment comes in.

Road Commission Report and 5-Year Road Plan Discussion: No report.

Capital Improvement Committee Report: No report.

Recreation Committee Report: Brian and Keith reported on the meeting held with Northern Natural Gas and SEMCO about the possibility of utilizing their easements for a snowmobile trail. If appropriate steps are taken to protect the assets and if the trail is not on top of the gas line, approval may be possible with landowner approval. Keith indicated that he spoken to Steve Palosaari about the possibility of allowing use of the easement on his property and he was not opposed. We will need to talk to the other landowners. Lease payments for use of easements and funding for fences and gates are available through the MDNR.

Recreation Facilities Issues: Keith reported that at last month's Township Board meeting the DPW staff discussed needed improvements to the basketball court, volleyball court, beach, and the need for a toddler swing. The board charged them with seeking estimates.

Old Business:

- a. **Chassell Mercantile Update:** Dan reported that the asbestos survey came back negative on the house adjoining the Mercantile site. Construction drawings are being developed and costed. Dan expressed concern about current interest rates. Dan also met with Dan Dowdy from Baraga State Park who oversees the Rail-Trail about the development of parking spaces in the southwest corner of the lot. Dan Dowdy indicated that they are interested in providing a permanent easement to the township from the Pike River Bridge to the south end of Lakeshore Drive. Keith asked Dan about the gate that is lying alongside the trail toward the north end of the park. Dan indicated that he believed it belonged to the township.
- b. **Snowmobile Trail Update:** Covered during the Recreation Committee report.
- c. **Centennial Park Engineering Study:** Chris Holmes was unable to attend the meeting.
- d. **Old Holy Trinity Lutheran Church:** Keith reported that Jeff Ratcliffe from KEDA indicates that demolition will occur in late summer/early fall. A couple of the other properties to be included in the RFP are still going through foreclosure. Jeff met onsite with Jason Hulkonen who is looking at doing a tri-plex. The house on the second site needs to be demolished. Jason had been looking at fixing it up into two units, but the house is too far gone. Jeff is waiting to hear back from Jason.
- e. **Portage Paddle Sports:** Nothing new.
- f. **Sturgeon River Launch:** The Natural Resources Trust Fund and Recreation Passport grant proposals were deemed to be administratively complete and are being scored by the MDNR. The plan is for the launch to go in the water next Monday. Lowell Miller from Feighner Dock plans to be out in three weeks to add the features that still needed to be added to the launch, including the ADA transfer, perimeter bumpers, and rails.
- g. **Water Trails Program Handbook Draft:** Keith is waiting for a response from Brad Barnett about leveraging the already existing Keweenaw Water Trail.
- h. **DNR Spark Grant Project Schedule:** The sidewalk project is out for bid, and we are expecting approval to proceed on the bidding of the waterfront boardwalk about any time. Chris Holmes has drawings for us to discuss on the restroom project.
- i. **Baraga/Chassell Trail Project Collaboration:** We are still waiting for word from the Attorney General's office through MDOT regarding the rail pulling. We are still waiting for a reaction from MDNR about helping with the brushing. Keith has left a message with Jeff Kakuk about this.
- j. **Veterans Banners:** Doug will reach out to Donna Byykkonen.
- k. **CD# Boat Cleaning System:** Sigrid Resh was not successful in securing the grant so this project will be shelved.
- l. **Kick Sled Track on Pike Bay:** We are still looking for a vehicle to pull the drag. Brian and I will be meeting with Marco to discuss the involvement of the construction trades class and looking to involve Corey Soumis from the ISD.
- m. **Visit Keweenaw Destination Grant Opportunity:** We are still waiting for a decision.
- n. **Historic Trail Buckthorn Project:** The next round of the remediation is to be scheduled by Sigrid. It was discussed that diesel fuel on a hay bale might be the way to get the cut buckthorn pile to burn. This will need to be brought to Curt's attention.
- o. **Hamar Creek Restoration:** We are waiting on Casey Huckens for the next steps.
- p. **Copper Shores Grant:** Discussion was supposed to be made by May 7th. No word yet.

- q. **Blight Mitigation Fund:** Brian discussed a potential fund raiser during the Strawberry Festival in the form of 50/50 raffle. A potentially dangerous house was discussed, but more investigation is needed.
- r. **Sigma Rho Fraternity Request:** Brian and Keith discussed their research into the topic and the potential risk of tripping an arbitrary and capricious standard with moving forward with the request. Keith talked to Hancock City Manager, Mary Babcock, who indicated no such agreement exists with the fraternity in Hancock.

New Business

- a. **Rent-Fun Program:** Brian shared information about this kayak and paddleboard vending system that would involve a \$29,000 investment that could break even in three to five years. This involves a five-year agreement and a 50/50 revenue share with the company. If we re-up the agreement after the end of the agreement there is no additional payment. We would just maintain the 50/50 revenue share.
- b. **Opportunity for Treats:** The commission discussed the idea of the township acquiring the former Treats/Lacey's Curbside Bistro and utilizing it as a potential entrance to the park where launch fees could be collected. The price is understood to be around \$180,000 which was agreed to be too high for this purpose.
- c. **Cemetery Mapping:** Doug mentioned the idea of acquiring mapping software to digitize the cemetery plots. The cost falls in the range of \$3,000 to \$5,000. Keith will discuss this with Chassell Historical Organization Curator Mat Moore.
- d. **Cemetery Trees:** These are being addressed through a contract entered into by the township.
- e. **Youth Bike Trail at Centennial Park/Bark Park:** This idea was discussed to help promote the popular activity of mountain biking with the possibility of cutting a four-foot trail through the area by the Bark Park.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 p.m.