

Chassell Township Planning Commission
April 4, 2024
Minutes

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

Brian convened the meeting at 7:12 p.m. (late start due the Remote Worker Networking Event running over) and the Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Agenda: Keith added Senator Peters Congressionally Directed Spending and AEG/Highline. Keith moved for approval of the updated agenda. Brian provided a second to the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Minutes: Brian provided a clarification under Old Business f) and moved approval of the minutes with that modification. Rich provided a second to the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Comment: Brian welcomed Aden and Grayson who are the President and Vice-President from Sigma Rho Fraternity. Grayson asked about the possibility of Sigma Rho being the exclusive fraternity to be allowed to locate in Chassell and pointed to Hancock where they understand that Phi Kappa Tau has such an agreement. Aden indicated that Sigma Rho is a local fraternity without a national organization to back it up, so they believe they would be at a competitive disadvantage during rush. Aden indicated that their house has twelve rooms and can have up to twenty-four members living there. Currently, they have fifteen members living there. Keith indicated that he will be in a meeting with Hancock City Manager Mary Babcock next week and will talk to her about whether such an agreement exists with Phi Kappa Tau. Aden and Grayson also expressed a willingness to help maintain the ice rink at the pavilion in exchange for receiving an hour for broomball practice. Lynn indicated that this could be looked into as the community currently floods the rink. Brian thanked Aden and Grayson for meeting with the commission and that we would follow up with them.

Keith then briefed the Commission on the March 26th meeting that Brian, Doug, Eric Zadorecky, and he had with Casey Huckins to discuss a potential brook trout restoration project on Hamar Creek. This meeting occurred on site starting at the Post Office. Casey expressed a strong interest in taking this project on with his students as there appears to be an opportunity to clean up the streambed to enhance brook trout spawning.

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

Capital Improvement Committee Report: Lynn will forward information to Brian. The committee was scheduled to meet at 6 p.m. on the Monday ahead of the next Planning Commission meeting.

Recreation Committee Report: No report

Recreation Facility Issues: None reported.

Old Business:

- a. **Chassell Mercantile Update:** The Zoning Board of Appeals will be meeting to consider the parking variance. Dan indicated that the site clean-up will take place first and that he needs an asbestos report on the other house. Dan will be reaching out to Dan Dowdy at the MDNR about parking along the grade. The width of the right-of-way needs to be determined. Brian mentioned that he had spoken to Ron Gray about the possibility of 7 to 8 spaces on his property along 4th Street. Brian also shared parking tags with Dan from the company he used when he was at the hotel.
- b. **Snowmobile Trail Update:** Nothing new, but we need to discuss the route to the intersection of the Cote and Upper Worham Roads at the next meeting.
- c. **Centennial Park Engineering Study:** Chris is on vacation. His commitment was to wrap this up after the plans and specifications went out on the waterfront boardwalk and the ADA accessible walkway. It was noted that there is strong interest in the boat ramp parking area. We will press for a presentation at our next meeting.
- d. **Bridges Out of Poverty:** The board approved the Blight Mitigation Fund at its meeting last month. Keith reported that he had submitted a Copper Shores Community Health Foundation small grant proposal for \$2,500 which would come to us if we get \$2,500 in contributions to the fund.
- e. **Old Holy Trinity Lutheran Church:** The board approved \$9,000 toward the demolition as a match to the County to address the \$41,000 cost of demolition and clean up.
- f. **Portage Paddle Sports:** Brian and Keith met at the park to review the outdoor restrooms and they can see how a remodel might work, but we need to meet with Brendan to get his reaction.
- g. **Sturgeon River Launch:** The Board approved going forward with \$15,000 of recreation millage funding this year and \$15,000 of recreation millage funding next year to meet the 25% match requirement for the proposed grant. Keith reported that he completed the narratives for both the Natural Resources Trust Fund and Recreation Passport Grant RFPs then worked with Lynn Gierke to get it all into MiGrants. This involved ten hours on just Friday and Saturday alone. Keith reported that he and Chris Holmes met with representatives of the disability community, and they provided valuable input on steps needed to meet universal accessibility. Jen Schaud provided a detailed ADA accessibility analysis of the site. Letters of support came from the Keweenaw Paddle Club, the Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance, Visit Keweenaw, Jen Schaud, and individuals. Keith noted that each proposal seeks \$90,000 which would fund a vault toilet, parking, entrance improvement, and accessibility improvement. We have been notified by the MDNR that our proposals were administratively complete which means they will be scored, will have a site visit by the MDNR, and we will have the opportunity to further improve our proposals before award decisions are made this fall.
- h. **Water Trails Recognition:** Brian talked with Barb McEwen, and we will be meeting with the Baraga County Convention and Visitors Bureau later this month to move this forward. Keith indicated that he has also discussed this with Brad Barnett with Visit

Keweenaw, and he suggested that we fold this in with the existing Keweenaw Waterway Water Trail.

- i. DNR Spark Grant Project Schedule:** Keith reviewed the response provided to the DNR in the recent quarterly report which included the following: “After bringing U.P. Engineers and Architects on board as the Prime Professional through a competitive process, the last three months have been focused on the completion of plans and specifications for the waterfront boardwalk and the ADA accessible walkway between the pavilion and the waterfront. As plan designs were developed by UPEA they were shared with Sue Anderson with the Superior Alliance for Independent Living (SAIL) to gain her input to make sure the plan designs meet our goal of universal accessibility. Sue provided input directly to UPEA. Additionally, the plan designs for the ADA accessible walkway were shared with the leadership of the Chassell Lions Club which is an important funding partner on this portion of the project. They also provided input to UPEA that was incorporated into the plan designs. Once the key stakeholders were in agreement about the plan designs, our Prime Professional submitted the plan designs and specifications to the MDNR for approval on February 27, 2024. We are hopeful about receiving approval soon as contractor interest is currently high, and it is our desire to get these two large deliverables within the overall project completed ahead of this summer's Strawberry Festival. We have also met with UPEA's architect on the design for the pavilion restrooms renovation. We recently learned that construction inflation may have a significant impact on this part of the project, and we plan to meet soon with UPEA to discuss value engineering opportunities so we can meet the expected outcomes within budget. On March 7th, the township and the Prime Professional met with Jerry Wuorenmaa from the Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region (WUPPDR) to discuss assistance WUPPDR can provide with grant compliance responsibilities toward which they have indicated they can provide two hundred hours of support.” The report went on as follows: “Work to be completed includes bidding and construction of the waterfront boardwalk and ADA accessible walkway which is expected to take place this spring. Work to be completed on the restrooms’ renovation includes agreement on the plan designs, then submission of the plan designs and specifications to the MDNR for approval, followed by bidding and construction which we hope to complete before the start of the pavilion rental season. If it is clear that this deliverable cannot be completed before the pavilion rental season, the construction of this deliverable will be deferred until fall of this year. Plan designs will be developed for the adjustable boat ramp dock, ice rink boards, and pavilion curtains later this spring with submission of the plan designs and specifications to the MDNR for approval this summer, with bidding and construction to take place by this coming fall.”
- j. Baraga/Chassell Trail Project Collaboration:** We are still waiting on the Attorney General’s opinion on the pulling of the rails, but we have offered Chassell assistance to both the MDNR and MDOT to brush the corridor through Jeff Ratcliffe with the Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance.
- k. Veterans Banners:** It was noted that we have nineteen lamp posts to work with and that these cannot be up year-round.
- l. CD3 Boat Cleaning System:** Nothing new. We are waiting for word about the grant.
- m. Kick Sled/Skating Track on Pike Bay:** We need to find a small vehicle to which we can attach the tracks to pull the drag. We will also need to follow up with Marco Guidotti and

Corey Soumis ahead of the next school year about having students produce the kick sleds.

- n. **Visit Keweenaw Destination Grant Opportunity:** Keith reported that he wrote and submitted a \$2,750 proposal to Visit Keweenaw for a two-sided entrance sign like the Centennial Park sign for the US 41 entrance to the Kayak Launch Site. Keith committed to provide the match for this grant to honor his father who passed away in February.
- o. **Historic Trail Buckthorn Project:** At last month's Township Board meeting, Grayson from Sigma Rho volunteered the fraternity to help at the Buckthorn Bash on March 21st. They came out in large numbers along with Sigrid Resh from the Keweenaw Invasive Species Management Area (KISMA), applied ecology students from MTU, and the Chassell Township Schools 4th graders. Nearly four hours was spent cutting and hauling out the buckthorn which was unfortunately too green to burn at this time. More events are planned to be scheduled.
- p. **Hamar Creek Restoration Project:** See public comments.

New Business:

- a. **Copper Shores Community Health Foundation Grant:** Covered under Bridges Out of Poverty under Old Business d).
- b. **Blight Mitigation Fund – Raffle and/or Fund Raiser:** Brian brought this up as an idea to help provide seed money for the fund. Lynn suggested talking with VFW as a partner. Setting up a table for sales at the Strawberry Festival was discussed. This would be a terrific way to create community awareness about the fund.
- c. **Senator Peters Congressionally Directed Spending:** Keith and Lynn worked together with Chris Holmes to put together a \$1.9 million proposal for a new sewage lagoon along with letters of support.
- d. **Atlantic Engineering Group (AEG)/Highline:** This is the organization that won the RDOF auction to provide high-speed broadband to the portion of the township not covered by either Baraga Telephone or Spectrum. Keith invited their U.P. leader, Bruce Moore, to tonight's remote worker networking event. He accepted Keith's LinkedIn connection request but did not respond to his message inviting him to tonight's event. Keith will continue to reach out to Bruce to get a timeline from him on completing their high-speed build out in the township.

Brian moved for adjournment with a second from Steve. The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 p.m.