

**Chassell Township Planning Commission**  
**August 8, 2024**  
**Minutes**

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

Brian convened the meeting at 6:59 p.m. and the pledge of allegiance was given.

**Agenda:** Brian moved approval of the agenda. Keith supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Reading and Approval of Minutes:** One correction was made to Old Business C. With that change, Brian moved that the minutes be approved as amended. Keith supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Public Comment:** Keith discussed the installation of the stair-climbing units at the Chassell Heritage Center that occurred in July and that Keweenaw Power & Lite is still working on the wiring and lighting retrofit project. He noted that the auditorium is already complete, and he welcomed all present to attend the remaining Thursday evening programs through the end of August. Braden Archambeau from the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Donna Bykkonen from the VFW Auxiliary shared the new 5' tall veterans banners. There was discussion about the desire to see these on the light poles in the downtown. There appear to be issues with the ability to fit these on the poles as well as with risk on the US 41 side being too close to the road. This will be looked at more closely. Additional options for placement include utility poles, the veterans park, and the triangle where the Chassell sign is located. Keith also mentioned a discussion he had with a couple of residents at the planning commission table at the Strawberry Festival who are interested in selling coffee/food from a trailer. This could be an opportunity for kayak and paddleboard rentals as well as a place for boat launch fees to be collected.

**Road Commission Report and 5-Year Road Plan Discussion:** Dale reported that FEMA has not paid the Houghton County Road Commission for four years now. There are no projects beyond routine maintenance. 2025 is awaiting proposal which will include the 4<sup>th</sup> Street re-paving. Dale noted that that last winter's snow reported to the state dropped to 154.9 inches from 291.38 inches the year before. This is what the state bases its funding for snow removal. Dale noted that he asked Kevin Harju about why they do not give the pledge of allegiance before their meetings. Even though he is stepping down from the planning commission after tonight's meeting, Dale indicated a willingness to continue attending Houghton County Road Commission meetings. Brian gladly accepted this offer. Dale expressed his pride for having served on the commission. He suggested sharing with the taxpayers the many accomplishments and projects completed by the commission as he believes the average taxpayer is not aware of what we have done. He suggested a one-pager detailing these that could go out with the winter tax bill. Dale emphasized the importance of the 5-Year Road Plan as a key to our relationship with the Houghton County Road Commission. Dale pointed out our road millage and how other

townships like Portage are following our lead. Brian expressed appreciation for everything Dale has done, and the other commission members echoed these thanks.

**Capital Improvements:** Doug passed out a highlighted asset list pointing out duplication and suggested that we plan to meet before our next meeting.

**Recreation Committee Report:** The committee met on August 5, 2024. Brian reported that an agreement had been reached on the location of the pickleball courts which will be to the north of the playground. It was discussed that the committee should set up a meeting with Jim Tervo to discuss assistance he may need with the ski trails.

**Recreation Facility Issues:** Keith reported that Dorthey and Millie had made him aware of a dead tree on the third base side of Misslitz Field that needed to come down. Keith will be securing bids. The raft has come loose from its anchor at the beach and is currently out of the water. A diver will be needed to find the anchor. The Bark Park fence has a gap underneath it due to sawdust settling. A “No Diving” sign has been ordered for the kayak launch.

#### **Old Business:**

- a. **Chassell Mercantile Update:** There will be a meeting at 10:00 a.m. tomorrow to discuss the 4<sup>th</sup> Street Stormwater project. Chris Holmes will explain this to the DNR. The township is looking at entering into an agreement with the DNR to takeover maintenance of the trail between the Pike River Bridge and Lakeshore Drive (and possibly to the township border with Portage Township). This will provide important flexibility to address brushing and particularly with the parking we seek to establish at the south end of the park to support the Chassell Mercantile project. Keith moved that the planning commission recommend to the township board that it review the DNR maintenance agreement and make a recommendation to the board regarding approval. Brian supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously. Mat Moore with the Chassell Historical Organization is helping pull together historical information on the Chassell Mercantile that will be provided to the MEDC. Doug offered to provide contact information for Jean Funk, who is 98 years old, who might be able to help with our questions about years of operation.
- b. **Snowmobile Trail Update:** Keith reported that Jeff Kakuk from the DNR is putting together talking points for discussion with landowners on easement payments and other supports for fencing and gates. Once we have these, we can discuss how we will handle contacts with landowners.
- c. **Centennial Park Engineering Study:** As noted earlier by Brian, the pickleball courts will go in to the north of the playground.
- d. **Old Holy Trinity Lutheran Church:** Keith reported that Jeff Ratcliffe has indicated that the RFP for the clean up is about to go out. Keith answered additional questions from Jeff about the site this past week. It was noted that two big stumps have now turned up at the site in addition to the engines.
- e. **Sturgeon River Launch:** Keith passed out an email from Merrie Carlock that she sent after her site visit related to the Natural Resources Trust Fund and Recreation Passport grant proposals. The ADA features are paramount. We will be receiving the scores soon

and can update our proposals during September. Keith also brought up the need to get a mailbox where we can keep a logbook to collect data from those utilizing the site. Keith moved that we recommend to the board that we acquire a mailbox to be installed at the launch site for this purpose. Rich supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

- f. **Kick Sled Track on Pike Bay:** Keith will reach out to Corey Soumis and Marco Guidotti to coordinate a discussion with the Recreation Committee. During this discussion, the commission came back to the kayak launch and Brian volunteered to set up a trail-cam to also help us with assessing activity at the site.
- g. **DNR Spark Grant Project Schedule:** The deadline for proposals for the waterfront boardwalk has been pushed to August 27<sup>th</sup>. DP Construction will start work soon on the sidewalk. DP is waiting on a contract out of UPEA.
- h. **Baraga/Chassell Trail Project Collaboration:** Keith has reached out to Ron Yesney at the DNR for a status on next steps.
- i. **Veterans Banners:** Addressed during public comment.
- j. **Visit Keweenaw Destination Development Grant:** Keith is working with UPEA on the needed sign permit from MDOT. The sign must be thirty feet from the white line. The design is with Industrial Graphics, and they will print and install it once we have the permit.
- k. **Historic Trail Buckthorn Project:** Sigrid Resh from KISMA had a group out on July 24<sup>th</sup> to do follow up work.
- l. **Hamar Creek Restoration Project:** Keith has emailed Casey Huckens at MTU for an update and we are still hoping for a project this fall.
- m. **Blight Mitigation Fund:** Visitors to the planning commission table at the Strawberry Festival took our one-pager about the program and envelopes to submit contributions. Keith indicated that he and his wife Julie will be contributing \$500 to the fund. Keith went on to indicate that he would work on a promotion for the Facebook page to be discussed at the next meeting.
- n. **Cemetery Mapping:** This effort is underway. We will also talk with James Juip at MTU about recording the Chassell Cemetery.
- o. **Cemetery Trees:** The Go Fund Me has not gone forward. The stump grinding is done. There was a discussion about the potential involvement of cemetery landscapers. Doug suggested looking at what other local units of government are doing.
- p. **Rail-Trail Priorities:** Discussed in part during earlier Chassell Mercantile conversation. Additionally, no response yet from Dan Dowdy. The board wants pros and cons for taking over maintenance from the DNR. The biggest pro is that doing so would create eligibility for grants that the DNR cannot get when they have responsibility for the trail's care. We will not own it. We have learned in this process that everyone on Lakeshore Drive who has built structures between the grade and Lakeshore Drive is trespassing. We will need to find out how we need to deal with that if we take it over. Trespassing on the right-of-way is currently also an issue in both Dollar Bay and Hancock according to Jeff Kakuk that they will have to deal with in those communities.
- q. **Mountain Bike Trail:** No report.
- r. **Screening Definition:** No report.

**New Business:**

- a. Commission Member Letters of Interest:** Steve Spahn and TJ Palosaari wish to continue serving. Brian moved that Steve and TJ be recommended to the board at its meeting next week. Doug supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.
- b. Pickleball Courts Location:** This was addressed during the Recreation Committee report.
- c. Boardwalk RFP:** This was addressed during Old Business g.
- d. Notifying Residents in case of Emergency:** Pursuing notification through a text list was discussed given that many residents do not use social media. This would be helpful during emergency situations like the recent boil order.

Brian moved that the meeting be adjourned. Steve provided the second. The motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

**Next Meeting Date – September 5, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.**