

Chassell Township Planning Commission
June 6, 2024
Minutes

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

Brian convened the meeting at 7:01 p.m. and the pledge of allegiance was given.

Agenda: Brian moved that Marinette Street clean-up be added. Rich supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Minutes: TJ moved approval of the May minutes. Daniel supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Comment: Brett Palosaari asked to have Mountain Bike Trails added to the 5-Year Recreation Plan. Brett believes the terrain on and around the Chassell Trails would work. Easements would need to be looked at. Brett will put ideas together. TJ offered support. Keith discussed recent trail development activities at the Hancock Trails Club. TJ discussed efforts that have taken place in Columbus, Ohio, where it helped clean up a park and shuttle services offered. Naomi Lukema responded to our call for rail-trail priorities and asked that thimbleberry bushes not be cut back on the trail. The Commission will pass this along to Dan Dowdy. She also discussed the need for cautions at crossings. The history of the trail for motorized use was discussed, specifically that by order of the director of the DNR the trail is only motorized for snowmobiles as an ungroomed trail and there is no ORV use on the trail. This led to a discussion about e-bikes and that only class-1 e-bikes are allowed by the DNR. Rich asked about assisted 3-wheelers. Anything that would be within class-1 would be okay, but the assumption is anything beyond this would not. We will need to get additional guidance on this from Dan Dowdy. There was additional discussion by Brett and TJ regarding developing an easier mountain bike trail near the ballpark (Misslitz Field) that could be a starting point for kids. Keith discussed the stair-climbing units that will be installed in the Chassell Heritage Center to provide for greater accessibility.

Road Commission Report and 5-Year Road Plan Discussion: Keith discussed a recent Creamery Road incident where a pothole resulted in damage to a vehicle, but this occurred as the potholes were being filled on the road.

Capital Improvement Committee Report: No report.

Recreation Committee Report: The committee recommends moving forward with acquiring a toddler swing from Game Time that DPW employee Craig Austin had brought to our attention from resident feedback. Keith moved recommending the acquisition of the toddler swing to the township board. Brian supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously. The committee talked with Barb McEwen from Baraga County. She talked with the

committee about the Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant purchase of land along the Sturgeon River below Tibbets Falls that will be developed for recreation purposes. The committee discussed the possibility of developing kayak launches below Otter Lake and M-38. Barb also noted that camping sites will be coming to Point Abbaye. We will keep Barb apprised on developments regarding the rail corridor between Chassell and Arnheim. Brian and Keith may go down to present to the Baraga County Commission.

Recreation Facilities Issues: The need for a “no diving” sign at the kayak launch was discussed and the commission will pursue this.

Old Business:

- a. **Chassell Mercantile Update:** On May 23rd., the Zoning Board of Appeals unanimously approved the variances requested for the project, including on parking spaces (one space per one-bedroom apartment and two spaces per two-bedroom apartment and four employee parking spaces off-site).
- b. **Snowmobile Trail Update:** Gearing up for landowner outreach. Lease payments for easements are still available to landowners providing easements for snowmobile trails per Jeff Kakuk from the DNR.
- c. **Centennial Park Engineering Study:** No report.
- d. **Old Holy Trinity Lutheran Church:** An environmental firm is doing outreach in preparation for demolition. We are sharing our previous environmental assessment.
- e. **Sturgeon River Launch:** The launch went in the river last Friday, May 31st. Keith has emailed Lowell Miller asking when he will be out to add the remaining equipment.
- f. **Kick Sled Track on Pike Bay:** Steve has indicated that he will provide the vehicle that Dave’s tracks will be added to in order to pull the drag for grooming. There is work needed on the vehicle. We will contact the ISD to see if they can help with its repair.
- g. **Youth Bike Trail at Centennial Park/Bark Park:** Based on the earlier input from Brett Palosaari, we will shift the focus of the trail’s location to the area west of the baseball field.
- h. **Water Trail:** Brad Barnett with Visit Keweenaw indicated to Keith that the program went from the DNR to a non-profit organization. Keith will be setting up a meeting with Brad to discuss next steps.
- i. **DNR Spark Grant Project Schedule:** The sidewalk project has been awarded to DP Construction with work to be performed after the Strawberry Festival. Merrie Carlock at the DNR has indicated that the plans and specifications for the waterfront boardwalk project should be approved the DNR very shortly. Brian, Lynn, and Keith met with Chris Holmes at UPEA on May 24th to discuss the ADA/family restroom concept as a value engineering approach on the restrooms and gave him our okay but asked Chris to review this with SAIL before sending it to Merrie Carlock.
- j. **Baraga/Chassell Trail Project Collaboration:** See Recreation Committee report.
- k. **Veterans Banners:** Doug spoke to Paulette Archambeau. Donna Bykkonen is filling out forms. They won’t be ready this summer but will get it in order over the winter. Brian asked who determines the signs. Doug indicated that family members would apply through the VFW.

- l. Visit Keweenaw Destination Development Grant:** Keith reported that \$2,750 has been awarded to the township for the Sturgeon River Kayak Launch sign along US 41. Keith indicated that he and his wife Julie will be providing the match on the grant to honor Keith's father who passed away back in February.
- m. Historic Trail Buckthorn Project:** On May 15th, KISMA spent two hours planting 35 dogwood, alder, and willow stakes at the Historic Trail. More are needed. There will be further buckthorn remediation later this summer.
- n. Hamar Creek Restoration Project:** We are waiting on word from Casey Huckens on a schedule. Looking at this fall.
- o. Copper Shores Community Health Foundation Grant:** The proposal was unsuccessful seeking a small grant as seed money for the Blight Mitigation Fund. We will continue to look for other funding opportunities.
- p. Blight Mitigation Fund:** We will receive final approval by the Copper Shores Community Health Foundation board of directors this month.
- q. Sigma Rho Fraternity Request:** Given the potential legal pitfalls associated with their request to be the only fraternity allowed in Chassell, the commission decided to shelve this matter.
- r. Rent-Fun Program:** After discussing the need to work around the construction of the sidewalk and the waterfront boardwalk, TJ moved that we shelve the Rent-Fun proposal at this time. Brian supported the motion with a second. The motion was passed unanimously.
- s. Cemetery Mapping:** The commission discussed the possibility of pursuing a Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission grant for this purpose. We will discuss this further with the board.
- t. Cemetery Trees:** No report.

New Business:

- a. July Planning Commission Meeting Date:** The commission will meet on Monday, July 8th. The Recreation Committee will meet at 5:00 p.m. and the Planning Commission will meet at 6:00 p.m.
- b. Rail-Trail Priorities:** Keith reported that Dan Dowdy has indicated that some funding is available this year with most of it going to the Lindala Road drainage. We asked residents for their input on the Chassell Township Facebook page and the need for a crossing over the ditch drainage to Doug's property was the top concern expressed. The approach to the Pike River Bridge was another issue that was raised. A not so friendly loose dog near the Portage Township line was raised as a concern by runners passing that area. A concern was brought up about a resident with a shed on the right-of-way on Lakeshore Drive that has put up obstacles to keep trail users from crossing to the street. Keith will write up these concerns, including the input from Naomi asking to not cut back thimbleberries until after their season, and submit these priorities to Dan Dowdy with the DNR.
- c. Screening on Corner Lots:** As a result of interest expressed by a potential buyer regarding the US 41 lot where the Bait Shack is located, the topic of screening requirements for corner lots has become an issue. In this instance, the potential buyer wants to continue to operate the Bait Shack but wants to park a trailer at the back of the lot. The potential buyer is willing to screen the US 41 side, but it raises the question

about what the requirement should be on a corner lot to address the 3rd Street appearance as well as what type of screen would be appropriate. Doug noted that we should explore what other municipalities are requiring. As we look at updating the zoning ordinance, Brian noted an error regarding short term rentals where the number of days is mistakenly noted as 365 days when it should be 30 days or less.

- d. **Strawberry Festival Table:** Keith indicated that his wife Julie will let us share her booth at the Strawberry Festival. This will give the planning commission the opportunity to answer resident questions, and we can share information about the Recreation Plan, the preliminary engineering study, zoning, the Spark Grant, and the Blight Mitigation Fund. Keith indicated that he would cover it whenever he is not involved with making strawberry shortcakes on Friday and Saturday mornings. Brian and Steve volunteered to help out with covering the booth.
- e. **Marinette Street Clean Up:** Recently, Marinette Street resident Jim Vaught was granted a variance by the Zoning Board of Appeals to build a retaining wall within the setback on the back side of his property which borders township land on the north side of the street. When the area (including the township land) was excavated, it was discovered that residents in the row houses along Marinette Street have historically dumped their trash off of the back side of their property. The excavation turned up 14 tires from the township property that need disposal. Jim has asked if the township can help with this disposal. Keith moved that the commission recommend to the board that it reimburse Jim for the \$8/tire cost to appropriately dispose of the tires. Brian supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Brian moved for adjournment and Steve provided the second. The motion was approved unanimously. The time was not recorded.