



Manistee County Planning Building • 395 Third Street • Manistee, Michigan 49660

DRAFT
Monday, June 1, 2026
6:15PM

Manistee Planning Conference Room
395 Third Street,
Manistee, MI 49660
and via Zoom

MANISTEE COUNTY RECREATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

Call to Order & Roll Call:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Wayne Beldo at 6:17 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Wayne Beldo, Gary Schwaiger, William Shryer, Paul Petrovich, Shayne Machen, Robert Schuelke

MEMBERS ABSENT: Margaret Batzer, Linda Cudney, Glenn Zaring, Devin Wegner

QUORUM: Confirmed

OTHERS PRESENT: Katie Gruenberg, Planning Director; Jessica Sorensen, Assistant Planning Secretary; Sara Herberger, Manistee County Community Foundation

DIGITAL MEDIA: Mark Coe, Manistee-Benzie Snow Birds; Sally Trisch, Dickson Township

Approval of the Agenda:

Mr. Schuelke motioned, supported by Mr. Schwaiger, to approve the June 1st, 2026, agenda as presented. Motion passed with a voice vote.

Approval of Minutes:

Ms. Machen motioned, supported by Mr. Petrovich, to approve the May 4th, 2026, meeting minutes as printed. Motion passed with a voice vote.

Conflicts of Interest: None

Public Comment: None

Updates:

Friends of SMARTrails:

- A copy of SMARTrails May 11th meeting minutes was provided in members meeting packets.

Benzie - Manistee County Dirt Birds: None

Benzie - Manistee County Snowbirds: Report by Mark Coe

- Ongoing trail maintenance, equipment maintenance, clubhouse improvements, and post-winter cleanup activities.
- Submitted three trail reroute proposals in Benzie County to address access issues on existing trail segments.

- Received a grant through the Community Foundation to purchase new mowing equipment that will assist with maintaining local trails.

Municipality Updates: Report by Ms. Katie Gruenberg

Onekama trail project:

Based on planning and engineering evaluations, the project is not expected to move forward. Concerns regarding roadway width, utility conflicts, right-of-way limitations, and the need for a separated pedestrian facility significantly impacted the project's competitiveness for Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant funding.

Although the TAP application is not being pursued, the Village and Township continue to utilize grant funding received through the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to complete planning and engineering work associated with the concept.

County-Wide Recreation Plan & Planning Department Staff: Report by Ms. Katie Gruenberg

County-Wide Recreation Plan Update:

Continued progress on County-Wide feedback:

- Local units of government were asked to submit community profiles, administrative information, and recreation inventories by June 1. More than half have completed their submissions, while staff has maintained communication with nearly all participating communities.
- Staff continues to attend local board and commission meetings to assist communities with plan development and gather feedback.
- The next phase of work focuses on goals and objectives, with a July 1 deadline established for local input.

Anticipated timelines:

- Continued participation from local units throughout the remainder of the planning processes.
- Presentation of the final two plan chapters next month.
- A draft plan ready for a 30-day public review period in August.

Recreation Commission Membership:

Ms. Gruenberg informed the Commission that member Devin Wegner's has reached three consecutive unexcused meeting absences. Per the Recreation Commission bylaws staff will forward the matter to the Board of Commissioners for consideration as required.

Ms. Gruenberg noted that Ms. Wegner remains interested in serving through the remainder of her term, which expires at the end of 2026, but has experienced increasing conflicts related to work and family obligations. Commissioners discussed the importance of maintaining active membership while also recognizing that circumstances can occasionally limit attendance. Staff indicated the bylaws may warrant future review regarding attendance requirements and member absences.

Kaleva Trailhead Project Update:

The Village of Kaleva and Fleis & VandenBrink have executed an amended scope of work to redesign the proposed trailhead facility utilizing a prefabricated concrete structure. The project remains within budget and has received an extension from the Community Foundation through September 30, 2026.

Ms. Gruenberg discussed the possibility of pursuing future grant opportunities through both the Community Foundation and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund to support construction. She also introduced the concept of utilizing a portion of Recreation Commission funding as a local match contribution, though no action was requested at this time.

Onekama Parks Programming Event:

- Event had good attendance and approximately 20 booths were present
- Shared a booth with Friends of SMARTrails
- Provided public outreach regarding recreation planning activities

Old Business: None

New Business:

Forest Road Closure Resolution:

The Commission reviewed a proposed resolution supporting future non-motorized trail development along the Thompsonville-Kaleva rail corridor and closure of the corridor to vehicular traffic.

Discussion focused primarily on the resolution title. Commissioners agreed the title should better emphasize support for future trail development rather than simply corridor closure.

Ms. Machen motioned, supported by Mr. Petrovich, to support the resolution with the change in the title that reads “Manistee County Recreation Commission Resolution in Support of Future Non-motorized Trail Development and Closure of the Thompsonville – Kaleva Rail Corridor to Vehicular Traffic”.

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: 6 (Shryer, Schuelke, Machen, Petrovich, Beldo, Schwaiger)

No: 0

Absent: 4 (Wegner, Zaring, Batzer, Cudney)

Motion Carried.

Parks & Recreation Plan: Chapter 5 Goals & Objectives

Staff presented the existing county-wide recreation goals and objectives for review as part of the Recreation Plan update process. Ms. Gruenberg noted that many goals have carried forward from previous planning cycles and remain relevant today. Commissioners generally agreed that existing goals remain applicable, though additional review and feedback will be accepted by staff over the next few months.

Further discussion centered on the more than 500 public survey responses received to date with discussion highlighting recurring themes identified through public engagement, including:

- Expanded trail opportunities.
- Beach access and improvements.
- Additional restroom facilities.
- ORV-related concerns.
- Assistance for local communities with grant writing and recreation project implementation.

Commission members noted the high quality of the survey comments and discussed the challenges local governments face in securing staff capacity to pursue recreation funding opportunities.

Other Items Before the Board:

- Commissioners and recreation partners engaged in an extended discussion regarding conditions along the Thompsonville-Kaleva rail corridor and the challenges associated with unauthorized motorized vehicle use.

Key discussion points included:

- Significant trail damage caused by ORV and truck traffic.
- Current Forest Service Road designations that limit closure options.
- Ongoing coordination with the DNR and State Trails Specialist Scott Slaven.
- Potential future engineering and surface improvements.
- Long-term enforcement and maintenance considerations.
- Opportunities to strengthen support from local governments and partner organizations.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of securing non-motorized trail connections to regional trail systems, including the Betsie Valley Trail, and appreciation for the Commission's continued support was expressed.

- Additional discussion addressed alternative trail routing opportunities on Milks & McMertain roadways. Feasibility considerations discussed included roadway constraints, local jurisdictional considerations, and the importance of continuing conversations with both public agencies and private landowners.

Adjourn:

Mr. Beldo requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 P.M.

Mr. Petrovich motioned, supported by Mr. Shryer, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed with a voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Schwaiger, Recreation Commission

Date