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DRAFT
Monday, February 2, 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 Vice Chair Margaret Batzer at 6:15 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Margaret Batzer, Shayne Machen, William Shryer, Robert Schuelke, Glenn Zaring, Gary Schwaiger, Paul Petrovich, Linda Cudney, Devin Wegner

MEMBERS ABSENT: Wayne Beldo

QUORUM: Confirmed

OTHERS PRESENT: Katie Gruenberg, Planning Director; Jodie Lynch, Planner 1; Jessica Sorensen, Assistant Planning Secretary; Sally Trisch, Dickson Township; Tim Knoper, Benzie-Manistee Dirt Birds

DIGITAL MEDIA: Laura Heinzelman, Manistee County Community Foundation; Mark Coe, Benzie – Manistee Snowbirds

Election of Officers:

Due to the election of officers not occurring at the prior meeting, the meeting was turned over to staff while the officer elections were conducted.

Chair:

Ms. Gruenberg asked for Chair nominations
Mr. Schwaiger nominated Mr. Wayne Beldo for Chair, seconded by Mr. Schuelke.
No other nominations were given.

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: 9 (Batzer, Schwaiger, Cudney, Shryer, Schuelke, Wegner, Zaring, Machen, Petrovich)

No: 0

Absent: 1 (Beldo)

Mr. Beldo was elected Chair for 2026 term.

Vice Chair:

Ms. Gruenberg asked for Vice Chair nominations
Ms. Cudney nominated Ms. Margaret Batzer for Vice Chair.
No other nominations were given.

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: 9 (Batzer, Schwaiger, Cudney, Shryer, Schuelke, Wegner, Zaring, Machen, Petrovich)

No: 0

Absent: 1 (Beldo)

Ms. Batzer was elected Vice Chair for 2026 term.

Secretary:

Ms. Gruenberg asked for Secretary nominations

Ms. Batzer nominated Mr. Gary Schwaiger for Secretary, seconded by Mr. Zaring.

No other nominations were given.

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: 9 (Batzer, Schwaiger, Cudney, Shryer, Schuelke, Wegner, Zaring, Machen, Petrovich)

No: 0

Absent: 1 (Beldo)

Mr. Schwaiger was elected Secretary for 2026 term.

Approval of the Agenda:

Mr. Zaring motioned, supported by Mr. Schwaiger, to approve the February 2nd, 2026, agenda as printed. Motion passed with a voice vote.

Approval of Minutes:

Ms. Cudney motioned, supported by Mr. Shryer, to approve the January 5th, 2026 meeting minutes as printed. Motion passed with a voice vote.

Conflicts of Interest: None

Public Comment:

Ms. Heinzelman, Manistee County Community Foundation, provided a “save the date” for a Recreation Grant Workshop being hosted in coordination with the DNR Recreation Grant Program:

- Thursday, February 26, 2026
- 2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- West Shore Downtown Education Center, Classroom A

Information will be sent to Commission members and local units of government.

No additional public comment was received.

Updates:

Friends of SMARTrails:

Commission received the written report. Updates included:

- Meeting held January 12, 2026
 - Officers reappointed
 - Meetings to be held at the Benzie-Manistee Snowmobile Club, typically second Monday at 6:00 p.m. (except October)
 - Discussed fundraising and 2026 goals
- Need to update strategic plans and revisit the Park-to-Park map due to completion of the Thompsonville Trail and Bear Creek bridge
- Plans for two trail cleanup days
- Ribbon cutting for the Thompsonville - Copemish Trail and Bear Creek bridge opening
- Interest in trail counters and potential grant funding
- Hope to have DNR representative attend a future meeting

Benzie - Manistee County Dirt Birds: Reported by Mr. Tim Knoper

- No recent meetings.
- The group is planning for the Blessing of the ORVs event in Mesick in June discussed possible promotion through:
 - The Manistee Tourism Authority
 - Adding it to the Tourism Authority's event calendar
 - Local media outlets

Benzie - Manistee County Snowbirds:

- Written report included in the packet.
- No additional update was provided.

County-Wide Recreation Plan: Report by Ms. Katie Gruenberg

Ms. Gruenberg provided an update on the County-Wide Recreation Plan and staff activities:

- Staff met with the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) through the Community Foundation and will conduct an input session at the February YAC meeting
- Exploring school-based outreach opportunities, potentially during lunch/advisory periods
- Surveys were provided for distribution
- One community had not formally signed on but provided verbal confirmation; staff will follow up
- Plan updates will include demographics, continued public input, and updated photos (including potential outreach to the Tourism Authority)
- Updated chapters will be presented to the Commission in sections for review over the next few months

Discussion included recommendations for additional outreach opportunities through Chamber of Commerce programs.

Planning Department Staff: Report by Ms. Katie Gruenberg

- Evaluate near-term trail development priorities, particularly the Thompsonville to Kaleva segment, as a manageable focus area.
- Research maintenance responsibilities, agreements, and funding expectations related to trail development.
- Engage DNR and partner organizations to clarify maintenance requirements and project sequencing.
- Identify and coordinate with local units of government and trail partners to build support and commitments for future trail segments.

Old Business:

County-Wide ORV Ordinance: Report by Ms. Gruenberg

Ms. Gruenberg reviewed ordinance revisions, including:

- Updating the definition of ORV to mirror statute language
- Discussion of proposed language allowing ORV operation on closed roads solely to access open roads; Commission consensus was to remove this language due to potential complications and impacts to city/villages
- Clarification of map update and publication process, including annual updates and the importance of dating map versions
- Staff presented updated master map and discussed including USFS and DNR roads for completeness, even if not enforced by the County Sheriff's office

Mr. Zaring motioned, supported by Mr. Schwaiger, to recommend approval of the County-Wide ORV Ordinance, including discussed revisions (notably removal of the access language in Section 2), with acknowledgment that local units may still finalize map updates.

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: 9 (Batzler, Schwaiger, Cudney, Shryer, Schuelke, Wegner, Zaring, Machen, Petrovich)

No: 0

Absent: 1 (Beldo)

Motion Carried.

County – owned property: 11 Mile Rd: Update by Ms. Gruenberg

- County is moving forward with a timber harvest agreement managed by Michitree Inc.
- Work will continue on access agreements with surrounding landowners in spring 2026
- Timber harvest anticipated for 2027, with proceeds dependent on access and market conditions
- Commission reviewed forestry management plan and a draft letter to the Board of Commissioners regarding future recreation considerations for the property

Discussion included:

- Clarification of potential revenue range from timber bids
- Interest in understanding where proceeds would otherwise be allocated (general fund anticipated)
- Question regarding ownership/value of oil and gas rights on the property

Ms. Machen motioned, supported by Mr. Shryer, to send the draft letter to the Manistee County Board of Commissioners. Motion passed with a voice vote.

New Business:

M-22 Byway Committee: Report by Ms. Gruenberg

- The M-22 Byway Committee was discussed; the committee is working to revitalize membership and representation.
- Commission members were invited to participate as representatives.

Other Items Before the Board: None

Adjourn:

Ms. Batzler requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 P.M.

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

Next Meeting:

March 2nd, 2026 @ 6:15PM; Manistee County Planning Conference Room

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Schwaiger, Recreation Commission

Date