

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

**DRAFT**  
Monday, January 5, 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 6:15 pm.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Linda Cudney, Devin Wegner - Zoom -

**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

**Approval of the Agenda:**

Ms. Batzer motioned, supported by Ms. Machen, to approve the January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026, agenda as printed. Motion passed with a voice vote.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Ms. Batzer motioned, supported by Mr. Petrovich, to approve the November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 meeting minutes as printed. Motion passed with a voice vote.

**Conflicts of Interest:** None

**Public Comment:** None

**Updates:**

**Friends of SMARTrails:**

- December's meeting minutes were provided to members through their agenda packets.
- Trail update Thompsonville to Copemish:
  - Bear Creek Bridge has been installed
  - Trail maintenance/resurfacing and signage is ongoing but nearly complete.

Discussion followed on:

- Bridge width and potential emergency vehicle access
- Potential for sharing photos
- Possibility for a press release likely led by Networks Northwest with coordination from Friends of SMARTrails

**Benzie - Manistee County Snowbirds:**

- Groomer reports were included for members in their agenda packets.
- Reports noted consistent grooming activity and improved snow conditions compared to the previous winter.

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

- Group is off for the winter months
- Three of their individuals are in training to be ORV Certified Instructors.

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

- Public input collection is ongoing concluding in late February/early March.
- Outreach to local units is underway for updates to community profiles and recreation inventories.
- A few of the local units have yet to finalize participation.

**Timeline:**

- February
  - Completion of public input collection
  - Start drafting local goals and objectives with the municipalities.
  - Recreation Commission review of draft chapters
- June
  - Target for draft completion.
  - Submit draft to DNR for review
  - Provide a copy to the local units for review
- August
  - 30-day public comment period
- September – October
  - Final draft ready for approval
- November – December
  - Complete plan with all approvals uploaded to the MI Grants portal for anyone seeking to pursue a 2027 Grant by the February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2027 deadline.

**Old Business:**

**County – Wide ORV Ordinance: Report by Ms. Gruenberg**

- ORV ordinance was approved by the Board of Commissioners on December 16, 2025, but has not yet been published, pending legal clarification.
- Discussion included:
  - Staff questions related to legal procedure
  - The inclusion of golf carts in the ordinance definition as golf carts are not classified as ORVs under Michigan law.
  - The inclusion of golf carts may conflict with existing municipal ordinances.
- Staff assigned to:
  - Seek clarification from Prosecuting Attorney's Office, & State of Michigan
  - Confirm State definition for ORV's
  - Bring item back to Commission for further review

**County – owned property: 11 Mile Rd: Update**

- Staff reported that no immediate timber harvest plans were reported for the property.

- Board of Commissioners may consider allocating proceeds to Recreation Commission if a clear use plan is presented.

Discussion points:

- Potential for low-impact loop trail development
- Need for easements to access adjoining parcels
- Importance of coordinating with county forester regarding potential areas for harvesting
- Getting an updated value of the timber inventory.

Staff designated to:

- Identify timeframe for when timber harvest may occur.
- Identify neighboring parcel owners
- Draft a memo for the County Board of Commissioners for
  - Approval of the project on the property
  - Use of timber sale proceeds
- Resend timber inventory report to commission.

**New Business:** None

**Other Items before the board:**

**2026 Meeting Schedule:**

**Ms. Batzer motioned, supported by Mr. Shryer, to accept the 2026 meeting schedule as presented. Motion passed with a voice vote.**

Mr. Beldo confirmed the election of officers will occur at next month's meeting.

**Planning Department Staff Updates: Report by Ms. Gruenberg**

Staff provided updates on recent outreach efforts, including attendance at the Manistee Recreation Association meeting and upcoming stakeholder engagement. Commissioners were invited to attend the Manistee Recreation Association annual dinner on January 19, 2026. Additional discussion occurred regarding strategic planning, project prioritization, staff capacity constraints, and the need for technical expertise to advance trail development initiatives.

**Adjourn:**

Mr. Beldo requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 P.M.

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

**Next Meeting:**

February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026 @ 6:15PM; Manistee County Planning Conference Room

Respectfully submitted,

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Gary Schwaiger, Recreation Commission

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Date