

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

**DRAFT**  
Monday, April 6, 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 6:16 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Wayne Beldo, Margaret Batzer, Gary Schwaiger, William Shryer, Glenn Zaring, Paul Petrovich, Linda Cudney,

MEMBERS ABSENT: Shayne Machen, Robert Schuelke, Devin Wegner

**QUORUM:** Confirmed

OTHERS PRESENT: Katie Gruenberg, Planning Director; Jodie Lynch, Planner I; Jessica Sorensen, Assistant Planning Secretary; Sally Trisch, Dickson Township; Sara Herberger, Manistee County Community Foundation; Rob Carson, Networks Northwest

DIGITAL MEDIA: Mark Coe, Manistee-Benzie Snow Birds; Ric Alameddine, Onekama Trail Project

**Approval of the Agenda:**

Ms. Gruenberg proposed the following additions to the agenda:

- F. Updates, add 5. Municipality updates
- I. Other items before the board, add discussion for
  - 1. Water Trails
  - 2. Onekama Parks Program Event

**Ms. Batzer motioned, supported by Mr. Shryer, to approve the April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026, agenda as amended. Motion passed with a voice vote.**

**Approval of Minutes:**

**Ms. Cudney motioned, supported by Mr. Batzer, to approve the March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026, meeting minutes as printed. Motion passed with a voice vote.**

**Conflicts of Interest:** None

**Public Comment:** None

**Updates:**

**Friends of SMARTrails: Report by Ms. Linda Cudney**

- No March Meeting, due to lack of quorum.
- Next meeting Scheduled for April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**Benzie - Manistee County Dirt Birds: No Updates Provided**

**Benzie - Manistee County Snowbirds: Report by Mark Coe**

A seasonal summary and ongoing efforts was provided:

- Snowmobile season officially ended March 31, with trail gates closed across approximately 29 locations
- 5,690 miles of trail grooming completed during the 2025–2026 season
- Post-season cleanup underway with volunteer support
- Continued coordination with regional trail groups on future trail development
- Early planning underway for new trail segments and reroutes within Manistee County

Discussion followed regarding proposed trail segments and reroutes, including efforts to address access challenges and improve connectivity.

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

Ms. Gruenberg provided an update highlighting ongoing planning efforts:

- Recreation Plan updates and feedback will be discussed later in the agenda
- County-owned property considerations will not move forward at this time due to maintenance and liability concerns
- Potential funding opportunities identified:
  - ARPA allocation of \$15,000 available for project match funding
  - Possible county support contingent on a defined project plan
- Continued exploration of partnerships for trail development and land use

Discussion included the potential for collaboration with outside organizations and use of county resources for grant support.

**Municipality Updates: Onekama Township Report by Mr. Ric Alameddine**

An update on current projects and planning efforts for Onekama Township was provided:

- Two grant applications submitted:
  - Community Foundation Grant for ADA walkway improvements at Langdon Beach
  - DNR Grant for ADA walkway at Glen Park
- Trail planning continues along M-22 with phased development anticipated
- Project constraints include utility relocation costs and right-of-way limitations
- Emphasis placed on regional trail connectivity to strengthen grant competitiveness

The Commission discussed logistics of trail pathing and incorporation into regional trail efforts within the Recreation Plan to support funding opportunities.

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:**

**Rob Carson – Discussion on next steps for trail development:**

A broader discussion was held regarding trail priorities, coordination with the DNR, and next steps:

- Emphasis on aligning Recreation Plan priorities with funding eligibility
- Need for clearer direction and coordination with DNR on:
  - Trail designation and prioritization
  - Engineering and development sequences

- Maintenance responsibilities
- Recognition that regional collaboration strengthens grant applications
- Interest in coordinating a future meeting with DNR representatives to clarify expectations and processes

**Key Take Aways:**

- Importance of unified support from local units and trail organizations
- Need for clear project phasing (designation → planning → engineering → construction)
- Ongoing challenges related to access, maintenance, and jurisdiction
- Resolutions of support for Recreation Plan adoption with non-binding financial clauses but binding regional plan support clauses from the local units.

**Parks & Recreation Plan Discussion: Appendix D**

The Commission reviewed priority trail segments and potential updates:

- Existing priority routes remain relevant and supported
- Updates will reflect:
  - Recent trail developments and projects
  - Increased emphasis on regional connectivity
  - Inclusion of partner group efforts (e.g., Snowbirds, Dirtbirds)
- Additional considerations:
  - Spur trails connecting parks, campgrounds, and recreation areas
  - Incorporation of current infrastructure projects (e.g., US-31 reconstruction)

**Parks & Recreation Plan: Reviewing Chapter 2 Narrative**

The Commission discussed the proposed narrative, highlights included:

- A description of the economic benefits of recreation
- Inclusion of statistics from the Tourism Authority
- Importance of trail construction for economic development

Ms. Gruenberg stated alignment from community survey feedback continues to show strong interest in trails, beaches, and ORV accommodations.

**Other Items Before the Board:**

- The Commission discussed including water trails within the Recreation Plan:
  - Recognition of existing informal water trail usage
  - Opportunity to formally designate and promote water trails
  - Considered a potential “early win” with minimal barriers to implementation
- The Commission discussed participation in the upcoming Onekama parks and recreation event:

Onekama Area Community Activities Open House  
May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 2:30 PM – 4:30PM  
Onekama School cafeteria

- General interest in attending and providing representation
- Potential distribution materials and visuals included maps, trail information, and ORV Plan overview
- Coordination with partner groups was encouraged

**Adjourn:**

Mr. Beldo requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:41 P.M.

**Ms. Batzer motioned, supported by Mr. Zaring, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed with a voice vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gary Schwaiger, Recreation Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date