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## MANISTEE COUNTY RECREATION COMMISSION

April 7, 2025  
6:15 P.M.

Manistee County Planning Department Conference Room  
and via Zoom

### MINUTES

Members Present: Margaret Batzer, Vice Chair; Gary Schwaiger, Secretary; Devin Wegner; Paul Petrovich; Shayne Machen; Linda Cudney

Members Absent: Wayne Beldo, Chair; Eleanor DeYoung; Bob DeYoung; Robert Schuelke

Others Present: Katie Gruenberg, Manistee County Planning Director; David Jarvi, Manistee County Planner; Jodie Lynch, Manistee County Planner; Sara Herberger, Manistee County Community Foundation; Sally Trisch, Dickson Township Claire Richards, SMARTrails (via zoom); Tim Knoper, Benzie-Manistee Dirt Birds President; Sherry Knoper, Benzie-Manistee Dirt Birds (via zoom)

Ms. Batzer called the meeting to order at 6:15 PM, roll call was taken.

#### **Approval of the March 3, 2025, meeting agenda.**

**There was a motion by Ms. Cudney supported by Mr. Schwaiger to approve the April 7, 2025, meeting agenda. All in favor, motion carried.**

#### **Approval of the March 3, 2025, meeting minutes.**

**There was a motion by Mr. Petrovich supported by Ms. Machen to approve January 6, 2025, meeting minutes as amended. All In favor, motion carried.**

**Public Comment:** No public comment.

**Friends of SMARTrails Update:** Ms. Cudney gave an update on behalf of the Friends of SMARTrails.

- Ms. Herberger shared information about the Walkability Action Institute. The goal is to create a trained group of people to promote programs to enhance biking, walking, and other forms of transportation in rural areas. Ms. Herberger asked for volunteers to join the group from SMARTrails.
- EDA: Rob is waiting on DNR for title certification. Working with a new contact at the DNR. There are wonderings whether the funding is frozen due to all the changes going on.
- Concern that construction may be delayed due to the bridge over Bear Creek being steel and the ongoing tariffs.
- Will be working on trail flip chart for Manistee County Trails, continuing to work on it at next meeting.
- The tent and banners are ready. Website is fixed.
- Linda will be attending the TARP meeting on April 15<sup>th</sup>.

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- Linda connected with Ironfish and will try to get something together for trails day, which is on June 7th.

**Manistee County Snowbirds Update:** No update.

**Manistee County Dirt Birds Update:** Mr. Knoper gave update on behalf of the Dirt Birds.

- Club had first meeting in March. Big attendance. Conservation Officer McNeil was guest speaker.
- A representative of the Forest Service will attend April meeting and be guest speaker.
- The first group ride will be in April.
- Mr. Schwaiger asked how meeting attendance was compared to last year. Mr. Knoper said they have gained a lot more interest and members in the group, as many people want to ride legal.

**Municipality Update:** No municipality update.

**Planning Department Staff Update:** Mr. Jarvi and Ms. Gruenberg gave an update on behalf of the Planning Department.

### ORV Open/Closed Road Map

- Mr. Jarvi asked the Recreation Commission if they would give permission to the Planning Department to update the County ORV Road Map.
- If the county does go through with an ORV Ordinance, we will need to keep updated maps, so the 2 go together.
- Mr. Knoper of the Dirt Birds has been getting requests to see it updated.
- Ms. Batzer asked Planning Department Staff how long it would take to update map. Mr. Jarvi didn't think it would take very long, as it would only involve updating layers. A few hours is the estimate.
- Mr. Knoper said a lot of changes have taken place since the last update to open/closed roads.
- Staff will reach out to the Local Units of Governments individually via mass mailing to inquire about changes.

### County Recreation Plan Update

- Planning staff has been thinking about updating the soon to expire County Recreation Plan in house, instead of contracting it out.
- The plan expires at the end of 2026, need a new plan to be uploaded to the State by February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2027.
- Doing the plan in house would save an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 dollars.
- Looking for Recreation Commissions support and involvement.

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- Ms. Batzer gave some background information about past Recreation Plans undertaken by the County/Networks Northwest.

**There was a motion by Ms. Cudney, Supported by Mr. Petrovich to direct Planning Department Staff to with an inhouse update of the County Recreation Plan. All in favor, motion carried.**

- More discussion ensued about budget, cost savings of doing plan inhouse.

### 4/4/25 meeting with Scott Slavin Update

- Planning Department Staff met with Scott to follow up and pick up discussion on Chief to Thompsonville trail.
- Staff asked Scott to advise on what steps forward we should take.
- Scott suggested focusing on a smaller segment, like Thompsonville to Kaleva.
- Discussed roadblocks that hinder trail development currently. MOU, Forest roads, road shoulders, Etc.
- Staff will get ball rolling again, trying to answer some of the above hurdles.
- Staff wanted to make sure that this trail is still our main focus. Which it is.
- Discussion ensued about other trail segments closer to the population centers of our County, Chief-Casino, Casino-City.
- Talked ensued about possible trail summit. Trail advocacy groups.

### Kaleva Trailhead Update

- Kaleva are seeking appropriation funding from their congressman John Moolenaar to fund the project.
- Will look to redesign, to bring costs down for the construction of trailhead facility.

### Old Business:

#### Economic Development Document:

- Mr. Jarvi went over the edits he made to document. Used info that was given from Manistee County Tourism Authority.
- Mr. Jarvi asked the Recreation Commission to approve the document if they see fit.

**There was a motion by Ms. Machen, supported by Mr. Petrovich to accept The Power of Trails: Enhancing Rural Towns and Communities Document. All in favor, motion Carried**

### Possible County-Wide ORV Ordinance

- Mr. Jarvi and Ms. Gruenberg met with the Manistee County Prosecuting Attorney, who saw no issues with the template ORV Ordinance.
- Mr. Jarvi will get a meeting together with Sherrif Gutowski, to get his thoughts on enforcement of an ORV Ordinance and see if it's feasible for the Sheriff's Department.
- Ms. Gruenberg anticipates about 2-3 months of outreach to inform communities.

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- After outreach, we will bring our progress to the county board and bring an approvable ordinance for them. Staff will be responsible for updates.
- Also, will put something in the paper.
- Discussion ensued about outreach, ordinance requirements, and drafting procedure.

### Future Session Brainstorming

- Staff would like a meeting to walk through items we are currently working on, and place soft deadlines on current projects.
- Talk about big picture items, is there a desire to assist individual communities?
- Ideas to generate revenue?
- Make sure visions are aligning.
- What is the policy for assisting local units of government?

**New Business:** No new business.

**Other Items Before the Board: None.**

Mr. Beldo requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 P.M.

**There was a motion by Ms. Wegner, supported by Mr. Schwaiger to adjourn the meeting.  
All in favor, motion carried**

Next meeting will be on May 5, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

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Gary Schwaiger, Recreation Commission

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Date