



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

DRAFT
Monday, March 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, Glenn Zaring, Paul Petrovich, Linda Cudney, Devin Wegner

MEMBERS ABSENT: Wayne Beldo, Gary Schwaiger, Robert Schuelke

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; Sara Herberger, Manistee County Community Foundation

Approval of the Agenda:

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

Approval of Minutes:

Ms. Cudney motioned, supported by Mr. Zaring, to approve the February 2nd, 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

- Meeting held February 9, 2026
 - SMARTrails branded materials and signage has arrived: koozies, stickers, magnets, etc.
- Ms. Cudney attended the recreation grant workshop hosted by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Manistee County Community Foundation.
 - Workshop focused on grant opportunities, match funding strategies, and collaboration.
 - Emphasis on combining Community Foundation grants with DNR Trust Fund grants.
 - Discussion of in-kind match opportunities including volunteer labor.
- Friends of SMARTrails received an application for Little River Casino Resort charity golf outing sponsorship to be held in August.
- Anticipating guest presenter at next meeting.

- Brief discussion regarding potential trailhead at Healy Lake due to existing amenities and snowmobile trail access.
- Ribbon cutting originally scheduled for April 17; likely to be rescheduled due to snow conditions.
- Trail counters being researched to track usage.
- Discussion of seasonal signage and gates to prevent ORV misuse outside snowmobile season.
- Ongoing discussions with tribal representatives regarding trail connections; formal meeting anticipated.

Members held additional discussion on the Recreation Grant Workshop which included:

- Leveraging multiple funding sources to maximize project dollars. Including in-kind sources.
- Example shared of Orchard Beach State Park playground funded through multiple grants.
- Positive feedback regarding cooperative grant application processes.

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

- First group ride meeting scheduled for third Saturday of the month.
- Three members pursuing certification as ORV instructors; final training scheduled late April.
- Adopt-a-Highway secured for M-115 between Springdale Road and Vondra Road.

Benzie - Manistee County Snowbirds:

- Written reports included in the packet.
- Ongoing trail condition monitoring and updates.
- Representation present at grant workshop.

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

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

- Drafting of updated recreation plan underway.
- Youth Advisory Council public input session held in partnership with the Manistee County Community Foundation.
- Positive engagement and representation from multiple school districts.
- Due to new state legislation regarding surveys conducted within public schools, staff will not pursue in-school questionnaires at this time.
- Public engagement to continue:
 - March: Public input collection
 - April–June: Community goal-setting sessions
- Tourism Authority providing professional photography for plan.
- Commission encouraged to share additional local photos.

Planning Department Staff: Report by Ms. Katie Gruenberg

- Ms. Gruenberg provided an update on the M-22 Byway Committee
 - Working to reestablish
 - Organizing membership board & organizations' needs
 - Ms. Gruenberg mentioned she would provide further updates at next meeting.
- Ms. Gruenberg provided an update on the ORV Ordinance
 - Public hearing scheduled for April 14 before the Board of Commissioners.
 - The 45-day notice has been issued.
 - Several local units have expanded ORV road access.
 - Updated comprehensive ORV map to be finalized mid-April

Old Business: None

New Business:

Parks & Recreation Plan Reviewing Chapter 3 Narrative: Report by Ms. Gruenberg

- Minor revisions include clarification that the Explore the Shores program is not currently active.
- Discussion regarding reactivation potential of Explore the Shores in partnership with the Community Foundation.
- Commission discussed Dark Sky designation; staff to research designation process further.
- Appendix E (detailed private land maps) likely to be removed to maintain local unit cooperation.
- Future review of priority trail routes to ensure alignment with Friends of Smart Trails goals.
- Recognition that 2016–2020 recreation plan remains strong foundational document.

Other Items Before the Board:

- Manistee Muzzle Loading Club submitted informational materials and noted recent facility improvements, including range expansions.
- Commission discussed availability of large-scale county maps.

Adjourn:

Ms. Batzer requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:54 P.M.

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

Next Meeting:

April 6th, 2026 @ 6:15PM; Manistee County Planning Conference Room

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Schwaiger, Recreation Commission

Date