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

**DRAFT**  
Monday, November 3, 2025  
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, Linda Cudney, William Shryer, Robert Schuelke, Glenn Zaring, Gary Schwaiger, Paul Petrovich

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Devin Wegner, Shayne Machen

**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:** Mark Coe, Benzie-Manistee Snowbirds

**Approval of the Agenda:**

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

**Approval of Minutes:**

Discussed correction to the date of the minutes.

**Ms. Cudney motioned, supported by Mr. Petrovich, to approve the October 2025 meeting minutes with the corrected date. Motion passed with a voice vote.**

**Conflicts of Interest:** None

**Public Comment:** None

**Updates:**

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

- Last meeting held October 20, 2025.
- Working to update trail signage at the Copemish trail head to include SMARTrails. Received approval to place temporary signage, until the permanent sign can be made which will include SMARTrails.
- AJ's Excavating expects to complete trail work by Thanksgiving. Trail up to Dutchman Creek bridge nearly complete; awaiting Bear Creek bridge installation.

- Group is reviewing promotional branding on items (koozies, stickers, magnets, pens) for outreach.
- Coordinating a Ribbon-cutting ceremony to follow trail project completion along with a press release.
- Updating friends of SMARTrails Member contact list.

Discussion followed on:

- Whether the trail project remains on track for grant completion before February 2026.
- Bridge delivery logistics and site access.

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

- Final club meeting of the season held recently.
- On track to have the blessing of the ORV's June 6<sup>th</sup> in Mesick; committee formed.
- Trail cleanup completed along railroad grade near Kaleva; strong volunteer turnout.
- Additional cleanup scheduled for upcoming Saturday (Intended clean up locations may be changed due to federal government shutdown).

**Benzie - Manistee County Snowbirds: Report by Mr. Mark Coe (via Zoom)**

- Preparing for winter grooming operations.
- Equipment maintenance in progress (oil changes, inspections).
- Brushing, signage replacement, and grooming completed across Manistee and Benzie County trails.
- Continuing collaboration with the Betsie Valley Group on maintenance coordination.
- General acknowledgment of strong volunteerism with the Snowbirds organization.
- Recognition for contributions to maintaining county winter recreation opportunities.
- Bear Creek Bridge installation:
  - expected this month.
  - will enhance connectivity for snowmobile routes.
  - connect the Betsie Valley Trail system through Kaleva, improving regional snowmobile access.
- Resurfacing of trail segment between Thompsonville and Copemish is coming along nicely.
- Their yearly annual grant request has been accepted by the DNR.

Upcoming meetings:

- Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup (SAW) Committee Meeting: December 4
  - Group coordinates state-level snowmobiling programs to align local and regional priorities.
- Michigan Snowmobile and ORV Board of Directors Meeting: December 6
  - Michigan Snowmobile and ORV Association (MISORVA) works on issues with all clubs throughout the state.
  - Assists with resolving issues and lends support to the 63 recognized snowmobiling organizations statewide.

Discussion followed on:

- Concerns about vehicles using trail sections as private driveways.
- Mr. Coe confirmed damage to gates and posts; noting reinforcements and added barriers are planned.
- Enforcement challenges were noted due to limited DNR presence and public reporting is encouraged when violations are observed.

Mr. Zaring guided discussion to improving public awareness and communication for trail users.

- Current outreach relies on Facebook and organizational websites.
- Proposed collaboration with the Manistee County Tourism Authority for broader visibility.
- Suggestions included website cross-linking, shared maps, and centralized trail condition updates.
- The MISORVA posts weekly statewide trail condition reports. Especially during snowmobile season Dec 1<sup>st</sup> to Mar 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Groups were encouraged to contact the Tourism Authority to provide links to trail information and improve public access.

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

- Recreation Plan Survey is live.
- A mass mailing of the survey was sent to the local units of government.
- Continuing outreach to local governments for resolutions of support and contributions.

#### **Timeline:**

- November 2025: Stakeholder public input sessions and outreach with schools/youth groups
- Winter 2025: Draft major plan chapters.
- Winter 2025–26: Community profile meetings.
- Spring 2026: Present public input for drafting local goals and objectives.
- May-June 2026: present local goals and objectives to Recreation Commission for County review
- June 2026: Target draft completion.
- Late fall 2026: Final plan adoption and validation.

#### **Upcoming public input session:**

- Pleasanton Township Hall – Tuesday, November 18, 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
  - Members are encouraged to promote the event and the survey.
  - Discussion on strategies to increase participation through social media, newspapers, and community events.

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

##### **Planner vacancy:**

- Recruitment is ongoing.
- Interim planning coverage provided by current staff.

#### **Old Business:**

##### **County – Wide ORV Ordinance: additions from Prosecutor's Office: Report by Ms. Gruenberg**

- Ordinance submitted for 45-day review by local units, MDOT, DNR, and MCRC.
- Road Commission review scheduled for November.
- Board of Commissioners public hearing: December 16, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.
- There were minor revisions provided by Prosecutor's Office.
- Staff will provide an update at January 2026 meeting.

#### **New Business:**

##### **County – owned property: 11 Mile Rd: Presented by Mr. Wayne Beldo**

Review of county-owned parcel for potential non-motorized trail site.

##### **Discussion points:**

- Parcel subject to forestry management plan.

- Potential for timber harvest revenue to support recreation grants or trail projects.
- Need to confirm harvest status, revenues, and access easements.
- Consideration of surface material and compatible recreational uses.

Staff designated to:

- Confirm forestry plan status with County Controller.
- Obtain latest forestry report.
- Explore allocation of proceeds toward trail development or matching funds.

**Other Items before the board:**

**Expiring Terms:**

- Discussion on expiring member terms; Staff will be notifying the Clerk's office to confirm postings for upcoming vacancies.
- Members asked to update contact information and communication preferences.

Mr. Schuelke announced completion of a 5-foot extension to the road shoulder from Tippy Dam Road to High Bridge. With a long-term goal to establish two-way, bike-safe, connections between Udell Hill Road and Warfield Road.

**Adjourn:**

Mr. Beldo requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 P.M.

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

**Next Meeting:**

December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 @ 6:15PM; Manistee County Planning Conference Room

Respectfully submitted,

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

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Date