

Whitefish Township Parks & Recreation Committee
June 17, 2019, 3 PM, Whitefish Twp Community Ctr, Meeting Minutes

ATTENDANCE Tom McKee, WTCS Superintendent; Terry Humphrey, Resident; Richard Jarnagin, Resident; Scott Erickson, Resident; Nikki Craig, Committee Chairperson

RESOURCES Current Recreation Plan is at this link:

http://whitefishtownship.org/pdf/2015_Whitefish_Twp_Rec_Plan.pdf

The 2019 Whitefish Township Parks & Recreation Survey is available at this link:

http://whitefishtownship.org/pdf/notice/ALLRESULTS_Whitefish_Twp_Parks%20Recreation_Survey_2019_FINAL.pdf

OLD BUSINESS A review of the current recreation plan assets, finds the North Shore Whitefish Township Park needs to be listed and the Tahquamenon Scenic Heritage Trail Learning Lodge is no longer standing and needs to be removed. Nikki reported that she has reached out to the current owners of the assets to confirm data in the table (p. 17 - 19) is up to date and requested details that had been previously omitted.

NEW BUSINESS A review of the goals and objectives of the current plan (p. 15 – 17) are well written and as appropriate today as in 2008. Nikki will research Goal 1, Objective H and Goal III, Objective F to confirm this information is correct today.

Before reviewing the attached addendum, the committee members reviewed an analysis of the 2019 survey results. A copy of the full survey results will be included in the 2020 recreation plan. With the survey results in mind, the committee members reviewed five projects recommended at the April Whitefish Township Planning Commission meeting.

Regarding improvements to the North Shore Park, the township is looking into collaboration with the Chippewa Co Highway Dept to improve access to the park. The largest issue with the county property north of the township is pollution. Feasible grants were discussed; details for this project can be specified as time progresses. It was determined that a marina does not have to include a boat launch. Establishing an eco-friendly location for fueling boats, coming into town to get groceries, dinner, or stay at a motel overnight has its benefits for the commercial district. Providing a stop between Sault Ste. Marie and Grand Marais would be beneficial for boaters. Acquiring property to accomplish the task would be challenging.

Feedback from committee members unable to attend the meeting is attached and was included in discussions. It was a consensus that the listed projects are supported by survey results. However, given the survey results the committee recommended adding

- An indoor recreational facility for all age groups accessible year round
- A picnic pavilion with picnic tables added next to the school's updated playground grounds.

- Sawmill Creek parking area cleared during the winter months permitting use of restrooms and access to smaller snowshoe or cross country ski trails.
- The Shelldrake Impoundment Site & State Forest, updated with camp sites and steps made to protect the current ecosystem as a kayaking possibility, waterfowl site, fishing facility, and used by many residents. There is current talk of decommissioning the current dam. The Newberry Field Office is responsible for this effort.

The committee will review the projects again at the next meeting. It was decided that should a project be challenging, it not be automatically omitted as this is a five year plan and circumstances could change increasing project feasibility.

ADJOURNMENT The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm.

NEXT MEETING July, 2019, date to be determined.

ADDENDUM

Parks & Recreation Goals for Whitefish Township

At the Whitefish Township Planning Commission meeting, April 4, 2019, members discussed the following as possible goals for Whitefish Township Parks & Recreation. Three of the five commission members also serve on the Parks & Recreation Committee.

- the enhancement of the north Township Park located along the north Whitefish Township shoreline of Lake Superior
- the development of the property located north of the current community center property as public access to Lake Superior providing parking and recreational facilities
- a marina located in the downtown area
- a multi use recreational bridge across the Tahquamenon River mouth
- a separate, off road multi-use trail from the Tahquamenon River mouth to Whitefish Point

2019 Whitefish Township Parks & Recreation Community Survey Preliminary Analysis

73% of the respondents are property owners in Whitefish Township; 42% of which visit or use assets 10 or more times. 27% visit 5 – 9 times a year; a total of 69% of the respondents are users of parks and recreational facilities available in the township with some frequency. 78% of the respondents use TFSP four or more times a year. 64% of the respondents highly value nature, the natural aspects of Whitefish Township. 56% of the respondents are satisfied with the local parks, 19% would like to see improvements. 65% approve the Lake Superior Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary Nomination. 80% of respondents feel the preservation of natural areas and water resources have a positive effect on their quality of life. 76% wish to approve access and enhance natural resources.

The respondents

1. Hike 46%
2. Fish 44%
3. Attend Special/Organized Events (Haunted Trail, Senior Motion Class) 41%
4. Picnics & Family Activities 38%
5. Camping 28%

*Motorized activities ORV's 26.4%, Snowmobiling 16%

Five of the top 15 parks and recreational assets are Tahquamenon Falls State Park properties. Combining TFSP facilities, the top ten assets used by respondents are

1. Tahquamenon Falls State Park (Upper Falls, Lower Falls, Rivermouth, Roadside Park, State Harbor)
2. Lake Superior Shoreline
3. Andrus Lake
4. Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum
5. Community Center
6. M-123 Scenic Byway
7. Whitefish Point Bird Observatory
8. Shelldrake
9. Library
10. North Shore Whitefish Township Park
11. Sawmill Creek Park

Respondents reinforce the desire to access Lake Superior. Respondent's top five wants are

1. Public Beach
2. Walking Trails
3. Biking Trails or Pathways
4. Picnic Pavilion
5. Boat Launch

There was an emphasis for improving the Harbor or developing a marina. 16% of respondents expressed an interest in ORV trail development. Concerns were expressed to protect "dark skies". The most frequently mentioned request for improvement is water access for public swimming and boating. The 2nd has to do with an indoor recreation facility that would benefit all age groups when outside activities have their limitations, winter months.

NOTES FROM SARA SIEKIERSKI, 6/12/2019

Regarding a multi-use, off-road trail from the Tahquamenon Rivermouth to Whitefish Point:

Off road vehicles such as side-by-sides, snowmobiles, dirt bikes, etc. are not allowed on the National Wildlife Refuge and that violations with snowmobiles especially have been an issue in the past several years. In addition, our visitors come to take in the serene beauty, cultural history, birds and other wildlife as well as the unique dune and swale plants. I worry that if off road vehicle traffic increases, trespassing would increase and result in damage to habitat and visitor experience. We do not currently have a Refuge Law Enforcement officer stationed in the Upper Peninsula to conduct frequent patrols.

Lastly, I'll add the refuge would be supportive of foot and bicycle paths as alternative ways people can access the Point.

NOTES FROM KAY KUJAYA 6/12/2019

At one time there was talk of connecting a hiking trail from town to the falls area. I did not think of it until I read your list. Getting a multi use bridge at the River Mouth would be a priority I would think! With the Great Lakes so high we may well lose the hwy bridge! Wouldn't that be an interesting problem?

NOTES FROM DAVID CORDS 6/17/2019

The enhancement of the north Township Park located along the north Whitefish Township shoreline of Lake Superior.

This in my opinion is a very doable goal. I do have a concern about access to the site. As of this past weekend the road out west of the cranberry farm is flooded over. Some help with shoring up the road is needed. We may need to have the help of chippewa county road commission help out in this effort. What kind of activities would the community like. I suggest a small play ground, picnic tables, maybe some grills? As far as camping goes out there the property should be sign posted that a fee payable to whitefish township is required and have the drop box at the community center. Maybe grant's through the state of Michigan or dnr should be looked into for this.

The development of the property located north of the current community center property as public access to Lake Superior providing parking and recreational facilities I'm not sure if this goal is realistic. The area surrounding the community center sits way above the shoreline. The cliffs surrounding the center are in a state of continuous erosion. As a fact beyond the roped off area, to the south, there is a big erosion hole. Some sort of stairway would need to be erected and then I'm not sure how much beach access would be available. I see some major liability issues if guests/residents were using this and the hill started to collapse. I suggest we team with the dnr and see if the area behind the center could get some grills similar to what they use at the state park. There is already outhouses and picnic tables there. Maybe a sign directing family's with kids to the new schoolyard for the swings and children activities.

A marina located in the downtown area

At this point I think this should be tabled. I do not see how this could be done. It would cost a lot of money just to develop plans for this. I suggest we team with the state of Michigan and see how the existing harbor could be used for recreational uses. Unfortunately with the seasonable availability of entertainment, food and such in Paradise I dont really see how a marina in town would benefit the community.

A multi use recreational bridge across the Tahquamenon River mouth

I really like this idea. I'm sure with the state of Michigan and dnr grants this bridge is a doable goal. Maybe the safety of snowmobile riders, birding people, and such should be stressed as a way not to be in traffic going 65 mph.

A separate, off road multi-use trail from the Tahquamenon River mouth to Whitefish point

Again I believe this is a very doable goal. With the existing snowmobile/ATV trails in the area this should be easy enough to accomplish. We could enlist the night riders group, dnr etc. This would help in getting users to paradise and the point.