

Whitefish Township Parks & Recreation Committee
September 16, 4 PM
Zoom Conference,
Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Daryl Ertel, Twp. Supervisor; David Heyboer, Planning Commission; Terry Begnoche, GLSM/Underwater Preserve; Terry Humphrey, Planning Commission; David Cords, Resident; Ellen Benoit, EUPRP&DC

The meeting began at 4:04 PM. Introductions were made.

Ellen Benoit gave a brief overview of the draft 21-25 Whitefish Township Recreation Plan. Members filled in areas where there were questions on the administrative structure. The graph was to be updated to put the Recreation Committee directly underneath the Township Board.

E. Benoit was able to get a few more pictures of inventory sites. Members offered to send pictures of those remaining that were needed: Betsy Lake trailhead near TSP Headquarters.

The goals and actions were looked at closer. Discussion of projects that were deemed important to focus on were:

1. Snowmobile Trails - Member D. Cords expressed the need to keep the snowmobile trails and bridge structures maintained as that is a very important part of the economics for the area in tourism dollars. There were a couple of bridges that needed repair and one that was completely washed away that needs to be replaced. There may be some issues with private property owners in that area so the trail was re-routed. Member suggested contacting Mike Cook for more information. D. Ertel would send contact information to E. Benoit. The road bridge over the Tahquamenon River remains a concern as it is very narrow and is the only crossing, not only for snowmobile/orv traffic but also for bicyclists or pedestrians. There are pilings of an older second bridge adjacent to the existing bridge, but widening of the existing bridge seems to be the most logical solution. E. Benoit reported an email received from Vince Bevins regarding MDOT road construction projects on M-123 in the area in FY 23/24 and 25. There is also a snowmobile trail project in progress with Newberry TSC. E. Benoit will follow-up with Newberry TSC to find out more information. The most cost-effect trail building is in conjunction with road projects, so discussions with MDOT and MDNR should begin to apply for additional grants in those years. There could be some opportunities to apply for the MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program for implementation of street improvements in the 2004 Visual Enhancement Plan and to the MDNR for recreational trails and the [2014 Tahquamenon Scenic Byway Non-Motorized Pathway and Trail Plan](#).
2. Saturn Memorial Park – expanding size (in process) and making it more accessible. Whitefish Township is working with the Chippewa County Road Commission on improving the road to the park. Wayfinding signage has been placed. Future goals would be to improve parking area, add a toilet facility, add a hand-pump well and develop a few rustic campsites. The Park Ordinance would have to be revised to allow camping.
3. Sunrise Park – the short-term actions would be to acquire the adjacent Road Commission property and evaluate the shoreline for erosion protection. Long-term actions would be to develop into a community park with a multi-purpose pavilion that could be enclosed and used

year-round, beach accessibility, picnic amenities, well, and toilet facilities. A site plan would need to be developed.

4. Bike paths – improving the Whitefish Pt. Road bike path – by developing an off-road multi-purpose paved path or widening the existing shoulder path. Potential issues could be not enough room in existing right of way and the private property owners. Reaching out to those property owners in the beginning of planning the off-road facility is important to address any issues that may arise.

There were some concerns expressed about some of the actions, but member will email these concerns and attend future Township Board meetings. Other members expressed that this plan is a general guideline and actions may or may not come to fruition, but it was important to include them for potential grant eligibility. The plan can also be amended as needed.

Next Steps – The Recreation Committee set the following schedule:

- Members to review and complete priority years/budget estimates and send to E. Benoit by 9/24.
- E. Benoit to complete the recreation plan draft by September 25, print and bind two hard copies and mail to Township, provide a digital copy for upload to Township website. E. Benoit to submit a public notice of the availability of draft plan for 30-day review and public hearing date to The Sault News and Tri-County Buyers Guide. The public review period will be from October 1- November 4.
- The Planning Commission will meet on October 7 to review and recommend plan for Township Board adoption at the next Township Board Meeting.
- The Public Hearing will be set for 11/5/2020 at 7:45 AM to hear and receive comments.
- The Township Board will be meeting 11/5/2020 at 8:00 AM to take action to pass a resolution and adopt the Recreation Plan.
- The plan checklist and minutes of meetings and resolution of adoptions will be incorporated into the plan and a final copy printed and bound and digital copy for township, as well as uploaded to the MDNR MiRecGrants website which will complete the recreation planning process.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 PM.