



www.M119TunnelofTrees.org

## M-119 TUNNEL OF TREES SCENIC HERITAGE ROUTE COMMITTEE

**DRAFT Minutes**

**Tuesday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**West Traverse Township Hall**

**8001 M-119, Harbor Springs, MI 49740**

### **Present**

Dale Scott, Friendship Township (Chair)  
James Fisher, Friendship Township  
Garon Gopigian, West Traverse Township  
Sue Rentrop, Cross Village / Emmet County Lakeshore Association  
Joey Arbaugh, West Traverse Township  
Jerry Root, Readmond Township  
  
Tammy Doernenburg, Emmet County Planning and Zoning Director  
Ben DuBois, MDOT  
Sherry Jones, Resident  
Steve Wolf, Resident  
David Berryman, Resident  
Isha Pithwa, Networks Northwest  
Cassidy Robarts, Networks Northwest

**Online presence** – Laurelynn Harris, Cross Village Township; Clayton Sigmann, MDOT

### **Absent**

Naomi Singer, Cross Village Township; Larry Wallen, Readmond Township; Don Schaplowsky; Readmond Township; Carolyn Sandford, West Traverse Township; Franz Neubrecht, Emmet County Lakeshore Association; Jim Anderson, Friendship Township

### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 9:44 by Chair Dale Scott. Attendance was recorded for those present and of online participants.

### **II. Additions to Agenda**

None.

### **III. Review and Adoption of Minutes from June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Garon requested that Thorne Swift Nature Preserve be added to committee member comments regarding distribution. Additionally, he noted that Friendship Township needed to be changed to Readmond Township in West Traverse Township's Municipal Representatives update.

*A vote was taken to approve the June meeting minutes, pending the previously mentioned changes. All in favor. None opposed.*

#### **IV. Chair Remarks**

- a. Dale Scott, Chair mentioned that there is a petition being circulated opposing the Readmond Township Recreational Plan.

#### **V. Public Comment**

- a. David Berryman introduced himself and expressed interest in being a part of the committee.

#### **VI. Subcommittee Updates**

- a. None.

#### **VII. Committee Member Comments**

- a. None.

#### **VIII. Partner Updates**

- a. **Networks Northwest** - Isha reported that the FY 2026 Work Plan was submitted and sent out to the committee. She also inquired about additional printing needs as there is still remaining funding in the current budget. She suggested the funding could be used for advertising of the potential ice storm/arborist presentation
- b. **MDOT** -
  - Ben offered to bring any questions the committee may have back to the TSC.
  - Clayton reminded attendees that the Byways Workshop is scheduled for November 3rd in Gaylord. He asked anyone not signed up for the Gov Delivery System, where his workshop updates are sent from, to inform Isha.
- c. **County Representatives** -
  - **Emmet County Planning and Zoning** - Tammy reported that there were no new property owners last quarter. She also announced two upcoming meetings:
    - **Emmet County Master Plan Kick-off Meeting** - July 24th, 6 PM, Little Traverse Township Hall
    - **Harbor Inc. Annual Meeting** - August 13th, 9 AM, Cross Village Township Hall
- d. **Municipal Representatives** -
  - **Friendship Township** - James F. reported on discussions regarding logging 80 acres of ice storm-damaged land. However, a tree crew assessed the area, stating that most of the affected trees are maple or beech and are expected to survive and grow. Therefore, they recommended postponing logging.
  - **Readmond Township** - None.

- **Cross Village Township** - Sue informed the group of ECLA's annual meeting on (date?) at 12pm (location?)
- **West Traverse Township** - Garon informed the group that Carolyn would be speaking at the West Traverse Township meeting on July 8th.

**e. Organization Representatives –**

- **Little Traverse Conservancy** - None.
- **Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians** - None.

**IX. Public Comment**

- a. None.

**X. Ongoing and Unfinished Business**

- a. **Ice Storm Public Info Session** – The committee discussed organizing a public session about ice storm recovery and tree care with an arborist. David offered Pond Hill Farm as a venue for the session and suggested that the committee pursue this as a group. The committee also discussed using existing budget funds for the session if needed.
- b. **DALMAC & Zoo-de-Mack updates** - None.
- c. **Website Proposals** - Isha and Cassidy discussed quotes for website hosting and search engine optimization (SEO), explaining that the goal is to make the committee's website appear higher in search results than third-party sites. Isha noted that the budgeted amount in the workplan reflects the highest quote they received from a provider, which is why it may seem high. Dave recommended a local contractor who may be able to help with website design. Isha also shared with the committee that she has heard some concerns about FlightPath from others at Networks Northwest. She also noted that a decision on the new website provider did not need to be made at the moment, but needs to be made by the end of the fiscal year.
- d. **Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Work Plan** - *A motion was made by Jerry to approve the FY 2026 Annual Work Plan, supported by Sue. All in favor, none opposed.*
- e. **Tree Cutting Ordinance** - Tammy provided a historical overview of discussions regarding a tree-cutting ordinance in the county, noting that research began in 2005 and a 2010 survey showed a 50/50 split among property owners regarding its implementation. Instead of enforcement, the county opted for education, sending information to new property owners about the Tunnel of Trees. Tammy explained that a county-wide tree cutting ordinance would likely be unenforceable based on state law and that ordinances would need to be at a township level. She reiterated that direct enforcement has not occurred for tree cutting instances, with only letters and information sent to property owners. Tammy emphasized that education, particularly involving realtors to inform potential buyers, is a more effective strategy for preservation.
- f. **Dark Sky Initiative** - Clayton mentioned that the Sunrise Coast Byway has been working with townships on dark sky ordinances, suggesting that this committee could explore similar approaches. Topic tabled until next meeting.

- g. Readmond Twp Restroom Proposal Update** - Tammy reported that Redmond Township received funding from the county toward their recreation plan.
- h. Law Enforcement Presence during October update** - Dale reported that he has not reached out to the law enforcement about attending a meeting yet but that he would be. He encouraged attendees to prepare specific questions for law enforcement officers for an upcoming meeting to discuss enforcement upgrade.

**XI. New Business**

- a.** None.

**XII. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 11:05. Next meeting on August 12, 2025 Cross Village – 5954 Wadsworth Rd., Harbor Springs, MI 49740 at 9:30 AM.