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M-119 TUNNEL OF TREES SCENIC HERITAGE ROUTE COMMITTEE

DRAFT Minutes

Tuesday, October 8th, 2024

Readmond Township Hall

6034 Wormwood Lane, Harbor Springs, MI 49740

Committee Members Present

Dale Scott, Friendship Township (Chair)
Franz Neubrecht, Emmet County Lakeshore Association
Naomi Singer, Cross Village Township
Garon Gopigian, West Traverse Township
Sue Rentrop, Cross Village / Emmet County Lakeshore Association
Laurelynn Harris, Cross Village Township
Don Schaplowsky, Readmond Township
Jerry Root, Readmond Township
Joey Arbaugh, West Traverse Township
Lisa Fineout, Readmond Township Supervisor
James Fisher, Friendship Township

Partners Present

Isha Pithwa, Networks Northwest

Online presence - Tammy Doernenburg, Emmet County Planning and Zoning Director, Caitlin Donnelly, Little Traverse Conservancy, Todd Neiss (MDOT)

Absent

Jim Anderson, Friendship Township
Carolyn Sandford, West Traverse Township
Larry Wallen, Readmond Township
Joe Tomlinson, Readmond Township
Neil Ahrens, Emmet County Commissioner, District 2 Friendship Township & West Traverse Township)
Heidi Phaneuf, MDOT
Ethan Reld, MDOT

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 9:39 by Chair Dale Scott. Attendance was recorded for those present and of online participants.

II. Review and Adoption of Minutes from September 10th, 2024

Motion by Joe Arbaugh, supported by Sue Rentrop, to approve the September meeting minutes. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

III. Agenda Review

No additions requested.

IV. Partner Reports

- a. **Emmet County Planning and Zoning (ECPZ)** – Tammy informed the group that Dale’s presentation is now available online on the Emmet County website under the September 19th meeting section. She also noted that the Board of Commissioners approved a text amendment, which will allow for additional changes to the accessory building section of the ordinance.
- b. **LTBBOI** – None.
- c. **LTC** – Caitlyn informed the group that construction has started on the trail at Woody’s Woods. She noted that the parking area along M-119 is located across from the existing Elmer Johnston Preserve. Caitlyn encouraged anyone who’s interested to visit. No additional updates were provided.
- d. **MDOT** – Clayton Sigmann was unable to attend today’s TOT meeting, but he has provided a report for the committee. He has also requested that I circulate the Byways Workshop flyer, which I have attached to the packet. Below is Clayton’s update:

Report:

- The Byway Workshop’s registration is open, the registration requests have been sent out through the byway delivery system. If you have not already, please sign-up for the Byways Delivery system, The instructions to sign-up are attached to the packet and can send those along to the committee separately if needed. Regarding the workshop, it will be held in Gaylord November 4th, for those worried about attending in-person, there will be a virtual attendance option for the afternoon session, which will focus on byways management from a local byway committee member’s perspective. If you wish to be included in the afternoon session, you will still need to register through the link. The byway’s flyer is shared via email as well as attached in packet.
- The 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the National Scenic Byways Program has been announced and will close December 16th 2024. These are larger grants aimed at projects along the byway and cast a wide net for projects that can be funded. However, these grants require a bit of technical base, so if there is a desire to pursue a project, please reach out to Heidi to begin discussing that process. The grants are competitive on a national basis with all other byways in the country and federally recognized tribes, so be sure to actively include MDOT in your application development. Additionally, applications need to be reviewed and prioritized by MDOT, so applications must be submitted to MDOT by November 20th to be considered for submission. More information about the NOFO has been sent out through the Byway Delivery System, and more details will be forthcoming through that distribution system. However, if you have questions on the workshop or this funding opportunity, please send them along to Clayton or bring them to me (Isha).

Tod Neiss, Resource Specialist from the MDOT North region gave his introduction and explained that he oversees the tree maintenance study for M-119. He opened the floor for any questions from the group. Tod mentioned that the tree assessment is typically conducted during the management plan update, with the next assessment scheduled for 2027-2028.

- e. **Networks Northwest (NN)** – Isha provided an update on the FY2024 budget – attached invoice

for final prints to the packet.

f. Committee Members Comment –

- Dale reported that he did the presentation to the Emmet County zoning and had no questions. Presentation went well.
- Naomi noted that the response was good at the Petoskey Chambers for the brochure handouts and seemed very helpful for people. She can ask from the people she met and shared the brochures with for the testimonial for the Byways Annual Evaluation form that is due in December.

V. Ongoing and Unfinished Business

a. Adopt-A-Highway Program – Dale updated on behalf of Carolyn about the Adopt-A-Highway Program thanking Jerry Root, Jim, Franz and Joe and all the members who helped pick up the litter along the Tunnel of Trees.

b. Review Fiscal Year 2024 Budget and accomplishments – Invoice for the last printing job was attached to the packet which concludes using all the funds for FY2024.

c. Review Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Work Plan Budget & work on plans for accomplishing goals –

The committee reviewed the FY2025 Budget. The currently approved budget includes \$500 for website maintenance, \$1,000 for printing, and \$250 for tree assessment. However, since MDOT staff typically handles tree assessments (maintenance and the tree disease survey/assessments) without any associated charges, the committee determined that budget allocation for this item is unnecessary. Given the successful distribution of printed materials this year and the positive response during the summer, the committee also agreed to allocate resources toward printing for the upcoming year as well. Regarding website improvements, it was noted that LIAH invoices \$365/\$375 per year for hosting fees, with additional hourly charges for updates if needed. As a result, the committee reduced the website budget from \$500 to \$400.

The committee expressed interest in focusing on sign improvements for FY2025. To support these improvements, additional funds will be needed or changes to existing allocation will be needed. An estimate from contractor Ken Harris was presented for sign improvements. The cost was quoted at \$650, with materials not to exceed \$100. The committee agreed on the contractor and the provided estimate. Isha reminded the group that all activities should be listed different with provision of details – attachment of the quote to the new budget discussed.

The committee discussed and approved the following revised FY2025 budget:

- Website Maintenance: \$400
- Printing: \$600
- Sign Improvements: \$750

Motions related to the discussion and conclusions above:

Motion by Garon Gopigian, supported by James Fisher to approve the quote from Ken Harris for \$750 for Sign Improvements, with \$650 allocated for labor and materials not to exceed \$100, as part of the FY2025 Planning Activity Item. All favored, none opposed. (Naomi wanted to mention that she abstains since Ken is her son. Dale mentioned that the bidding process was needed for

projects exceeding \$25000. Additional Note: Dale reminded the group that the bidding process is required for projects exceeding \$25,000.) Motion carried.

Motion by Garon Gopigian, supported by Sue Rentrop to revise the FY2025 Budget Planning to allocate \$400 for Website Maintenance, \$600 for Printing, and \$750 for Sign Improvements, for a total budget of \$1,750. All favored, none opposed. Motion carried.

- d. MDOT Byways Workshop in Gaylord 11/4/24 – Possible attendance?** Flyers and information attached – also discussed during MDOT’s report.
- e. DALMAC info report** – Jim Anderson - DALMAC is interested to attend the M-119 meetings. Contact information will be shared to Isha to include in the email list.
- f. Byways Annual Evaluation Report – Due 12/31/24?** Updates or changes to 2024 Evaluation discussed - The total volunteer hours remain the same as last year. There are no new committee members, and no members have resigned. Updated contact information has been provided. Naomi will be sending the new testimonial.
- g. Set meeting dates and locations for 2025** – Cross Village Township is not the best option for April 8th with the weather conditions at that time – will be notified later with updated information on the location – possibly LTC or Emmet County.
- h. Prep for new committee Chair beginning on 10/1/25.** – Dale reminded the group that a new committee chair will need to be appointed next year, with the appointment to occur sometime before October 1st, 2025.

VI. New Business - None

VII. Comments from the public and the board.

James Fisher informed the group about an organization called “Ragnar Run,” which hosts running events from Traverse City to Frankfort along the lakeshore. The group now plans and is interested to organize a run from Petoskey to Alpena, including portion along M-119. Ragnar Run consists of teams of 12 people at a time who take turns running, including running through the night. The group has expressed interest in further exploring the possibility of incorporating M-119 into their route. Discussion continued regarding safety, permits etc. Tod Neiss will follow up with permits and guidelines regarding same form MDOT.

Isha asked Dale and the committee about the existence of bylaws for the M-119 committee. The committee members were unsure and had no recollection of any bylaws being in place. There was some confusion regarding whether bylaws are required for a byway committee. Dale inquired if there are any guidelines or a formal structure available to provide more clarity on the subject.

VIII. Adjourn

Next meeting on April 8th, 2025 location TBD (will send communication) at 9:30 AM.
Motion by Naomi Singer to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 AM. Supported by Joey Arbaugh.