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M-119 TUNNEL OF TREES SCENIC HERITAGE ROUTE COMMITTEE

DRAFT Minutes

Tuesday, August 13th, 2024

Friendship Township Hall

3018 Beacon Hill, Harbor Springs, MI 49740

Committee Members Present

Dale Scott, Friendship Township (Chair)
Jerry Root, Readmond Township
Jim Anderson, Friendship Township
Joey Arbaugh, West Traverse Township
Don Schaplowsky, Readmond Township
Naomi Singer, Cross Village Township
Laurelynn Harris, Cross Village Township
Larry Wallen, Readmond Township
James Fisher, Friendship Township
Joe Tomlinson, Readmond Township
Garon Gopigian, West Traverse Township
Franz Neubrecht, Emmet County Lakeshore Association

Partners Present

Isha Pithwa, Networks Northwest
Jay Gailits, Gaylord TSC Manager MDOT

Others Present

Linda Rosalik, Cross Village Township Committee Member

Absent

Neil Ahrens, Emmet County Commissioner, District 2 Friendship Township & West Traverse Township)
Hillary Taylor, Emmet County
Sue Rentrop, Cross Village / Emmet County Lakeshore Association
Lisa Fineout, Readmond Township Supervisor
Tammy Doernenburg, Emmet County Planning and Zoning Director
Carolyn Sandford, West Traverse Township
Caitlin Donnelly, Little Traverse Conservancy

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 9:31 by Chair Dale Scott. Chair led attendance by introduction/roll call to note members' presence at the meeting.

II. Review and Adoption of Minutes from August 13th, 2024

Motion by Joe Arbaugh, supported by Dale Scott, to approve the meeting minutes for July with suggested corrections on attendance. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

III. Agenda Review

IV. Partner Reports

- a. **Emmet County Planning and Zoning (ECPZ)** – No report or updates.
- b. **LTBBOI** – No report or updates.
- c. **LTC** – No new updates.
- d. **MDOT** – Update from Jay Gailits – MDOT is going to do a new road project in future probably 2026 - Chip Seal the M119 corridor. They are working with the county to put gravel shoulders and a little pre work. Secondly, they sent communication on email regarding Forest Beach rd. There was a request for tree trimming. They don't have issues for tree trimming along any state highways but M119 is a different case and difficult to do so with critical slope and MDOT is very likely to disapprove. Also the right of way is very narrow and the requests are mostly outside of their authority or MDOT right of way. The discussion proceeded regarding the tree trimming. Dale suggested the group that if you see any critical tree needing trimming please contact Jay or pass the information. Majority of M119 would be 33 ft from the center line generally however, it does change on different locations depending on the Right of Way. Jay shared that there is a MDOT Right of Way Map on MDOT website with numbers and instructions look up. If it's difficult to find and navigate please contact MDOT.
- e. **Networks Northwest (NN)** – Isha updated the committee about the printed materials, the invoice copy has been given to Dale Scott. The invoice has been processed and submitted to MDOT for reimbursement. For the current FY2024 the group has \$522.3 spare to use before September 30th that has to be spent on printing purposes.
- f. **Committee Members Comment** –
 - Naomi updated the group about a letter from Harbor Inc. and gave the group an overview on Harbor Inc. works – (See attached letter **Page 5-6**)
 - Laurelynn Harris - conveyed the group's condolences to Larry Wallen
 - Dale Scott updated the group about the Good Hart Artist Residency Tunnel Of Trees Art Trail is happening on August 17th, 2024
 - Dale Scott informed the group about a special use permit approved by the County for a large accessory unit by Richard Wallace, located along the lake side of the Tunnel of Trees, approximately one mile south of Cross Village. The permit was approved – there were several buildings on the property. Further discussion followed regarding zoning, building heights, allowances, and approved permits impacting the character of M119.

V. Ongoing and Unfinished Business

a. Adopt-A-Highway Program – None

- b. Review Fiscal Year 2024 Budget and Expenditure** – The last billed invoice for the submitted prints was \$2,124.50, leaving a remaining balance of \$522.30 to be spent by September 30th. The group discussed the possibility of using the remaining funds for updates to current signs if necessary. No other items are planned for spending in FY2024. It was agreed to ask Clayton Sigmann whether the remaining funds could be used for signage and if it is still possible to resubmit the budget to request the use of these funds for signage. Isha requested specific details regarding the signs, including their locations.

Motion to use the remaining funds for signage cleaning and contract work, pending MDOT approval and possible request, was made by James Fisher and supported by Jim Anderson.

c. Review Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Work Plan Budget and Expenditure –

Isha informed the group that the FY2025 budget was revised after the initial submission. Clayton provided the revised budget (a copy was attached to the packet). The approved amount from MDOT is \$1,750, which includes \$500 for the Website Activity, \$250 for the Tree Study Activity, and \$1,000 for the Printing Activity. However, MDOT was unable to fund the \$1,000 Signage Improvement Activity and the \$250 Public Meeting Activity. The Public Meeting Activity may still be eligible for funding under the Byway Administration Work Element. The signage and public involvement items were not approved primarily due to their low scores in meeting the program's goals and objectives.

The group discussed whether to allocate funds for signage next year, but the current FY2025 budget does not include this item since it was not approved. The group agreed to leave the budget as is and, if necessary, resubmit the request. Isha suggested that future budget items should be well-planned and detailed before submission. If changes are needed in the future, the group can resubmit the budget request, but any requested changes should be clearly planned to avoid multiple submissions. While the total funding amount will remain unchanged, action items can be adjusted and resubmitted if necessary.

Tree Assessment – Isha inquired about the next tree assessment, its process, and potential contacts. The last tree assessment was conducted in 2021 during the preparation of the 2023 Management Plan. Jay informed the group that Tod Neiss assisted with the previous assessment and could be contacted for the next one. Contact information shared.

d. Review progress on educational materials printing, storage, and distribution plans –

Dale requested Isha to update the M119 website with the newly printed educational materials. Dale has all the boxes containing the new prints and asked for volunteers from the group to help distribute them. Dale will keep track of how many prints are given to each township, who receives them, and where they are distributed, and will share this information with Isha. Naomi suggested that copies also be shared with Harbor Inc. and the Chamber of Commerce.

- e. Presentation to Emmet County Commissioners** – Dale organized a presentation to Emmet County Commissioners to present and take a few handouts as well. Asked the group if they wanted to join.

- f. **Signage** – Dale discussed the issue regarding the sharp curve north of Horseshoe Bend and the request for possible signage for deer and 'Keep to Right' warnings. MDOT representatives, and NN met to review the crash report and map related to the area. Continuing from previous emails, the MDOT meeting for review of issue, and the group interest and discussion concluded that additional signage would not be the best solution.

Linda raised a separate issue about a group of teenagers vandalizing the Bear sign located at the corner of M-119, across from the post office. The sign was torn up, and no one has taken responsibility for its replacement or repair. Linda asked if anyone knew the origin of the sign and other helpful information. Discussion proceeded - the sign was not under MDOT jurisdiction or M-119, as it was located just past the end of the Tunnel of Trees. The group suggested checking with the fire department for more information.

- g. **MDOT Byways Workshop in Gaylord 11/4/24 – Possible attendance?** Dale asked the group who all are interested in going. Isha will share more information on the workshop details as it becomes available.

VI. New Business

Tree Trimming Proposals discussion & Shoreline Bluff Protection Ordinance discussion - Discussed in item IV d

VII. Comments from the public and the board.

- Linda shared that Cross Village Township is beginning work on their 10-year plan, which will include input on the future vision for the township. This planning process will involve stakeholders similar to those involved with the Tunnel of Trees, including County planning members and tribal representatives, to address community interests and concerns. Cross Village Township may request a member of this committee to represent the Tunnel of Trees' interests, possibly by creating a presentation and discussing issues that overlap with the township's 10-year plan.

VIII. Adjourn

Next meeting on September 10, 2024 West Traverse Township Hall – 8001 M-119 Harbor Springs, MI 49740 at 9:30 AM.

*Motion by Jim Anderson to adjourn the meeting at 10:49 AM. Supported by James Fisher.
Motion passes.*



August 1, 2024

Henry and Naomi Singer
2341 Tor Lane
Petoskey, MI 49770

Dear Henry and Naomi,

Harbor Inc. continues to partner with the city of Harbor Springs and the Top of Michigan Trails Council on the “Harbor Way” project – an extension of Little Traverse Wheel Way into downtown Harbor Springs. Permits are in place, designs have been finalized, and we are now focused on raising the funds to begin construction. For more information and to help support the project, please visit harborinc.org or the information sign at the current trail end in Kosequat Park and on both sides of the M-119 underpass entrances.

In addition to the “Harbor Way” project, Harbor Inc. is getting back to our roots of facilitating important conversations with our local units of government. Michigan Public Act 233 of 2023 will take effect on November 29, 2024. This act makes significant changes to the permitting process for large-scale renewable energy facilities including solar, wind, and battery energy storage systems. The law grants permitting authority to the Michigan Public Utilities Commission and options for retaining local regulatory control. Important stakeholders have shared that providing a space for questions and feedback is needed and would be beneficial to our Townships and Emmet County.

As part of Harbor Inc.’s Annual Meeting, we’ve invited Mary Reilly of Michigan State University Extension to speak about the key elements of Act 233 and the most up-to-date information available to assist with community planning and zoning decisions. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and share insights with colleagues. Mary Reilly is a land use educator and serves northwest lower Michigan. She travels statewide providing specialized training programs on wind and solar energy, emerging zoning issues, zoning administration, shoreline planning and zoning, zoning board of appeals and Open Meetings Act. Mary has over 20 years of experience in planning and zoning and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

As a key supporter of Harbor Inc. and our community, please join us for a critical discussion and learn more about what Harbor Inc. is doing to foster connections and collaborate with our community members to create cohesiveness in our area planning processes. The Annual Meeting will take place at Little Traverse Township Hall on August 15th, from 9:00-10:30 am.

As we continue to listen to community needs and provide spaces for conversations, our Loft Coworking Space is providing space for our area workers, both seasonal and year-round residents, and students. Please consider a gift to Harbor Inc. to provide continued space and support for the Loft and our mission of enhancing the community by building connections, fostering collaboration, and turning ideas into action.

Sincerely,



Caitlin Donnelly
Harbor Inc., Board Chair


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