

**YANKEE SPRINGS TOWNSHIP
MARK ENGLERTH
INFORMATIONAL MEETING REGARDING**

Trails

July 17, 2014

3:00 p.m.

**Yankee Springs Fire Station
1425 S. Payne Lake Rd., Wayland, Michigan 49348**

**INFORMATIONAL
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MINUTES

Meeting began at 3:00 PM by

Those in attendance:

Roll Call: Roger Rottschafer, Bruce Campbell, Mark Englerth (3:15 pm) (Board of Trustees)

Valerie Byrnes – Barry Cty. Economic Development

Mark Dionise, MDOT

Jake Welch, Barry County Road Commission

Steve Stepek, Kalamazoo Area Transportation Services

Jodi Stefforia, Kalamazoo Area Transportation Services

Mick Barney, Barry County Planning & Zoning

Andrew Jevicks, Unit Mgr. Parks and Rec Division, YS Rec. Area, YS Park Mgr.

Bonnie Hildreth, Barry Community Foundation

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Valerie Byrnes, of Barry County Economic Development, opened the meeting with everyone introducing themselves. Discussion began with:

Bruce Campbell, YS Trustee and Owner of Sand Bar & Grill, sees a ton of bikes on trailers every weekend. There are 200 campsites at the campground. Safety is a key issue. He would like to avoid accidents. B. Campbell would like to see progress beginning on M-179 and” tying in with the other areas of the lake.

Andrew Jevicks of YS Recreation Area, commented there is a trail that brings you out of the campground and when the bikers get to the road (M-179) they have no choice but to ride on the road. There is no bike trail south of Gun Lake, even though visitors ask about it. Andrew believes there is a need for it and would bring more people to the area. Deep Lake Rustic has a dirt bike facility.

Roger Rottschafer, YS Trustee, lives on Payne Lake and commented that walking around the area (near Fire Station/Payne Lake/M-179) is not safe. Rottschafer also mentioned that he liked the idea of tying in the Veteran Memorial with the trail somehow.

Steve Stepek mentioned a corresponding plan (possibly 2011) on the South West-Region’s Planning Commission Website as being a starting point for planning. Discussion occurred regarding picking up a future YS Twp. Trail/ Path with the Paul Henry Trail. Also mentioned was the North Country Trail.

Discussion continued:

B. Campbell commented ideally he'd like to see something off the road with a good buffer of trees.

S. Stepek commented that a trail would be 10 foot paved with 2' on each side for clear zone with MDOT (most likely). Locally funding would give more flexibility to the standards of the trail. Also mentioned was that maintenance could involve MDOT, the county road commission, and the township.

Mark Englerth entered the meeting at 3:15 p.m. and apologized for his late arrival due to his work activities.

Englerth commented Yankee Springs has a recreation plan in place, but it doesn't include a linear park or walkable trail.

S. Stepek commented that the township could plan something regionally. For DNR funding it was mentioned that an updated rec plan was needed.

It was mentioned that if the township wanted to do the project locally with private funds, it would probably be a lot less expensive. Englerth mentioned that MDOT funding may be a struggle on M-179 from McDonald's to the Shell Station on the east.

Mark Dionise, of MDOT thinks Chief Noonday is a 66' right of way and does not think that it would be a tree-lined between the path and the roadway.

Rottschafner indicated that local folks may have some dollars that they are interested in using to get the project moving forward.

Bonnie Hildreth mentioned that her group has worked with Orangeville quite a bit, and is also partnering with Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy which has a master plan of the Gun Lake area and has been starting an accumulation of properties. Peter Tarelow was mentioned as a contact. A group meets annually at Pierce and they go through the master plan and look at how they have been able to actually put in conservancy some of this land within the state game area which is private land. Clarification was made of the proposed project's parameters. North Country Trail will not be involved.

Englerth commented that once one gets on state park and game land, YS is looking at 36 miles of trails that are established or semi-established. Englerth pointed out that YS Twp. is already the trail community. Englerth commented that mountain biking in YS Twp. is phenomenal.

Andrew Jevicks commented that people come from Indiana and border states. They come with their family and not all of the family members are always mountain bikers, so regular bike trails would be an attraction for these as well.

Mick Barney commented that Gun Lake could be a hub for trails. It could be a destination instead of just the path. Mick is looking at safety near the south side of the lake (Orangeville). Barney felt it would be difficult to create a trail on the south side of Gun Lake.

Englerth commented that better than two decades ago, a plan to build a walkable community around Gun Lake failed. Englerth pointed out that this history shows that there is interest in this project for the community. It also points out that it is a struggle to get the project going. Englerth added that he felt people are a lot more willing and feel comfortable to send money to an organization, rather than directly to government.

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Discussion regarding engineering issues:

Jake Welch of Barry County Road Commission commented that Patterson Road is Allegan's and Barry County picks up Patterson south of the Lake. They (Allegan) go just north of Green Lake Road.

Englerth commented on major bridge reconstruction on Cuddy Drain, a quarter mile south of the corner (BP/Old Curley Cone). **Barney** commented that they have something similar to this on Gun River, but a box culvert is not planned at this time.

Englerth commented on setting up phases of the project and getting the community behind it.

The possibility of Tribal Fund availability was discussed.

Mark Dionise: commented on MDOT's Transportation Alternative Program being a possibility.

Steppek commented about missing a planning piece about what the township and the people of the township want for the project. Steve noted "conceptually" is the only way that you see funding on this and it is necessary to show regional connection. Conceptual connections need to be shown.

Englerth commented that because the township is a very conservative community and if you draw the picture way too fast, it may scare people. There are five communities within the township that need to be included (the other lakes besides Gun Lake). Englerth also noted that YS Twp. is a community that is basically the size of Hastings.

Hildreth commented that she saw Orangeville's success in developing the 12 step approach for parks & rec. and having the "Build it and they will come" kind of mentality. Hildreth noted the area as being a "jewel of Barry County."

Steppek commented regarding the unlikely-hood of state funding.

Englerth commented, "If you fail the first time, politically you won't get to recover." Englerth spoke about going down along M-179 without bumping it and going to the state park. "These businesses (on M-179) make a living in the summer, and starve during the winter," commented Englerth.

J. Welch commented the Road Commission dealt recently with the Lake Odessa/Jordan Lake trail. Leaders of the project were very interested on trying to gain MDOT funds. "There are some issues on our end (BCRC); it is a huge risk on our part for upkeep," commented Welch. Welch added, "Later on it puts our federal funding at risk – if not maintained. Ionia and Barry County kind of stepped out of the situation." Welch commented that YS has other options. "There is some economic input on the north part of the lake that you can tap into. It needs to start with a comprehensive plan...The road commission's federally funding cannot be at risk," commented Welch.

More discussion on possible funding:

Stepek commented that the Road Commission has to apply for the funds. MDOT can't apply for the funds nor can YS. "Local funds for your first key piece, might be your best option," commented Stepek.

V. Byrnes mentioned a recent conversation from a manager of Barry County Road Commission.

J. Welch commented that the Road Commission risks its future funding for roads when it gets involved with trail projects.

Englerth commented on county road commissions drowning because of the lack of state and federal funding.

Barney commented on the difficulty of a similar project near the Plainfield area that took three years. There were no funds for planning. All adjacent properties had to be contacted.

Stepek felt the consensus around the table was for an update to the recreation plan...so the conceptual of where the township is going would be known. "If there is state funding, I would lean toward the DNR based off that recreation plan for your first piece," added Stepek. "It's a competitive pot of money," Stepek also added.

Englerth brought up the need to subscribe to a vehicle to drive the project through. He commented, "You can't have just volunteers."

Stepek mentioned a "friends of (group)" (such as "Friends of the Cuddy Drain").

Englerth commented that Phase #1 of the project would be from McDonald' to the Fire Station.

V. Byrnes mentioned that she is on the South Central Planning Council for this region. There might be some funding available.

Stepek commented that the first step is having a conceptual and a rec plan.

It was confirmed that the project should have the word "conceptual" tied to it real hard.

Englerth also noted that the township has not historically gone after a millage.

Hildreth commented that there may be some conservancy dollars.

Mick Barney has one or two donors that might participate.

A. Jevicks will be meeting next week with some people from his planning department to work on a master plan for Yankee Springs Recreation. They haven't done a master plan since the 1970's for this. Jevicks commented that if the township could start putting the recreation plan together for some of those pieces, when the Parks & Rec starts having its public meetings, and start bringing stakeholders in looking at the future recreation area all of things will go along if the information in place. Jevicks encouraged getting something on paper for the first phase.

Englerth commented that at least a bare bones program is needed. How do you perceive with making a plan?

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Hildreth commented on the need for a conceptual plan as well.

Barney commented on options that he felt could be used for the plan.

Englerth commented on the township not having a DPW and realistic maintenance expectations from Barry or Allegan Counties.

Hildreth commented that there's a need for a facilitator.

Mark Dionise of MDOT commented that there is usually two ways that MDOT can help with funding. The first way being the Transportation Alternative Program, and the other is to help with assisting through a complete streets program approach.

Stepek commented that Dave Bee – is the one he'd call. He is the director of the Regional Planning Commission.

At this point, Stepek had to leave the meeting.

Byrnes commented that Bee was on vacation but could perhaps be at the next meeting.

Dionise of MDOT commented that Daryl Hardin would be a helpful planning specialist. Dionise commented of a rearrangement in the future with the regions and predicted a possibly better situation with the Grand region.

In summary, V. Byrnes felt that the consensus was for this group to continue to meet and to come up with some funding matches through various sources to be able to begin with the comprehensive plan update to include portions of the linear park idea, whether the whole phase piece is done now or some level of it. "If were not relying on a lot of funding, it's a place to start." added Byrnes. V. Byrnes commented, "Bonnie (Hildreth), myself, and then township folks and any others where dollars come from, if we can at least get some quotes and ideas out of CATS (Jodi), and what some dollar costs might be for something like that. If we are working with Dave Bee, I will get some kind of level of quote from him and then bring it back to this group to begin that process."

Hildreth commented that her donors will want to see how the entire piece ties with the other trails.

Mick Barney described his path plans. He can't see connecting easily to the Paul Henry trail however.

Englerth commented that down the road Thornapple Township needs to be brought in.

Hildreth commented the next step is what collectively (YS Twp. and Orangeville) could put in the pot to create the plan.

Englerth commented that he has mixed emotions – that we are getting too far stretched out (project-wise).

Hildreth commented Mark Pardowski showed what it looks like at the end (project in Orangeville).

Barney felt that Bruce and Mark could work on an independent, separate piece, as well as tying into being part of the big plan.

Byrnes had hoped someone would step up and say "I'm in", but commented that she would help keep the group going and facilitate bringing the group together to figure out, and be the connectivity with South Central Michigan or Dave Bee with West Michigan Regional Planning.

Byrnes commented that she doesn't really have a person on staff that would really harness this project and move it along.

Hildreth commented that she would be checking for funding as well (specific contact unclear on recording).

Englerth inquired what would be the outcome if MDOT were pushed on widening the shoulders of M-179.

Dionise of MDOT commented that it would probably be more difficult than one would think, it can't really move the traffic lines over. MDOT would need to start from scratch.

Englerth commented about other townships, and speed and passing issues.

Dionise commented that for speed, a speed study was needed to lower speed limit.

V. Byrnes commented that she and Bonnie will follow up on a certain amount of things. **B. Hildreth** will help connect to a group (BCEDA) for potential funding to get a facilitator that is solely focused on this process. **Byrnes** also mentioned that **Dave Bee** may actually be able to play that role. But there may be an amount involved.

Tentative next meeting date: August 14 at 3 p.m. at the fire station. **Dave Bee** will be here. (**Byrnes** will confirm **Dave's** availability).

Other outcomes from the meeting that were mentioned:

Andrew Jevicks will talk to planners regarding those that are coming out to do the Master plan. **A. Jevicks** will mention this trail system at this meeting with the planners.

It was mentioned that a larger map would be a good visual.

It was noted that there are 15 miles around Gun Lake per Mick. All the sides are different.

Discussion occurred regarding simple cuts, easements, and Payne Lake Creek. The north and south sides were brought up for comparison.

The meeting came to a close at 4:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Deb Mousseau
Recording Secretary 7/26/14

Date: _____

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ADJOURNMENT