

Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting Minutes

Location: Muskegon

Date: June 14, 2022

Roll Call

Present for the Waterways Commission:

- Commissioner, Chair, Barb Brooks
- Commissioner, Vice-Chair, Pat Egan, via phone
- Commissioner, Secretary, Mary Rising
- Commissioner, Fred Sitkins
- Commissioner, Elaine Isely
- Commissioner, Chris Shepler
- Commissioner, Mark Yonan

Others Present:

- Vicki McGhee, DNR
- Michelle Wieber, DNR, Recorder
- Michael Desnoyer, DNR
- Linnae Dawson, DNR

Special Guests:

- Pat Whalen, DNR
- Greg Sherburn, DNR
- Dakota Hewlett, DNR

Not Present:

- Ron Olson, DNR
- Maia Turek, DNR
- Jordan Byelich, DNR

Meeting minutes

Opening Comments:

- Chair, Barb Brooks called for the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m., June 14, 2022.
- The meeting began with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Chair, Barb Brooks requested introductions, as this was the first in-person meeting since December 5, 2019. Many of the Commissioners/staff had not met one another outside the virtual world.

Public Appearance:

- In the meeting packet, there was a memo submitted by Katie Duman, President, Les Cheneaux Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Duman wrote to the Commission on behalf of the Township in support of Clark Township's proposal to perform an upgrade by replacing the aging power pedestals at the Hessel Marina. The request in assistance to fund the project would result in a recreational asset. The grant application was approved.
- In the meeting packet, there was a memo submitted by Deana Jerdee, Executive Director, Paddle Antrim. Ms. Jerdee wrote to the Commission regarding the approval to fund improvements to the Village of Elk Rapids. The grant award will help provide a universal kayak/canoe launch, accessible restrooms, and a wash station for aquatic invasive species prevention, among other projects.

Action Items:

- MOTION: Chair Barb Brooks asked for a motion for approval for the revised minutes from the February 2, 2022, Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Mark Yonan and was seconded by Commissioner Chris Shepler. Motion carried unanimously 7-0.
- MOTION: Chair Barb Brooks asked for a motion for approval for the minutes from the April 29, 2022, Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Mark Yonan and was seconded by Commissioner Fred Sitkins. Motion carried unanimously 7-0.
- Retreat Action items are a standing agenda item. There were no updates made to the list since the previous meeting.

Committee Reports:

- The Special Projects Subcommittee met and discussed their communication with Ms. Jerdee, of Paddle Antrim. Commissioner Elaine Isely mentioned they spoke about the access, and ways to improve paddle sports on both water trails and waterways facilities.
- The Operations Subcommittee also met. Commissioner Mary Rising stated the Committee received a variance request from the George Kemp Marina, Sault Ste. Marie. The marina requested one additional season slip. After consulting surrounding marinas and finding the

well-seasoned harbormaster both agreed it would not negatively impact any transient recreational boaters. The Operations Subcommittee recommended approval, and a review after 3 years to determine if an adjustment is necessary.

Informational Business:

- Guest speakers, Pat Whalen, Plainwell District Manager, and Greg Sherburn, Unit Supervisor of Muskegon State Park and Duck Lake State Park, presented to the Commission a review of the Plainwell District operations. The district is responsible for fifteen state parks and 136 boating access sites, two field offices, as well as overseeing a construction crew. A sampling of the projects includes building boat launch ramps, storm cleanup, oak wilt (invasive species) vibratory plowing, permit booth and vault toilet construction, shelter repairs, shoreline stabilization, and skid pier construction.
- Guest speaker, Dakota Hewlett, Non-motorized Trail Grant Coordinator, presented a piece on state designated water trails to the Commissioners. A water trail is a designated route on a navigable waterway such as a lake, river, canal, or bay that is designed, implemented, and managed to foster educational and recreational experiences for the user. Water trail designations could be State Designated Water Trails, Pure Michigan Water Trails, National Water Trails, or Local Water Trails. There are currently nine existing State Water Trails. Applications for designation will be accepted until early November.

General Updates

- Vicki McGhee reported to the Commission on behalf of Ron Olson. The state budget for FY23 is still in progress. In the spring, the DNR sent staff to New York to gather more information on the Dredge Master machine. Staff determined it to be a complex and expensive in terms of both equipment and annual operations, and therefore not financially feasible for the Department at this time. In consideration of unifying all of the department's programs under the DNR logo, the plan is to discontinue the Michigan State Waterways Commission logo. Commissioner input on discontinuing the logo was requested.

Financial Updates

- Financial information updates were provided to the Commissioners in the meeting packet. Michael Desnoyer provided further details including updates to revenue and expenditures.

Operations Updates

- Linnae Dawson provided an Operations update to the Commissioners. Linnae noted the numbers were strong for slip reservations, and that the price of gas does not seem to be slowing things down. While most harbors are staffed for the season, there are a handful that are still hiring. The recent increase in the hourly rate to \$15 has assisted many units in filling seasonal worker vacancies.

Marketing Updates

- There were no marketing updates to report.

Project Reports

- The Michigan State Waterways Development Program Project Report was included in each Commissioner's meeting packet for their information.
- Vicki McGhee provided an update, on behalf of Jordan Byelich, to the Commission on various State projects. Vicki first spoke of Lexington State Harbor, it is partially complete, as the showers and restrooms are useable, and the remaining work will be finished in early July. Mackinac Island State Harbor – the project is out for bid, with bids due June 29. The Clinton River Cutoff Boating Access Site (BAS) is under construction and is anticipated to be complete this fall. Paving projects are active at Au Gres State Harbor, Klinger Lake BAS, and Paw Paw East BAS, which are anticipated to be complete this fall. Projects that are on the horizon include a study of Grayhaven for design and feasibility of a BAS. Torch River BAS is in the development and design phase.
- Linnae Dawson shared updates on Grant-in-Aid projects with the Commission. Schoolcraft Township is nearly closing out their grant, signage has been delivered and will soon be posted. Work in Berrien County is also nearly complete, broadside dockage, day dockage, and a kayak launch are just about finished. There are about 10 communities ready to close out their grants. Grant awards for 2022 are in the process of being executed.

Transmittals

- Chair Barb Brooks received a memo regarding Senate Bill No. 968. It was introduced by Senator John Bizon, highlighting boating registration fees. Based on Michigan Boating Industries Association (MBIA), the Commission thought that the proposed bill needed revisions before the Michigan State Waterways Commission could support it.

Great Lakes Water Level Report

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District Great Lakes water level outlook was included in each Commissioner's meeting packet for their information.

Non-Agenda Items

- Commissioner Chris Shepler prompted a discussion on riparian rights.
- Vice-Chair, Pat Egan shared with the Commission his enthusiasm for the August meeting taking place in Menominee.
- Chair Barb Brooks prompted a discussion on the methods for sharing electronic documents with the commissioners. Staff will investigate options.

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The next Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting: August 24, 2022, in Menominee.