

LITTLEFIELD TOWNSHIP PUBLIC HEARING

GRANT REQUEST FOR RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY WITH MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND

Held Electronically by ZOOM
February 2, 2021 TIME: 6:50 PM

Meeting called to order by Damien Henning, Supervisor, and announced it is being held by Zoom due to the concerns of the health & safety of all persons who would otherwise be attending an in-person meeting in accordance to public act 228 of 2020. S. Festerling explained that Roll Call under the new electronic guidelines needs each board member to state where they are participating from. **Roll Call all by Zoom:** D. Henning, Supervisor (Littlefield Township, Michigan), K. Shomin, Treasurer (Littlefield Township, Michigan), D. Morford, Trustee (Littlefield Township, Michigan), K. Derrohn, Trustee (Participating absent member due to medical conditions at Venice, Florida-Sarasota County), and S. Festerling, Clerk (Littlefield Township, Michigan). Guests participating through Zoom: Max Putters, Kim Morgan, Brent Bolin, Jule Peurasaari, Jason Lousy, Scott Lauer, and Brian Drayton.

D. Henning explained the purpose of the Public Hearing is to get Public comments on the Grant Request Littlefield Township is working on to fund the purchase 11.23 acres of property located parallel to US31 Hwy between Milton Rd. and Powers Rd. and 3.94 acres north of Powers Rd located in the Village of Alanson. The purpose of the project is to provide public park land and open space to allow realignment of the North Western State Trail.

D. Henning opened the meeting for any public comments in regards to the North Western State Trail:

Brent Bolin from Top of Michigan Trails Council introduced himself and gave notice to Max Putters as being a Trails Council Board Member along with being a general trail champion and champion of this project. Brent wanted to commend the township for moving this project forward and to try to improve the trail alignment. The North Western Trail has been a real asset to the community and this section of the trail has been one of the most popular sections, and by moving it up onto the railroad grade it will be much safer for all that use it. It could also open up the option to create a trail head on the north end bringing more users into the Village of Alanson and its businesses.

Max Putters responded that this section of the trail has tried to be acquired for at least 20 years. It is exciting that it is now a real possibility to place the trail where it always should have been. There have been three owners of the railroad right of way leading into the Village of Alanson business district that has agreed to sell at a discount of 25% to meet the grant requirements. The next important step is to get the final appraised value which is where purchasing this property has fallen apart in the past by the then one owner. Max stated that if the price comes in close to the SEV this deal will go through. Max went on to say there are a lot of stars in alignment: MDOT is participating, there is a lot of support coming from the College and the Village of Alanson. MDOT is willing to build the trail from at least Powers Rd. going south. The Village section will take a little bit more and maybe another grant program. The owners Tom and Bob Oelke have agreed to build and pay for a trail side gazebo to dedicate and honor their grandmother. This area has the makings for a great trail head that connects three trails: North Western State Trail, North Country Scenic Trail, and the Iron Bell Trail, not to mention the waterways. Emmet

County Planning & Zoning Director, Tammy Doernenburg, is very involved with this segment just like she was for the Oden and Ponshevaing segments of the trail.

Scott Lauer stated he is 100% for the trails upgrade. He said he would like to see it have more signs for stop signs or safety signs to protect people on the trail. Maybe start posting signs sooner down the trail stating stop approaching then the stop sign at the intersection. Scott stated that within the seven years he has been on the fire department there has been more than a dozen calls on the bike trail. It needs to be made safe for both people on the bike path and also for people in automobiles or snowmobiles. Max Putters replied to these concerns stating that the Trails Council has been working with MDOT on signs and that the Council has Bill Prall, a safety person within the council, who is an avid bike rider on the trails mapping areas that need signage. Brent Bolin added that the Council will also be working with MDOT for signage.

Damien Henning asked if there were any further public comments. Katie Derrohn asked what the Township's next step is. The response to that was that Tammy Doernenburg who has taken the lead for writing the grant request for the township, will continue to obtain additional letters of support. Damien Henning stated that he has received a really powerful letter of support to review before submission from Matt at MDOT. We are also looking for letters of support from the Village of Alanson and Littlefield Public Schools to name a few yet to come in. By obtaining this grant it will allow us to place the trail where it always should have been. Other than additional letters of support, Damien and Tammy will be going over all the documents for completion, and they will need the Minutes from this Public Hearing and a Certified Resolution Approving Submission of Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant Application for Acquisition of Property in Littlefield Township. Damien stated in a recent conversation with Tom Bailey from the MDNR, Tom said that Emmet County Municipalities are known for following through with the grant request which means a lot to the people who are with the DNR Trust Fund.

Damien went on to say that to do our due diligence we will need an appraisal, and due to the potential size of the purchase price we may have to get two appraisals. Kim Shomin asked who would be paying for the appraisals. Damien stated that the last time our Township paid for the appraisals. This time Tammy Doernenburg said she was going to try and see if the County will help our Township out by paying for them.

Damien Henning again asked if there were any further public comments in regards to the Grant Request, and without any further comments he **Moved to Adjourn** the Public Hearing, Second by Katie Derrohn, Motion Carried 5 Yes, 0 No.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:25PM

Sondra Festerling
Littlefield Township Clerk