



**NEWAYGO COUNTY
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
Newaygo County Welcome Center – Conference Room
April 7, 2026**

PRESENT: Mark Guzniczak, Steve Hatting, Jim Maike, Mark Pitzer, April Storms, Chuck Trapp, Dale Twing, Janet Westfield

ABSENT: John Clark, Doug Harmon

STAFF PRESENT: Chris Wren, Asa Vermeulen, Connie Parks

PUBLIC PRESENT: Bryan Kolk, Randy Butters, Amanda Paige

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. by Board Vice-Chair **Guzniczak**

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Maike, supported by Trapp, to approve the agenda with the deletion of the by-law motion as another meeting is needed first.

AYES – All. MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Randy Butters from NCEC and Amanda Paige from MRWA were in attendance to discuss the Pollinator Pathway at Ed Henning County Park

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Maike, supported by Pitzer, to approve the minutes from the January 6, 2026, meeting.

AYES – All. MOTION CARRIED.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

**Motion by Maike, supported by Hatting, to approve the Revenue and Expenditure Report totaling \$47,183.67 for the period March 1, 2026 – April 02, 2026.
AYES – All. MOTION CARRIED.**

**Motion by Trapp, supported by Hatting, to approve the Budget Performance Report totaling (\$19,679.73).
AYES – All. MOTION CARRIED.**

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR / BOARD CHAIR REPORT - None

PARKS DIRECTOR / ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Director **Asa Vermeulen** provided updates on:

- Parks
 - New Marina – On Hold
 - Ed Henning – Pond and beach improvements, new cabins
 - Muskegon River Bluffs Disc Golf Course – Map installation, widening of fairways
 - White Cloud – Firewood collection is complete
 - Sandy Beach – Tree permits issued, dock slips evened out
 - Diamond Lake – Rented man-lift and removed dead tree over bathhouse, Firewood permits issued
 - Hardy Marina – Dead tree over parking area removed with man-lift
 - Welcome Center – Final 2 dead trees cut down
 - Dragon Trail – Merchandise discussion; and all requested events will be put on hold due to CE sale and refusal to approve anything at this time.
 - Collaboration – Meeting with multiple area groups regarding birding, tourism, WMMBA event in September and Bike Stations, and I was the guest speaker at the West Michigan Trail Summit at Camp Newaygo.
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OLD BUSINESS

New Marina: After multiple discussions and the unknown of the CE sale, the New Marina project is placed on pause currently.

Motion by Storms, supported by Hatting, to approve to “pause” the New Marina project on Hardy Pond.

AYES – All. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS –

1. Spey Fest Event Request:

The Muskegon River Spey Fest is requesting to host its 26th annual fly-fishing get-together at Ed H Henning Park. They have requested use of the 120v electric, free of charge at the River Group Site for their PA System and a few laptops on September 26, 2026.

Motion by Pitzer, supported by Trapp, To allow the 26th annual Muskegon River Spey Fest free use of the electric at the River Group Site as described in Motion 26-4-1, and to authorize the Park Director to sign any and all necessary documents.

AYES – All. MOTION CARRIED.

2. WMMBA Sandy Beach End of Season Event Request:

The West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance is seeking approval for the 3rd annual End of Season Celebration.

Each year, West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance (WMMBA) hosts an annual celebration marking the completion of the Dragon Trail—a project that has brought meaningful recreation, tourism, and economic impact to the Newaygo community and the continued support from WMMBA volunteers.

The 2025 weekend event at Sandy Beach County Park brought over 150 riders, families, and volunteers together for live music, camping, food, and community connection. In 2026, we’re expanding the experience with new features to make it even more memorable and accessible.

Given the volunteer work the WMMBA does for the Dragon, I recommend the Parks Commission waive the rental fee for the pavilion, group campsite and all vehicle pass requirements for anyone attending the event. In 2026 the WMMBA was very generous in helping to outfit the new Dragon Trailhead of Sandy Beach with benches and a bike repair station along with multiple more repair stations for other trailheads

Motion by Maiké, supported by Hatting, to approve the request to waive rental fees and vehicle pass fees for the WMMBA during their October 3, 2026 event at

Sandy Beach County Park, as described in Motion 26-4-3, and to authorize the County Administrator to sign any and all necessary documents.

AYES – All. MOTION CARRIED.

3. Ed Henning Pollinator Pathway Request:

NCEC's Pollinator Pathway Project Area – Ed Henning County Park:

This project is intended to increase the width of riparian vegetation between the boat launch parking lot and the river at Henning Park and mitigate some of the runoff from the parking lot which currently drains into the river without any natural filters.

The area selected is about 500 sq ft. shaped like an “L” in the corner of the parking lot and extending about 30 ft in each direction from the center, with an 8 ft average width. If our budget allows, they will plant additional trees to the space, as well as a bench and signage.

The planting will include pollinator-friendly grasses and forbs, and a defined pathway in front of the garden to allow for foot and mower passage. The garden, in addition to slowing runoff, could act as an attractive divider between the boat launch and group campsite.

Project partners are Newaygo County Environmental Coalition and the Newaygo Chapter of Muskegon River Watershed Assembly's Friends of the Muskegon River. NCEVC has committed to taking the lead in organizing the logistics of installation and maintenance of the space, and Friends, by way of MRWA, in providing project funding. Elements of this project align with both MRWA's Lower Muskegon River Watershed Management plan and NCEC's Pollinator Pathways Initiative. Both Organizations are committed to the long-term success of this installation.

Motion by Pitzer, supported by Hatting. To recommend to the Parks and Recreation Commission to partner with NCEVC & MWRA to improve the riparian area of Ed Henning through the installation & Maintenance of a pollinator garden, as described in Motion 26-4-3, and to authorize the County Administrator to sign any and all necessary documents.

AYES – All. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Newaygo County Bird City Designation:

The Newaygo County Bird Trail is ready to take Birding to newer heights in 2026 by adopting the Bird City Resolution and becoming the 7th in Michigan.

Bird City is a conservation program that brings people together to create healthier communities benefiting both people and birds.

American Bird Conservancy and Environment for the Americas have joined forces to help deliver solutions on the ground through the Bird City Network. The Network unites and connects independent Bird City programs throughout the hemisphere who work directly with local communities to envision and complete bird-friendly actions. Together we form a powerful collaborative force – connecting people and helping birds across the hemisphere.

In addition to education and engagement, one of the real benefits of Bird City is recognition. Communities can tell their story and be recognized for their actions – through their designation and through their online profile on www.birdcity.org. The website also gives the opportunity to share events and birding tourism opportunities in the community.

Motion by Hatting, supported by Trapp, To recommend to the Board of Commissioners to approve the Newaygo County Bird City Resolution as described in Motion 26.4.4, and to authorize the Board Chairman to sign any and all necessary documents

AYES – All. MOTION CARRIED.

MISCELLANEOUS

- **Maiké:** After 3-4 years of trying, the paving of Mundy to Diamond Lake is not going to happen.
- **Twing:** Will be attending a Dam removal meeting with the DNR in Lansing.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Maiké, supported by Trapp to adjourn the meeting at 11:03 a.m.
AYES – All. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Parks

Newaygo County Parks & Recreation
Assistant to the Director