

11/27/18 1pm @ Cleon Township Hall Meeting relating to the BVT Cleon Twp Application for DNR Trust Grant

Scott Slavin, Laura Heintzelman, Linda Cudney, Elaine Gibbs, Sharon Goble, John Rothhaar, Jeff Stanton, Tamara Buswinka, Todd Humphrey, Lisa Leedy

Origin of this meeting:

AES requested this meeting based on the trails committee needing additional direction and answers as to the best way to move forward on applicants for future Manistee trails segments. Laura Heintzelman requested clarification on trail ownership, who should be the applicant to provide clarity that could be used for fund development. Laura has indicated the ownership piece and management agreement needs to be better understood for fundraising purposes. We have to have a clear message when fundraising. After inviting the Grand Traverse Land Conservancy to participate in the committee, as well as hosting TART Trails and LIAA for some insight on how other organizations pursue trail systems, Lisa Leedy felt the committee questions should be answered relating to ownership and appropriate applicant prior to moving forward on the next application.

Introductions were made.

Summary: The summary of the origin of how this meeting came to be was given. Scott Slavin was asked how this group could best move forward on trails applications, and who should be the applicant? Scott feels the townships should still be applicants as the DNR is already spread thin for internal projects. Once a grant is awarded, a management agreement is entered into by the applicant and the DNR. The DNR signs for applicant (township) to be project manager during the grant cycle for construction, and give permission for the project on their lands. Other agreements that will help an application are the Grant Sponsor Agreement which is what the Snow Birds indicated interest in. Linda to share a sample of this with Scott and the group that Mark Coe gave her a copy of.

Discussion: John Rothhaar of the Betsy Valley Trail Friends and Trails Manager on behalf of the management council in Benzie County gave an overview of Benzie 20 miles of BVT. DNR owns right-of-way Management Council is an agency of Benzie County government. Council takes over management and oversight of trail. Reps on the council are from units of government and a property rights group, DNR, Friends group.

Management Council has no formal structure so acts as volunteers. They make decisions about trail as a committee. Friends group provides all financial support for projects including match funding. Sharon asked who can seek Grants? John says

Benzie County seeks grants on behalf of management council. Friends paid for grant writer and provided the match funds. Friends do all fundraising. Laura asked if Cleon trail is a priority to BVT Benzie group. John says not a high priority at this point, based on Crystal Lake 3 mile history as priority. Beulah to Thompsonville has never really been improved and would be next if he had to guess. The original trail plan included a spur into Elberta. Elberta wants to get their section done, so that could be the next unofficial priority based on use and popularity. John felt if Beulah to Thompsonville were improved, then it would be nice long section of trail to connect to Cleon and thus creating a higher priority to Benzie management council. Scott concurs.

Scott followed up with information that the bridge study will be complete in December for Manistee River bridge and a potential \$4million dollar fix if the bridge needs overhauled instead of only re-decking which is estimated at \$1million. That study will dominate DNRs decision on how to move forward on the Betsy Valley Trail segments and other trails in that section. Sharon inquired further on \$4million bridge pricing estimate. Scott explained that is a guess that if worse case scenario is in the findings of the study, this could be the price. Until the inspection reports are in there is no way for long range planning. Scott put together phases on how the DNR would like to get trails done. Laura noted we received info that this Cleon segment was at one time a priority for DNR so she wondered if that was still the case. How can we as county trails committee move forward on future trails? Scott said he can help as we go and he can better direct us once the study is completed.

Laura asked if DNR and MDOT set joint priorities. Rob Carson at Manistee County had feedback from MDOT that this segment is no longer a priority for MDOTs TAP grant program. Scott stated the applications currently in line for TAP grant would be higher scoring based on TAP grant priorities. DNR RTP funding was allocated for \$60,000 to the Cleon BVT application. Scott has this funding in place until 2020. Upcoming RTP grant process and guidelines will be discussed at a DNR internal meeting this week. Cleon match funding was discussed. Sharon said the trail group committed to helping and can raise match funds. Scott will make sure RTP funding stays on priority for Cleon. Sharon asked about RTP discussions and how criteria is decided and Scott said this program is changing so he can't say just yet. Megan Lamar is new grant manager for RTP and can get us the criteria.

Greg Kuenzer was hired to replace Emily as trail coordinator for Manistee. Linda asked John if BVT friends would help with fundraising. John felt they could potentially take on the match funding for the Benzie's section but needs to be discussed at (BVT Friends board). Laura asked Scott how DNR handles collaborative projects. Scott said other units collaborate and communicate with no issues with formal agreements between them to identify roles and responsibilities. Once a project is committed, they essentially give the land to the applicant for construction and once complete its turned back over to the DNR. Sometimes there is maintenance agreement, which the DNR will prefer in

Manistee since there is no local DNR office with staff to manage maintenance. That agreement needs to be established right in beginning along with a plan to fund maintenance. Leases of land by the DNR are generally for no costs but the DNR does not want to incur maintenance they can't budget for. Laura asked John about maintenance costs. Sharon said she had that information based on discussions at trails groups and could provide it. Scott said don't stipulate timelines for maintenance as its perpetual.

Scott said leases can include future improvements such as pavilions. Linda asked if there should be an agreement with Snowbirds and Scott says it's always better to have agreements in writing. John reiterated communication is important and those agreements provide clarity.

Trail user groups should work together. Lisa asked length between Beulah and Thompsonville. John says 12 miles. Scott says paving that section would cost \$1.2million. Scott can provide maintenance plan costs. Kent County Road Commission, for example, doesn't charge for maintenance. Their community leadership sees the value in collectively maintaining a trail system. Scott suggests we see if we can get an agreement road commission to do a bit of the maintenance. Scott uses maintenance costs from the state guidelines. Not Act 51, but the Schedule C book.

Laura asked if DNR funds only limestone trails or do they fund paving? DNR is looking at crushed asphalt and other options, so it just depends. He has specs for crushed limestone if we need (3/8 minus mix is ADA compliant). Construction of the trail should include discussion to make sure pavement is done properly by experienced firms. Laura asked John to identify a Benzie BVT sample section to check out. John said Sleeping Bear Trail north of Glen Arbor through Port Oneida district, parallel to 22 is an ideal section. Sharon asked about RTP grant timeline and Scott said he will know more later this week. Lisa will send Cleon application to Scott.

Laura asked best way to move forward on Manistee trails. Scott said hire a consultant and he can provide a list of consultants he has worked with that have experience. Elaine asked why didn't we go out for bids for engineering this application cycle? Lisa agreed we should have, and that was why AES provided an RFP that could be used for engineering firms for future projects this past summer. The big issues is that the trails committee is not a formal structure, and cannot enter into an agreement. So the townships would have to enter into an agreement individually by trail segment. Lisa noted Spicer had been engaged prior to October of 2017 in some informal fashion by the trails group and asked Tamara if she had any insight to share. The first walk through on the Cleon application was October 2017, and we received engineered estimates in mid-March of 2018 from Spicer, which was very late to make corrections and the estimate had limited language. Lisa requested a change in the length of the trail on the application. So she asked Cleon to shorten the obligated trail segment in the application based on her concerns the pricing was way low after consulting some others with experience in trail construction. So just a few weeks before due date the segment

size was edited from 3.3 miles to 2.5 miles, as it would be better to be able to do a longer trail if construction estimates ended up in line with the engineered estimate, but if the construction estimates came in too high, Cleon Township would be on the hook for the overage. This was an effort to reduce some burden from the township.

Sharon offered that we could as a group fundraise to pay for those services up front and having a written agreement in place might be a better option to get a firm to commit to the project.

Laura will send Scott a letter stating MCCF will hold their \$25,000 match funding grant to Cleon Township for 2yrs so they have an opportunity to re-apply. Scott will look and see how he best fits to help the Manistee trails group move forward.

Workshop opportunity: Jan 9 UC Gaylord TAP grant workshop bring lunch and eat during presentation. Doesn't appear to need an rsvp.

Scott says make sure you communicate with MDOT/Amy when you have a project. Tamara said those conversations already were had about a TAP grant for Cleon Township but Patty O'Donnell advised not to go for it. Lisa added she spoke with Patty and believes the reference was for the TAP application to be saved to help fund the bridge costs.

Next steps: Lisa will gather the fundraising committee to begin a planning stage for the next application cycle. Lisa will also share notes from this meeting to all.

Other items: Scott reported that Mark Coe got a quit claim deed for the Merit property, then the Club will turn over to DNR. Scott is trying to find the 60ft bridge. DNR can put temporary bridge on DNR property. Sharon asked for timeline on feedback. Scott says next week or so.

Thanks to all for participating in a productive meeting. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Leedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" being more prominent than the last name "Leedy".

Lisa Leedy