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**REGULAR MEETING of the PAINT CREEK TRAILWAYS COMMISSION**  
**Paint Creek Cider Mill**  
**4480 Orion Road, Rochester, MI 48306**

**CALL TO ORDER:** The Tuesday, March 15, 2022 Regular Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Steele at 7:00 p.m.

**Voting Members Present:** Robin Buxar, Ken Elwert, Linda Gamage, Steve Sage, Donni Steele, David Walker

**Voting Alternates Present:** Martha Olijnyk, Patrick Ross

**Non-Voting Alternates Present:** David Becker, Carol Morlan, Chris Shepard

**Village of Lake Orion Non-Voting Member Present:** Jason Peltier

**Voting Members Absent:** Brian Blust, Aaron Whatley

**Alternates Absent:** Julia Dalrymple, Dave Mabry, Ann Peterson

**Village of Lake Orion Non-Voting Alternate Absent:** Jerry Narsh

**Others Present:** Melissa Ford, Trail Manager, Chris Gray, Assistant Trail Manager, Louis Carrio, President of the Friends Group, Sandi DiSipio, Recording Secretary

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** All rose and recited the Pledge.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Chairperson Steele added approval of Resolution #2022-001 prior to Public Comment.

**MOTION** by Buxar, seconded by Sage, *Moved*, to approve the March 15, 2022 agenda as amended.

Ayes: All      Nays: None

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION #2022-001:** Chairperson noted Ms. Ford is a recipient of Oakland County's *40 Under 40* award, asked her to come forward, and read the following resolution for Commission approval.

**PAINT CREEK TRAIL COMMISSION**  
**RESOLUTION #2022-001**  
**Melissa Ford, Trail Manager, Recipient of 40 Under 40 Award**

**WHEREAS,** Oakland County is a place that honors young professionals who live and work there; and

**WHEREAS,** the 40 Under 40 selects 40 individuals from Oakland County born before December 31, 1981; and

**WHEREAS,** this diverse group of exceptional individuals are leaders and entrepreneurs, activists and teachers who are passionate about their communities, successful in their careers and bound for great things in the future; and



of it or does he need more help with the legal work. Mr. Carrio said that would not be his first choice, as it's more than just the legal work and filing. He said if you look at the list of all the things that go into running the organization – basically he has all the knowledge of how that works. Relative to the 501(c)(3), there are certain compliance issues with that. Ms. Olijnyk said we had hoped this group would take off like the Friends of the Library, which is large and has a lot of people who are active, but we were never able to get it running on its own. What probably happened is that the group was started and then there was no one who wanted to run it. Ms. Myers wound up having to do this and then got her parents involved as she shouldn't be managing the Friends too. A small group of people started out with a big mailing list, but not a lot of people willing to do what needs to be done. Ms. Olijnyk feels this is still a problem or if it can be resolved, as it's really a problem of getting as many people active as we can so we have people that can turn over for different leadership, and not one or two people are running it every year. Mr. Carrio said he's been involved in the Friends Group almost from the beginning and has concluded if you have a specific project, you get energy around that event. When people sign up with the Friends, they want to do something on the trail, not the things that go into supporting the organization. In looking at the list of tasks and who was responsible, even though Mr. VanDoorn was President, a lot of the work was done by Ms. Myers, his daughter. Mr. Walker asked if the structure of the Board of Directors is clearly defined in the by-laws. Mr. Carrio said this is clearly defined – it calls for seven directors, and the Board elects four officers as originally designed, but the Secretary and Treasurer was combined into one position. Mr. Walker asked if the by-laws call out who the seven directors were. Mr. Carrio said this wasn't specified, the way it worked out was there were two Trailways Commissioners on the Board. The Board members are elected every other year, and officers are elected annually. Ms. Pinkham asked if the Friends voted in the last couple of years to reduce the number of Board members. Mr. Carrio said the original document was amended, but there are still seven members. He has to file paperwork with the State of Michigan every year identifying who the Board members are. Mr. Elwert asked when the Friends Group was formed - Mr. Carrio indicated in 2010 they were formed as a 501(c)(3) in order to get more grants and donations. Mr. Elwert commented the Trailways Commission voted to stay with the Community Foundation for the 501(c)(3) function that they provide, so we essentially have two organizations doing the same role right now. The Friends does much more than the Community Foundation will do, but we have this function if we can raise the necessary funds. Ms. Gamage remembers two reasons the Friends was formed – one was for the 501(c)(3) status for tax deduction purposes for donations and the other reason was a lot of people were contacting the office wanting to volunteer, but the Commission didn't have projects and it was a lot for the office to take on. We wanted to encourage a Friends Group to develop. She asked Mr. Carrio if he wants to continue with the 501(c)(3) status or just continue as a Friends Group, and what his solution to the situation is. Mr. Carrio replied he would see the continuation of the 501(c)(3) with a Board consisting of members from the Commission and general public, that Board meetings be held in conjunction with the Commission meetings, either before or after so people would be more engaged in running the Friends organization from the Commission, and more discipline to the meetings and information sharing to ensure the sustainability of the Friends Group. The volunteer aspect is a valid reason to continue the group, but do we want to migrate towards a volunteer organization to support a project or continue to do that and have the 501(c)(3) as a corporate structure? The second option is Mr. Carrio's preference, but he doesn't believe it's sustainable as it currently is. This is not an emergency, but he's looking at the longer-range future of the organization. Ms. Steele is a little concerned about Commissioner and staff participation in the Friends organization because of the overlap. Ms. Gamage suggested looking into how other Friends Groups are managed and operated, as she thought Ms. Myers was just supposed to help the Friends Group get started and launch on their own, not necessarily that it would be inter-mingled. A lot of volunteer groups like this are struggling right now with growing older and no younger interest coming up. Ms. Gamage is

concerned about the sustainability as well and suggested maybe a subcommittee be formed to explore how other Friends Groups operate. Mr. Carrio commented he's happy to do whatever he can as he enjoys it, so that's not the issue. He mentioned that being a 501(c)(3) does serve a purpose when applying for a raffle or liquor license, or run events. It was used in getting grants for the Pollinator Garden, so if we had another project like that, status is an important role. Mr. Becker asked if Mr. Carrio had considered trying to combine with other trail Friends Group and make it larger to encompass all trails. Mr. Carrio has not explored this idea, but has attended some Clinton River Friends' meetings and interacted with Ms. Moran with the Polly Ann Trail, but the interests are different. With regard to sustainability, Mr. Sage asked if Mr. Carrio has considered amending the by-laws with regard to the Board – would that make it more manageable? What if the Commission dedicated projects to the Friends, e.g., Trails Day or the Bridge Walk – would that give this group purpose and vision to move forward? Mr. Carrio said getting volunteers is not that difficult when you have a project; it's harder getting volunteers for the administrative tasks. Mr. Elwert asked if the concern is getting more Board members or is it people to organize the other functions underneath that and if there is a membership fee. Mr. Carrio said it's both, and there is no membership fee. Chairperson Steele said an Ad Hoc Committee is one solution, another is having the Community Foundation take over the financial portion of it, and just having the volunteer portion remain with the Friends. As far as how her observations go, Ms. Ford said she sees Mr. Carrio's dilemma, that he does the majority of work, and there is a small group that does attend their meetings. There isn't really an incentive for membership; there isn't a fun night out or anything. If there was a membership fee, maybe we'd get people more engaged because they would have ownership if they were financially contributing to the organization. One way to sustain it is to have some kind of membership drive in a deliberate way. She doesn't know how much discussion Mr. Carrio has had with the membership at large that does attend the meetings. Mr. Carrio indicated he's done promotions, has the Facebook page, but not really a drive. They have a membership application and do receive one every month or two. They receive a nice welcome letter listing the next meeting and some of the projects, but then they lose interest. Ms. Buxar suggested maybe scheduling something fun before or after a meeting to get more interest. Mr. Becker asked if the numerous tasks listed in Mr. Carrio's letter could be combined into four or five categories of things to do, and ask people if they were interested in doing something that aligns with their expertise. Mr. Carrio agreed and will look into this. Ms. Gamage and Ms. Buxar volunteered for the Ad Hoc Committee. Ms. Buxar also nominated Mr. Mabry. The next Friends Group meeting is April 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. The Ad Hoc Committee will attend this meeting and report back to the Commission at the next meeting.

**MOTION** by Gamage, seconded by Buxar, *Moved*, that an Ad Hoc Committee be formed to meet with the Friends Group to discuss ideas relative to this situation and report back to the Commission on how we might be able to help moving forward.

Ayes: All      Nays: None

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**DISCUSSION: National Trails Day:** Mr. Carrio said he has been meeting every other week with Mr. and Mrs. Peltier and Mr. Fisher, and worked with Ms. Ford to submit the application to Lake Orion for the permit which is still pending. He's applied for and received the raffle license. The liquor license application is being held until the permit is granted. The passport has been designed for merchant coupons and an outline explaining how it will work will be included. They will hand out the existing trail map to participants that will include an insert explaining the program itself and the agenda. The layout of where things will go has also been developed. Mr. Peltier has secured a few sponsors, but more are needed. Mr. Carrio asked Mr. Sage not to set up the meeting with the Rochester DDA until the permit has been approved. They've been working with the Lake Orion DDA, so they are aware of what is happening and are on-board with the

event. There is a \$10 event fee to encourage more participants, and will rely on the sponsorships and sales at the event for the fundraising aspect. Optional T-shirts will be available for purchase. An Eventbrite site is in draft mode now; when someone signs up, they get the option to get a shirt and will receive a confirmation email with a release of liability form that can be printed and brought to the event to save time at the registration table. The next meeting is next Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. at Oat Soda – all are welcome. A 20-page planning document was submitted to Ms. Ford, with a one-page summary. Ms. Ford will send the one-page summary to all Commissioners. Relative to the Commission's role in the event, Ms. Ford explained they will share a booth with the Friends, and have a bike helmet decorating station for kids including stickers and markers. Information about the trail and etiquette will be available. She asked the Commission to pick up the cost for the stickers and markers (around \$100), as we would not be seeking sponsors other than what the Friends have secured.

**MOTION** by Walker, seconded by Buxar, *Moved*, to approve spending up to \$200 at staff's discretion to be used for stickers and markers to decorate kid's bike helmets at the event.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Buxar, Elwert, Gamage, Olijnyk, Ross, Sage, Steele, Walker

Nays: None

**MOTION CARRIED.**

The members then discussed whether to sell bicycle bells, stickers and seed packets at the event or give them away. Ms. Ford and Ms. Gray will both be at the booth; another volunteer is probably needed to handle giving away or selling the other items. The stickers cost just under \$2.00, and Ms. Ford will check on the price of the bells to see what they would need to be sold for to cover our cost. More information will be provided at the next meeting. Mr. Shepard asked if the Commission has made use of the Rochester Hills Sign Shop for stickers. Ms. Ford indicated no, but will keep it in mind.

**DISCUSSION: Fundraising:** A memo was included in the packet. Ms. Ford said the Fundraising Committee met on March 4<sup>th</sup> to discuss ways to raise money for the fund at the Community Foundation. Our Valentine's Day email campaign only resulted in one \$20 donation from a Commissioner. A donation button is now available on the website homepage. Some different ideas for events to raise funds were discussed – an Amazing Race-style Easter Egg Hunt on the trail using a game app similar to the GooseChase app used previously (staff is looking into the cost), a Dine to Donate at a local restaurant on a select day where trail supporters could dine in or carry out with a portion of the sales going to the Commission, and an auction with opportunities to bid on items such as a walk on the trail with a native plant expert, a tour of the Pollinator Garden with a master gardener, etc. Another idea explored was a 50/50 raffle at the Tour de Trail, but the Friends are already doing this. They also talked about the idea of preserving and maintaining green space as a reason why people should donate, and focusing on what the funds would be used towards, e.g., future projects, the upcoming bridge project, trail maintenance or future resurfacing. Ms. Ford asked the Commission for any ideas they might have or other fundraising activities they've participated in or heard about. Mr. Becker suggested the Donate Button give people a few categories they can donate to. Ms. Ford will check with the Community Foundation as they set this up, but the issue then is the money needs to be allotted to specific categories and we're restricting the funds at the Foundation. Ms. Olijnyk said the owner where she works has something he does with the Tigers where if a Tiger hits a triple, he will donate \$300 to a local charity - this happens during the whole season. He runs an ad that features the charities he donates to. Ms. Olijnyk talked to him about the Commission and he's willing to do it, he just has to figure out how it's going to work this year with the Tigers and what their requirements are for what counts as a charity. If we do that and it does work out, would it depend on being a 501(c)(3)? If interested, Ms. Olijnyk will check it out. Ms. Ford asked if it could be donated to the Community Foundation. Ms. Olijnyk said yes, but then all the press would be for

the Community Foundation and not us. Ms. Steele asked why would it have to go into the Community Foundations' name if it is dedicated to us. Ms. Ford asked if it could be dedicated to the Trailways Commission fund at the Community Foundation? Mr. Elwert indicated Rochester Hills has numerous funds at the Foundation each with a specific name and the Foundation makes sure the funds go directly to that specific fund. Ms. Olijnyk will look into this option. Mr. Walker said people are looking for a cause – if we articulate a cause, the better chance of getting their donation. He commented in Rochester Hills the recycle bank points earned through trash collection are aimed for institutions, and explained how the program works; the points are turned into dollars that are given to institutions of the resident's choice. He suggested an option could be the trail. Mr. Elwert said he would look into this possibility, but it might be too late for this year. Kroger and Meijer have similar options. Ms. Ford thinks you have to be a 501(c)(3) to be a recipient. Ms. Ford indicated she reached out to Mr. Peltier to see if they would be interested in doing a Dine to Donate at Oat Soda; he would be interested but no further discussions have occurred. Mr. Peltier said it could be an evening event or a Saturday afternoon, a day when the participants could enjoy the trail and have a meal/take-out before or after. The event could be scheduled before Trails Day and another one in the fall. He could put a donate bucket in front of the restaurant. Ms. Steele thought maybe other businesses in town could be approached to put similar buckets out for donations. Ms. Gamage mentioned we had previously talked about auctioning off our old signs. Ms. Ford explained they are in storage but need to be cleaned up and all the hardware removed; staff wanted to take care of this, but has not had the time. Ms. Ford added at least two people are interested in buying them. Mrs. Peltier volunteered to help out. Mr. Sage asked to be notified when the Dine to Donate event is scheduled, and he will talk to Rochester businesses. Ms. Ford said she had a conversation with the owner of Paint Creek Tavern before COVID hit and they were interested in supporting the trail; she will reconnect with them. Ms. Gamage said for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the trail, really nice tech shirts were made up and they completely sold out. She suggested marketing nice tech shirts or hats or car magnets as fundraising ideas. The Ad Hoc Committee will meet again to discuss options.

**MANAGER'S REPORT:** In addition to the written report, Ms. Ford said she's still in the process of getting the old road crossing signs removed. All payments from the member communities have been received for the year. She is still waiting on the Mounted Patrol contract from the Sheriff's Department. Ms. Ford talked to Mannik Smith about the mussel situation, and they indicated a mussel survey was not required by MDEQ/EGLE as part of the permit application process, which means either there was not a known endangered mussel or that they determined that the project scope would not affect them. Ms. Steele also looked into the Polly Ann Trail connector bridge project and found no mussel survey was required for that project. All materials for the audit have been prepared. The panel for the audio sign at the Wet Prairie Site is being reviewed. The Road Commission is going to be replacing the bridge at Dutton in 2023 and reached out to Ms. Ford because they wanted to know if people park at this lot. Ms. Ford indicated yes; we have a permit from the Road Commission to use this area as it's their space. This project is in the early design stage, but it sounds like it will impact the trail and the parking lot. The Road Commission will keep Ms. Ford informed of the project. Ms. Steele mentioned we've talked about future donations, e.g., trees. Ms. Ford indicated right now we have 21 people waiting to put a bench on the trail, and other than one or two at Paint Creek Junction, there aren't any more places to locate them. She's explored ideas for other memorials, like the bike racks or free little libraries. One idea suggested in the past is a memorial tree program, and Ms. Ford spoke with Oakland Township who discouraged this idea because of the amount of watering a new tree needs and that it's on the trail which would require bringing in water by truck with a tank to ensure survival. Ms. Steele said on the Polly Ann Trail, they have a garbage can donation, picnic tables and bike racks. Ms. Gamage suggested that memorial brick pavers could be explored if there is an appropriate location. This issue will be put on a future agenda.

**COMMISSIONER REPORTS:** Ms. Gamage thanked Mr. Carrio for all the work he puts in for the Friends Group. Mr. Elwert mentioned that Rochester Hills is low on Parks staff so response time may be slower than normal unless high priority. Mr. Peltier indicated Sunday May 22<sup>nd</sup> would be a good day for the Dine to Donate event if that works out. The Commission congratulated Ms. Ford on being a recipient of Oakland County's 40 Under 40 award!!

**ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR MEETING:**

**MOTION** by Gamage, seconded by Elwert, *Moved*, to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 8:45 p.m.  
Ayes: All      Nays: None      **MOTION CARRIED.**

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING: April 19, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. – Rochester Municipal Offices**

Respectfully submitted,

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MELISSA FORD, Trail Manager

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DAVID BECKER, Secretary