

PAINT CREEK TRAILWAYS COMMISSION

DRAFT

November 19, 2024



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

The November 19, 2024, meeting of the Paint Creek Trailways Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the main conference room of the Paint Creek Cider Mill.

ATTENDANCE

PRESENT

Voting Members:

David Walker (RH), Vice-Chairperson (Acting Chairperson)
Julia Dalrymple (Orion), Secretary (arrived 7:04 p.m.)
Ken Elwert (RH)
Conner Reiter (Orion)
Linda Gamage (R)

Voting Alternates:

Dave Mabry (Oakland)
Martha Olijnyk (Oakland) (left 8:25 p.m.)
David Becker (R)

A QUORUM WAS PRESENT.

Non-Voting Alternates: None

Village Non-Voting Alternate: Stanley Ford (Village of Lake Orion)

Staff: Tom Correll, Trail Manager

Friends of the Paint Creek Trail: Michael Jahn, Vice-President

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ABSENT

Voting Members: Brian Blust (Oakland), Robin Buxar (Oakland), Steve Sage (R)

Alternates: Matt Pfeiffer (Orion), Aaron Whatley (Orion), Sara King (R), Russell George (RH), Carol Morlan (RH)

Village Non-Voting Member: Jason Peltier (Village of Lake Orion)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice-Chairman Walker led the Commissioners, staff and those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

AMENDMENTS TO AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOVED BY ELWERT, SECONDED BY BECKER, to approve this evening's agenda as presented.

MOTION CARRIED.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Friends of the Paint Creek Trail – Holiday Meeting and Dinner

Vice-President Michael Jahn invited the Trailways Commissioners to attend the Friends of the Paint Creek Trail's holiday meeting and dinner on Tuesday, December 10th at 6 p.m. at Forks & Fetes in Goodison. The cost is \$20 per person. He asked anyone interested in attending to please rsvp as soon as possible.

CONSENT AGENDA

This evening's Consent Agenda consists of the following: (a) minutes of the October 15, 2024, regular meeting and (b) Treasurer's Report for October 2024.

MOVED BY MABRY, SECONDED BY ELWERT, to approve and file the minutes of the October 15, 2024, regular meeting as presented, and to receive and file the Treasurer's Report for October 2024.

MOTION CARRIED.

APPROVAL OF INVOICES

Trail Manager Correll and the Commissioners reviewed the list of invoices dated November 19, 2024. The invoices include payment for printing new brochures in the amount of \$1,767.00. This amount was originally budgeted for 2025, but we were in need sooner. Last time we ordered 7,500 brochures and this lasted us approximately two years.

MOVED BY ELWERT, SECONDED BY GAMAGE, to approve payment of the invoices as presented in the amount of \$2,504.76.

MOTION CARRIED.

(Secretary Dalrymple arrived at this time, 7:04 p.m.)

BRIDGE 31.7

We have received the Project Agreement from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant for this project. Manager Correll said that MNRTF grant monies may be used for soft costs such as engineering and design costs as well as hard costs (i.e., construction costs). Construction on this project is expected to begin in March or April 2025.

At the grant is to the Paint Creek Trailways Commission, Commissioner Elwert cautioned that the Commission must approve the Project Agreement before we incur costs that we expect to be reimbursed from the grant, and he offered to work with Manager Correll to draft a resolution to accomplish this. Manager Correll will bring the resolution to the Commission at the December meeting.

Commissioner Becker asked Manager Correll to also provide an updated budget, including cost estimates for the project, at the next meeting.

The MNRTF grant is a reimbursable grant, so the Commission needs to determine how we will manage cash flow for the project. Commissioner Gamage will discuss this with the City of Rochester.

MASTER PLAN DOCUMENT UPDATE – Chapter 3: Administrative Structure

Manager Correll thanked subcommittee members Elwert and Olijnyk and other Commissioners who worked on revisions to this chapter.

Section A. Trailways Commission – Structure and Powers

Manager Correll will update the membership chart (figure 3.2) once the municipalities appoint representatives for the upcoming four-year term.

Section B. Paint Creek Trailways Staff

Manager Correll updated this section, including revised job titles/descriptions.

Subsection 3 – Bike Patrol. Contributions from the member municipalities was updated.

Subsection 4 – Management of the Paint Creek Trail. “Encroachment management to limit direct trail connections” was added as an additional management practice.

Section C. Budget

Manager Correll will update the budget (Table 3.1) once the Trailways Commission approves the 2025 fiscal year budget at the December meeting.

Section D. Sources of Funding

Subsection 1 – Operational Budgeting. The Commissioners discussed the resurfacing timeline. After further discussion, under Subsection 1 – Operational Budgeting, the Commissioners agreed that the fourth paragraph, last line, should be revised as follows, “...It is the Trailways Commission’s hope that the current surface will require no extensive overhaul until 2034. However, the Trailways Commission recognizes the degradation of the Trail may require reevaluation as early as 2030.”

Commissioner Gamage recalled that, in the past, the Trailways Commission shared information with the member municipalities on an annual basis regarding when resurfacing is planned. This allows the municipalities to adequately budget for this expense. Manager Correll said he sends the municipalities an annual letter with the budget, and he typically has an informal conversation with member municipality staff at that time. However, he agreed to add resurfacing planning information to the budget letter that he sends.

Section E. Volunteers and Service to the Trail

In Table 3.4, the fifth organization listed should be corrected to read “Vanguard Trout Unlimited.” The description associated with that organization should be revised to read, “Paint Creek ~~Environmental~~ Restoration Projects.”

General Discussion

Commissioner Elwert asked that we include Trail visitation data somewhere in the Master Plan, as the Trail receives substantial use.

He thanked Manager Correll for incorporating the revisions that the subcommittee suggested. Manager Correll will update the document with this evening’s additional changes.

Commissioner Gamage asked to include more photos, especially of the wayfinding signage as this was a big project that the Commission accomplished since the last Master Plan update.

Manager Correll will update this section's cover photo, and acknowledged that he can add more photos in the Master Plan document where appropriate.

MASTER PLAN PROCESS UPDATE

Community Opinion Survey

The Commissioners and Manager Correll reviewed the summary of the community opinion survey. This survey was open from August 2024 to November 2024. We received 228 responses. In addition to the summary of responses available for review this evening, Manager Correll will share all of the comments received as they become available.

Commissioner Elwert pointed out that, while this survey offers some insight into Paint Creek Trail user opinions, it is not a random survey, as he believes the marketing of the survey by the different communities had an impact on who responded to the survey.

The Commissioners reviewed responses to the questions. The following reflects some of the highlights of the discussion. The responses indicate that most people drive to the Trail (Question 3), and they use it for health and exercise (Question 4). While on the Trail, they like to walk/hike and run/jog (Question 5).

Question 7 asked participants to share areas where they felt there could be improvement. While the top response was lack of restrooms, other top concerns focused on speeding bicycles, e-cycles/scooters/boards, and trail courtesy.

Question 13 asked users how frequently they use the Paint Creek Trail; the response was three to five times per week. Commissioner Elwert noted that this is a significant amount of usage, and found it particularly interesting given that the majority of Trail users drive to the use the Trail (response to Question 3).

Other improvements that Trail users would like to see include signage (trail etiquette, native plant identification, wayfinding, mileage, etc.) (Question 16).

Question 17 asked respondents to rank three improvement priorities. The top listed items were maintenance of the natural beauty of the Paint Creek Trail, maintenance of the limestone surfacing, and a restroom at the Gallagher Road crossing (although the Commissioners noted that there is a restroom at this location, so we may need to install better signage advising Trail users of this). Other amenities Trail users would like to see include additional restrooms, drinking fountains, and garbage cans. Respondents said they would also like improved winter accessibility, additional amenities for dogs, improved signage, and speed limits for bicycles.

Question 18 asked respondents to share their favorite things about the Paint Creek Trail. Responses included enjoyment of the natural beauty, the opportunity to improve physical and mental health, the peaceful and tranquil atmosphere, the car-free zone, and the ability to connect with surrounding communities.

Question 19 inquired about what prevents Trail users from using it more. The greatest obstacle that respondents indicated was lack of time.

Finally, in response to Question 20, the top items people would like to learn more about include the Master Plan, event schedule, Friends of the Paint Creek Trail, volunteer opportunities, and Trail merchandise.

Accessibility Assessment

The Commissioners reviewed the chart entitled “Paint Creek Trail Barrier Free Assessment.” The spelling of the word “Barrier” needs to be corrected. Additionally, the far right column is titled “Ranking,” but the description underneath refers to “Rating” system; these need to use the same terminology.

Respondents were asked to rate different features of the Paint Creek Trail for their barrier-free accessibility. The length of the Trail was broken down into sections.

Commissioners felt that accessibility to some features could be improved fairly easily. However, there are other features that cannot be made fully accessible. The Commissioners acknowledged that we do need to make “reasonable accommodations” to provide comparable experiences that are ADA accessible.

Commissioner Gamage suggested that when we review our goals to include in the Master Plan, we revisit the goal to look at the barrier-free accessibility of the Trail.

Next Sections

At the December meeting, the Commission will review the “Goals” and the “Public Input” sections. Commissioners Gamage and Dalrymple will work with Manager Correll to review these sections and make recommendations in advance of the meeting.

Open House with Stakeholders

Master Plan consultants Giffels Webster will hold an open house to obtain public input from stakeholders in February. However, they want to conduct virtual interviews with five focus groups during December. Manager Correll said his understanding is that the focus group will be composed of eight to 10 individuals from each of the four member communities (the fifth focus group may be with the Commission). Participants should represent local user groups, the communities, agencies, etc. Each virtual interview will last 45 minutes, and will be held between 4 and 8 p.m. Commissioners discussed that other people who could provide valuable input to such as discussion include Paint Creek Trailways Commission staff, maintenance personnel, local officials, Trail users, special interest groups, etc.

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After considerable discussion, it was agreed that Manager Correll will forward a list of stakeholders to the Commissioners and invited them to add to that list. Commissioners should indicate the person's name, the community they represent, their connection to the Paint Creek Trail, and their contact information.

Michael Jahn asked that the Friends of the Paint Creek Trail be allowed to participate in these focus groups. He will provide Manager Correll with the names and contact information for several members.

PAINT CREEK TRAILWAYS FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET

The Commissioners reviewed the draft budget for the 2025 fiscal year with changes made after last month's meeting.

Manager Correll will verify the amount budgeted in the "Office" cost center in the "Office Materials & Supplies" line item (line item P3111).

In the "Insurance/Professional Services" cost center, we need to put out a request for proposal for a new auditor, so the amount under the "Auditing Fee" (line item P3310) may need to be amended later.

Under the "Publicity /Marketing/Education" cost center, the amount budgeted for "Brochures" (line item P3410) should be moved to 2024 and should be increased to \$1,767.

In the "Trail Projects" cost center, it was noted that the donor withdrew their request to construct an overlook in southeast Rochester, "Trail Improvement – South Rochester" (line item P3620), so this amount has been removed from the 2025 budget. Also under this cost center, we have budgeted funds for "Document Scanning" (line item P3650), a significant project we hope to accomplish this upcoming year.

Under the "Patrol Program" cost center, Manager Correll said the Oakland Township Sheriff's Department advised that we should budget for a 10 to 20 percent increase next year. He expects to have the proposed contract at the December meeting. The Commissioners asked that this be adjusted to a 15 percent increase at this time.

(Commissioner Olijnyk left at this time, 8:25 p.m.)

Commissioner Gamage asked if we will need to budget for additional staff time in conjunction with the Bridge 31.7 project. Commissioner Elwert said there will be additional meetings, inspections, etc. as the project gets going, and estimated that this may take between three and four extra hours per week. Once the project is underway, he estimated that it may take only an additional three to four hours every other week. As this project is within the City of Rochester, their staff needs to coordinate with the Trailways staff regarding expectations. Manager Correll will be meeting with someone from the City of Rochester later this week.

Commissioner Elwert offered to attend this meeting. The Commissioners agreed that the Personnel Committee can discuss Trailways staff time allocation as necessary.

The Commissioners will consider approval of the 2025 fiscal year budget at the December meeting.

MANAGER'S REPORTS

License Agreements

Manager Correll reported that he and Administrative Assistant Sands have prepared letters and invoices to be sent with the new license agreements. These will be sent to each licensee. The Trailways Attorney will then contact each licensee if they have questions about the new agreements.

Forestry Mowing in Oakland Township

On December 9th, Oakland Township will be closing portions of the Paint Creek Trail over the course of approximately one week in order to have forestry mowing done along the shoulders of the Trail.

Encroachment Update

Manager Correll reported that he obtained estimates to remove the encroachments at both the 4763 Forest Ridge Court and the 1850 N. Livernois properties. He sent the homeowners copies of these estimates as well as all other documentation required under our encroachment policy. If he has not heard anything from the homeowners, he will follow up with them on or about December 5th.

The Commissioners discussed how to proceed if the homeowners do not cooperate and remove the encroachments. As the Paint Creek Trailways Commission is a quasi-governmental body, the local municipalities may become involved in enforcement. The Commissioners agreed to consult with our attorney in this regard.

COMMISSIONER REITER'S REPORT

Community Habitat Improvement Projects Grant

Commissioner Reiter shared information about the Community Habitat Improvement Projects ("CHIP") grant opportunity through Oakland County. He thinks this would be a good match for the Paint Creek Trail. If we were to be awarded a grant, he recommended that we have a management plan prepared, which he feels would be a very valuable tool. This would identify priority sites, areas of concern, cost estimates for natural beauty projects, etc. While the program is closed for applications for the 2024 year, this is something we can look to apply for in the 2025 project grant year.

COMMISSIONER FORD'S REPORT

Snow Removal Along Paint Creek Trail in Village of Lake Orion

Commissioner Ford recalled that last winter both the Village of Lake Orion and the Paint Creek Trailways Commission received complaints from a resident regarding snow removal along the northern part of the Paint Creek Trail. That resident has again made complaints.

The complainant was concerned about access to nearby stores. The Commissioners recalled that there are areas where snow is removed by others to provide an alternate way to reach the stores.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED BY GAMAGE, SECONDED BY BECKER, there being no further business before the Commission, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully submitted,

Ingrid R. Kliffel
Recording Secretary

Approved,

Julia Dalrymple
Secretary

Approved,

Tom Correll
Trail Manager