

## **PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING – JUNE 21, 2022**

### **MASTER PLAN WORKSHOP – NATURAL RESOURCES**

The meeting was called to order at 2:00pm by Chairperson Larry Shaffer.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Larry, Shaffer, Phil Bontrager, Jenny Irvine, Nancy Griswold, Lou Lundquist, & Christine Lundquist

**GUEST SPEAKER:** David Horne, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Park Manager

**AGENDA:** The meeting agenda was approved on a motion by Christine with support by Lou.

**MINUTES:** The minutes of the June 16 meeting/workshop were approved on a motion by Nancy with support by Lou.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Larry read a letter from Pat Grasser regarding short term rentals. Ms. Grasser indicated that she disagrees with some of the people from the last meeting who claimed ST rentals do not affect LT rentals. She believes ST rentals do result in a shortage of LT rental availability.

**NATURAL RESOURCES PRESENTATION:** Larry introduced David Horne, the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Park Manager. Mr. Horne discussed where the park is now and where it is expected to develop. He indicated that there were approximately 1.3 million visitors to the park last year. He noted that it is close to being in the top 50 of the over 400 national parks in the country. The west half of the park currently has about 77% of visitors and the eastern end about 23%. The Park Service would like to see increased visitors on the east end.

Larry noted that we need to incorporate national park plans into our Master Plan. Mr. Horne indicated that lack of employee housing is an issue for the park.

Mr. Horne indicated that recreation fees have started in 2022 with a 3 year phase in. He indicated that 80% of the fees collected are reinvested in this park. Approximately 55% out of that 80% is currently anticipated to be used for costs related to the maintenance backlog.

Commission and audience members suggested that bringing back the swimming beach to Sable Lake would go a long way toward increasing park usage on the eastern end of the park. Audience members also indicated that the boat launch at Sable Lake is insufficient. Mr. Horne indicated they are working on improving the boat launch. Christine noted that the park would get more GM support if Sable Lake was restored to a swimmable beach. Mr. Horne indicated that some of the original legislation creating the park may limit options. An audience member asked if the park might consider selling the 40 acres around Sable Lake that the Township gave the park when it was forming back to the township. It was also suggested that perhaps the former swimming beach area could be leased back to the Township to maintain as a swimming beach.

Mr. Horne indicated that the 2021 economic impact of the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore was estimated to be \$54 million. He noted that the Park continues to work on improvements to several

USCG stations/properties that the Park now oversees. He reviewed some of the items the Park staff monitors routinely such as visitor use management & human waste removal. He noted the recent purchase of a \$300,000 boat to assist with human waste removal in parts of the park that are not easily accessible by road. Some areas like Chapel Beach and Mosquito Beach are moving to a tank system to avoid waste leaching into the ground as the park visitation increases. He discussed ongoing maintenance and repairs to back country bridges.

Jenny asked how often the Park's general plan is updated. Mr. Horne indicated that it does not happen routinely.

An audience member asked about the status of refurbishing snowmobile trails around Sable Lake. Mr. Horne said it should already be done. It was asked if a park pass would be required for the small amount of the trail that is actually in the park.

An audience member asked about the Park's intentions for the Sable Lake area. Mr. Horne indicated it is considered "casual recreation" allowing for smaller motor boats. He noted there is currently a primitive campground and they are working on dock improvements and rerouting some trails.

It was suggested that the Park and Township schedule additional meetings to work out more details on how we can work together. Jenny asked about job opportunities in the park and how they might be expanded. It was questioned why passes are not currently being sold at the visitor center near Grand Marais. Mr. Horne noted that the center is not open all the time, but he will check into the feasibility of selling passes there.

Larry thanked Mr. Horne for his participation at our meeting. Commission and audience members indicated they hoped meetings would be further scheduled to encourage cooperative efforts.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** Larry indicated that we need to schedule a meeting related to the conditional use permit request on Ames Road. The Commission agreed to schedule a meeting for July 28th at 7:00pm.

Larry reported that he met with the Chamber of Commerce last night and believed it was a very positive meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Lou with support by Jenny.