

Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen Advisory Council (EUPCAC)

DRAFT* Work Session Minutes *DRAFT

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

6:00-8:00pm Eastern

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Chair: Tom Buckingham Vice-Chair: Gary Gorniak Secretary: Jack Thomas

Council Members Present

Tom Buckingham

Ken Collier

Gary Gorniak

Tim Hass

Bernie Hubbard

Robert Liebermann

David Lieble

Tom Paquin

Mark Spencer

Jack Thomas

Julie Weist

Tony Wright

Council Members Excused/Absent

Jeff Cox

Grant Dewitt

Al Garavaglia

Travis Kangas

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Liaisons & Guests

PJ Costa, Parks & Recreation Division-Eastern UP Trails, Newberry

Kristi Dahlstrom, Executive Division, Marquette

Lt. Skip Hagy, District 2, Law Enforcement Division, Newberry

Stacy Haughey, UP Field Deputy, Executive Division, Marquette

Call to Order/Roll Call

The Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council meeting was called to order at 6:03pm by **Chair Buckingham**. He welcomed everyone in attendance and asked **Ms. Dahlstrom** to read the names of all those attending virtually.

Adoption of Agenda

Chair Buckingham asked the Council if there were any corrections or additions to the agenda; none were brought forth. **Mr. Hass motioned to adopt the agenda as presented; Ms. Weist supported the motion. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: See listing on page 1. Motion carried.**

Acknowledgement of Previous Meeting Minutes

Chair Buckingham acknowledged the Council's receipt of the December 15, 2022 meeting minutes; and noted approval of them has been deferred to the April meeting.

DNR Division Reports

Written staff reports were provided to Council members on December 8, 2022. **Ms. Haughey** thanked Lt. Hagy and Mr. Costa for attending this evening. She indicated if there were any questions about items in the reports for staff who are not present, she would collect them for a later response.

- **Chair Buckingham** asked about the recent snowmobile accidents in the Newberry area. **Lt. Hagy** provided a brief overview, noting speed has been a factor in the majority of accidents and fatalities. With the trails in excellent condition due to the amount of snowfall, the trails have been extremely busy. Officers have focused on speed enforcement and encouraging riders to ride more responsibly. Many who are from out of town are unfamiliar with the trails and remote areas. He mentioned during the I-500 in Sault Ste. Marie, the sheer number of riders on trails was unbelievable. During that event, officers gave about 178 warnings as well as many tickets. He reminded folks to

take a few minutes and make sure helmets are securely fastened; many are coming off in collisions. **Mr. Hass** mentioned in Alger County, there has been so many snowmobile accidents that first responders have been spread very thin, which delays the response time to other emergent needs.

Work Session Items

Ms. Haughey noted this is the first time the Councils have had a dedicated work session and the intent is to spend time reviewing the summary and recommendations resulting from the MSU-facilitated survey/sessions the Council participated in last fall. In addition, meeting dates, locations, and agenda topics for the upcoming year will be determined. To allow adequate discussion time at this session, no action items or natural resource topics were placed on the agenda and divisional staff attendance was optional. She thanked everyone who was able to participate in the survey and sessions. The goal is to make the CAC experience better for all involved.

1. **Review Council Role/Expectations (UPCAC Charter, WUPCAC Bylaws):** Roles and expectations for both the Councils and members are defined in two documents, the UPCAC Charter and a set of bylaws for both the West UPCAC and the East UPCAC. Both were established when the UP Citizens' Advisory Councils began in 2008 and a few revisions have occurred over the years.
 - Early Rally: The Councils were created after 300+ people gathered at a sportsman's rally in Marquette in early 2008. The message was clear that something had to change in the way the DNR was communicating with the UP sporting public. Several current members of the Council attended that rally. The first meetings of the Councils were contentious. A lot has changed with the Councils since then, and communication has been at the forefront. **Ms. Haughey** further explained some of the notable historic events of the Councils, including the chairs of both Councils addressing the NRC at their yearly UP meeting.
 - UPCAC Charter-Key Highlights: The two main functions of the UPCACs and the primary purpose/roles were reviewed, including advising the DNR on various regional (UP-specific, not necessarily statewide) programs and policies and the importance of members assisting to inform the broader public about DNR information they learn of at the meetings. There is always so much information circulating in the public, some of which is incorrect.
 - The expected outcome of the process and scope of the UPCAC's authority, which is advisory in nature and does not have decision-making abilities or authority over any other current advisory group used by the DNR, was also covered. **Ms. Haughey** stated the UPCACs are a priority and was reinforced by DNR Director Eichinger at the October 12th CAC planning session with Acting Director Lott in attendance. She replayed a video with the Director's commentary from that session: The Councils *"are extremely important for the work that we do...I appreciate all that you do."* She indicated the latest rumors suggesting the Councils will be dissolved are very untrue. This planning process was an invested effort to continue to improve the highly valued work of the Councils.
 - WUPCAC Bylaws: The bylaws govern membership and operating procedures of the council, including attendance, council structure, etc. The resolution process and subcommittees were also reviewed.

2. **Review MSU Facilitator Summary & Key Recommendations from CAC Planning Sessions:** **Ms. Haughey** thanked Council members for participating in this important process and thanked DNR staff for providing their insightful input as well. The summary has been shared internally with DNR division chiefs and leadership as well as with UPCAC divisional staff. The following four key recommendations

were gleaned by the facilitators after the in-person and virtual planning sessions and surveys held with Council members and DNR divisional staff.

- **(1) Streamline meeting planning and agendas:**
 - *Move meetings around each regional CAC's area of responsibility:* Meeting locations are rotated in the eastern UP (Newberry, Sault Ste. Marie, St. Ignace, Munising) and in the western UP (Houghton, Ironwood, Marquette, Baraga, Escanaba, Iron Mountain). Note that meetings are held every other month in each region, totaling 6 meetings per year per Council. In some locations, adequate meeting facilities are lacking such as Manistique. **Mr. Hass** suggested the hospital's conference room as an excellent meeting location in that area.
 - *Have local DNR staff provide updates at each meeting:* Division Reports will still be produced for each meeting; however, not all staff may be present if the focus at each meeting were to be staggered.
 - *Plan for meeting topics and in-person staff/division reports at CAC meeting well ahead of time:* Time was spent determining which divisional topics would be best discussed at each meeting, with a focus on the time of year, possible regulation changes, etc. and also focusing on not having all staff be present at all meetings. This can be challenging for spontaneous discussion or topic inquiries at meetings. **Ms. Haughey** opened the floor for input on this item.
 - **Mr. Liebermann** stated to keep it the same, with staff at all meetings and if they are on the agenda to enhance their topics or conversation to make it more meaningful.
 - **Mr. Paquin** stated having been on both sides, he suggested having appropriate staff present according to the season of the meeting to answer applicable questions.
 - **Mr. Hass** stated he only recalls one instance since he's been on the Council in which staff came to them in advance of formalizing a decision to ask for the Council's input. It seems in most cases, the DNR has already made a decision prior to presenting it to the Council. **Ms. Haughey** indicated this was a good point made and added that certain items can only be changed legislatively. Discussion ensued in length regarding providing the Council advance knowledge of legislative bills that may affect the DNR and keeping within the Council's regional purpose, function, and role. It was noted the division reports, as well as the recap of NRC meetings that are emailed to Council members monthly, include the most current legislative initiatives affecting the DNR. **Ms. Haughey** indicated this topic will need more thought.
 - *End expectation that all divisions be present at all meetings:* This contradicts the second item above; however, this may have come from staff feedback and the other item came from council member feedback.
 - *Discussion:*
 - **Ms. Haughey** asked for a show of hands for how many Council members would support having staff attend all meetings (2nd item above) or ending the expectation that staff attend all meetings (4th item above) and stagger attendance based on seasonal topics.
 - Before stating choices, **Chair Buckingham** stated over the years, there have been multiple community members and council members who have been able to engage with DNR staff at meetings and ask specific questions. Not knowing what those would be or where the course of conversation would go, a DNR staff person would be able to answer the question directly on the spot. He asked for it to be recognized that Council members are equally as busy as DNR staff and make time to attend these meetings and do so because DNR staff are present. **Ms. Haughey** agreed.

- **Mr. Wright** stated he agreed with Chair Buckingham stating it may not be essential that every single staff person attend, but it is appreciated when they are present and the topic of conversation or public question presented is not always for only one specific division.
- Council members provided their choices: 8 supported the 2nd item and 4 supported the 4th item.
- (2) Improve communications:
 - *Develop improved social media presence for CAC:* The DNR has a Facebook page, however, the UPCAC's are unable to have one due to social media policies, staffing/time to manage it and the likelihood of unsolicited negative comments that tend to surface with pages like this. CAC press releases are published on the DNR's Twitter feed for UP subscribers (which tend to be younger). Perhaps members can share meeting notices on their personal FB pages.
 - *Focus on expanding presence in traditional media due to lack of internet service:* The CAC press release process was explained. UP news media considers their audience before printing the press release, for example, if a meeting is in Houghton, the Marquette media may choose not to run it as their readership is not in Houghton. These are the limitations of print media. According to John Pepin, Deputy PIO in the UP, CAC press releases are received by 31,691 UP subscribers (as of 1/12/2023) through the DNR news delivery system. Various radio outdoor shows also receive the meeting notices.
 - *Proactively invite stakeholders to attend meetings:* **Ms. Dahlstrom** has an extensive email listing including past council members, organizational representatives (MUCC, MiSORVA) and anyone wishing to receive DNR related materials including meeting press releases. The release, meeting agenda and division reports are also emailed to local city/county officials in the city the meeting is held, NRC Commissioners, UP legislative offices and staff, etc.
 - **Ms. Haughey** asked if there were any suggestions as to who might be missed that is not already receiving the notice. **Chair Buckingham** suggested a new contact; **Ms. Dahlstrom** will add him to her email list. Any others can be emailed to **Ms. Dahlstrom** as well.
 - **Mr. Paquin** asked if the topics are listed on the press releases when they are sent out; **Ms. Haughey** replied they are listed in the appropriate state format, and it is sent out a week or more before the meeting to catch most of the weekly papers.
 - **Mr. Wright** spoke about associate membership on the Councils without the ability to vote and if that had been considered previously. **Ms. Haughey** indicated the UPCAC bylaws and charter require members to be a UP resident. With the ability for occasional hybrid meetings, it allows for a wide variety of folks to participate in meetings in that format. Otherwise, attending in person may be a barrier. **Chair Buckingham** stated it's something that could be looked into. Discussion ensued in length and ended with **Chair Buckingham** suggesting this topic be discussed at a future meeting if the Council desires. **Ms. Haughey** indicated the UPCAC Charter was drafted and prepared by the DNR and represents both the East and West UPCACs. She indicated she will review historical files on the creation of the charter and information contained within before any further discussion takes place.
 - *Standardize process of reporting to CAC across DNR divisions:* A report of CAC meeting activity each month is shared at DNR leadership meetings and also with the Director and various divisional leadership staff on a weekly or monthly basis.
 - **Ms. Haughey** asked the group whether this item pertains to a standardized reporting or format for the division reports or getting CAC information to the divisions. No response was given. She indicated she will look back on the comments to see if there is more clarification.

▪ (3) Diversify the CACs:

- *Establish onboarding process for new CAC members:* There are always opportunities to improve the onboarding process. The pandemic years created isolation for new members that came on board during that time with no in-person connections to the Council.
- *Conduct outreach to silent sport and other nontraditional outdoor user groups:* One silent sport group was encouraged to have a member apply for the Council, but no response was received. Any other ideas or suggestions?
 - **Mr. Lieble** indicated he is active with the silent sports group, Munising Bay Trail Network, in Alger County and they would be a good contact.
- *Hold meetings once annually on college campuses in both regions:* Each year, a meeting is typically held at MTU in Houghton and Bay College in both Escanaba and Iron Mountain for the WUPCAC and at LSSU in Sault Ste. Marie for the EUPCAC. Student attendance at these locations will be encouraged for future meetings. There is also a state requirement to hold state agency meetings at educational facilities, local government facilities, etc.
- *Discussion:*
 - **Ms. Haughey** asked if there were any others we may be missing in the eastern UP. **Ms. Weist** suggested Bay Mills Community College near Brimley. **Secretary Thomas** suggested the township hall in Engadine which hosts a lot of meetings as well as the Hiawatha Sportsman’s Club which also has a meeting room.

▪ (4) Strengthen relationship between CACs and DNR administration:

- *DNR staff should communicate more proactively with the CAC about upcoming projects and resolutions; ideally CAC would have input before actions are taken.* **Ms. Haughey** indicated the CAC charter and bylaws focus on a regional perspective, which was discussed earlier and noted the Council is very engaged on eastern UP-related items. If this item is related more to statewide topics, there may need to be a separate discussion.
- *Develop a process for CAC leaders to interact informally with DNR administration:* The annual Joint UPCAC meeting is the main event in which CAC members interact with NRC Commissioners and DNR administration. In the past, both UPCAC chairs would address the NRC during public comment at the annual UP NRC meeting each year about current CAC items; it was suggested they both speak this year.
- *Discussion:*
 - **Ms. Haughey** asked for suggestions on other opportunities. **Chair Buckingham** stated last year’s Joint UPCAC Meeting and NRC mixer in October 2022 was one of the best joint opportunities since they’ve been held in conjunction with the UP NRC meeting. He explained the NRC commissioners and Lansing staff all attended the Joint UPCAC meeting and the mixer was a great opportunity to speak to the commissioners informally on current subjects. **Ms. Haughey** noted the same format will again be held this year with the Joint UPCAC meeting being held on October 11, 2023, the day before the UP NRC Meeting, both of which will be held in Escanaba. An informal meet-and-greet will be planned after the Joint UPCAC meeting. Locations for the Joint meeting and the mixer have not been determined. The NRC meeting on October 12th will be held at Bay College in Escanaba.

3. Approval of 2023 Meeting Dates & Locations: Six meeting dates and locations for 2023 were proposed (5 regular meetings and one joint meeting with the West UPCAC). A possible date change

for the June 13th meeting date was mentioned; however, it was agreed to wait until plans were firm before suggesting an alternative date. No other changes were brought forth, thereby solidifying the 2023 dates as presented. The final schedule will be emailed to Council members and location venues will be arranged.

4. *Determine Agenda Topics for Each Meeting:* General guidelines for agenda preparation were reviewed. Agendas are created in combination with the Council, Chair and UP Field Deputy. Topics can be requested by Council members with concurrence by the Chair and UP Field Deputy. Presenters must be a Council member or DNR staff, unless approved by the Chair and UP Field Deputy. Those wishing to present at a Council meeting about a specific topic can register for public comment. Agendas/topics for upcoming meetings are discussed and finalized at a pre-meeting held two weeks before each meeting with the Council Chair, UP Field Deputy and DNR staff. The goal in determining focus areas this year for each meeting is to ensure appropriate staff are present to answer related questions. Written division reports from staff will still be requested for each meeting.
 - April: Fisheries/Law, Moose Survey Results (if available), Introduction of New Members, CAC Officer Selections, Committee Selections
 - June: Wildlife/NRC-Potential Wildlife Orders
 - August: Parks, Boating, Trails
 - October (Joint UPCAC): DNR Budget Overview/Restricted Funds, DNR Budget Priorities for New Fiscal Year, DNR Updates, Local & Lansing Staff/NRC Commissioners in attendance
 - December: Forestry, Marketing & Outreach
 - *Discussion:*
 - **Ms. Haughey** stated agenda themes were established to allow staff to plan for topics and attendance. All staff will be invited to attend all meetings; however, to allow flexibility, they may decide not to attend a meeting that doesn't have a specific agenda item. This coincides with the recommendations from the facilitated planning sessions. She indicated staggered staff involvement is a new process and there will be some hiccups along the way. She asked for the Council's thoughts on the topics chosen for each meeting date; none were brought forth.
5. *Consider Committee Involvement for 2023:* There are currently two active committees for the EUPCAC: Fisheries and Policy Impact. Members were reminded to consider adding themselves to a committee at the next meeting. **Ms. Haughey** asked the Council if there were any other committees the Council would like to see. She indicated she received a request for a wolf committee for the EUPCAC since it has been on the agenda over 29 times; **Vice Chair Gorniak** stated he would like to be on that committee. **Chair Buckingham** noted there were several committees in the past that are no longer active such as Firewood Movement and Deer. **Ms. Dahlstrom** spoke about the West UPCAC's committee structure as a comparison, indicating their process is to have resolutions be discussed and developed at the committee level first (if not time sensitive) and then brought to the full council for a brief explanation and then consideration. **Ms. Haughey** added it has made their resolution process much smoother and eliminated domination of Council meeting time to one topic. **Chair Buckingham** stated the Council can consider that type of structure if they wish. **Mr. Liebermann** stated he hasn't seen much come forward from the committees since he began; perhaps there isn't as great a need yet. **Ms. Haughey** agreed the EUPCAC's committees are more active when there are pending issues. **Mr. Liebermann** noted if there were an invasive species committee, he would be interested in serving on it and perhaps it is something that would dissolve when no issues were present rather than a

standing committee. **Ms. Haughey** stated she will add a more in-depth discussion to the agenda for the April meeting.

6. CAC Selection Process Update: **Ms. Haughey** reviewed the current status of new member selection. 9 current EUPCAC members were approved for a term renewal and 7 applications were received for 4 openings on the EUPCAC. General applicant demographics (residence county, interests) were noted. The CAC Selection Team met on January 31 to consider renewals and chose new members for open positions on both the East and West CACs. The Team consisted of 4 UP representatives and 4 DNR staff. After a background and approval process, new members will be introduced at the April meeting. Onboarding and orientation will occur before then. **Secretary Thomas** indicated he doesn't recall having an orientation before he joined. **Ms. Haughey** stated those that may have been missed during the pandemic years will be invited to the upcoming orientation if they wish to attend. **Mr. Liebermann** noted he did not attend an orientation as well, and asked if there was a handbook. **Ms. Dahlstrom** explained how the former handbooks became outdated quickly. Instead, copies of the bylaws, charter, and a few other items are provided to new members while other meeting documents such as minutes are now available on the CAC webpage.
7. Additional Discussion:
 - **Chair Buckingham** recognized the Council for voting on the earlier item regarding staff involvement and that no one had an issue to agree or disagree. Everyone was respectful and he appreciates it very much and is very proud of that. **Ms. Haughey** agreed, stating this Council is a great group of folks and are very much appreciated.

Next Meeting

1. Next Meeting Date/Location: **Chair Buckingham** indicated the next meeting, as agreed to earlier, will be Wednesday, April 26 at 6:00pm, most likely at the LMAS Health Department conference room in Newberry, though not yet confirmed. This will be an in-person meeting. **Ms. Dahlstrom** noted Mr. Randy Claramunt is scheduled to speak regarding a cormorant funding and control resolution being submitted by Vice Chair Gorniak. **Chair Buckingham** asked if the resolution will be circulated before the next meeting; **Ms. Dahlstrom** indicated it will be sent to Council members at least 7 days in advance of the meeting.
2. Review of Agenda Topics Planned for Next Meeting: **Ms. Haughey** reviewed the topics mentioned earlier for the April 26th meeting (introduction of new members, CAC officer selections, committee selections, fisheries topics including the cormorant funding resolution, Law topics including a snowmobile season summary) as well as topics brought up at this meeting. **Chair Buckingham** stated the Council's resolution list has recently been sent to DNR Acting Director Lott, and in light of wildlife biologist Mr. Roell talking about changes being considered on the radio, he'd like to see the Council's former 2016 resolution relevant to deer seasons and method of take be discussed at the April 26th meeting and possibly be reaffirmed ahead of the upcoming deer regulations review by the NRC. Discussion ensued regarding the possible need to switch topics between the April and June meetings depending on when the deer regulation information would be available. **Ms. Haughey** will investigate and inform the Council ahead of time. **Chair Buckingham** asked that a copy of the Council's resolution history, along with the 2016 resolution, be sent to all members for reference.

Closing Comments from the Council

Chair Buckingham opened the floor for closing comments from the Council and DNR staff.

- **Secretary Thomas** stated in light of a discussion on method of take, he asked if the Council should be discussing a potential wolf season and method of take regarding wolves. He agreed to serving on a wolf committee if one were established. He also suggested establishing a deer committee as well. **Chair Buckingham** stated that he has asked for the former deer resolution as well as committees to be put on the April agenda for further discussion.

Adjourn

There being no further business, **Chair Buckingham** thanked everyone for attending. He adjourned the meeting at 7:45pm Eastern.