



Tourism and Recreation Committee  
MEETING MINUTES  
February 22, 2024

Attendee's: Rich Castle, George Samra, Tom Wdowik, Pam O'Laughlin, Vicki Barnes, and Gary Blaser

1. Introductions
  - a. Tom Wdowik – Oscoda AuSable Greenbush Convention and Business Bureau
  - b. Gary Blaser – Iosco County Parks & Recreation
2. Trail Discussion
  - a. ATV/ORV and Snowmobile Trail Funding
    - i. Gary Blaser discussed that Iosco County Parks & Recreation receives funding from the State of Michigan from snowmobile trail permit sales to maintain and manage the snowmobile trails in Iosco County. That includes the ability to purchase equipment. That same opportunity currently does not exist for the ATV/ORV trails and the needs are substantial in Iosco County as the trail system is being used more and more.
    - ii. Gary is attending a meeting with the MDNR in Sault Ste. Marie to discuss the ability for the State to start providing ATV/ORV maintenance funding. More information will follow.
    - iii. There are 60 miles designated as ATV/ORV trail in Iosco County
    - iv. There are 103 miles designated as snowmobile trail in Iosco County
  - b. Trail Promotion
    - i. US Forest Service roads being open to the public for ATV/ORV use is a pilot and could be temporary.
    - ii. US Forest Service has limited law enforcement to manage use of the roads.
    - iii. Preference is to not promote the use of the US Forest Service roads, let it happen naturally.
      1. If we are planning to promote any trails, promote the use of the ATV/ORV designated trails and snowmobile designated trails.
  - c. County Trail Map
    - i. Iosco County recently completed its new trail map which promotes the ATV/ORV, Snowmobile, Corsair and etc. trails in the County. The map is currently available at the Iosco County Courthouse and other vendors across the County.
    - ii. Rich Castle is working with Iosco County to inquire about a link so the trail can be accessed digitally.
3. Iosco Parks & Rec Community Grant
  - a. Gary Blaser overviewed the parameters for the grant provided by Iosco Parks & Rec.
    - i. \$25,000
    - ii. Available for brick-and-mortar projects (ex. pavilion, courts, etc.)
    - iii. Townships and municipalities can apply.
    - iv. No match required.
4. NEMCOG Map
  - a. No update.
5. Mission & Vision
  - a. Rich sent a draft Mission and Vision for the Committee to review and comment on via email.
    - i. Mission
      1. The Develop Iosco Tourism and Recreation Committee will promote tourism and recreation within Iosco County.
    - ii. Vision

1. The Develop Iosco Tourism and Recreation Committee will serve as a conduit to assist organizations within Iosco County to promote and enhance tourism and recreation within the County.

iii. Discussion

1. Pam recommended that collaboration and enhance be key words added.
2. Tom added that we need to add northeast Michigan. Promote the region as a whole.

6. Priorities

- a. It was realized as part of the January meeting the committee needs to develop a list of priorities to support and work on. There are so many opportunities and the committee cannot tackle all items.
- b. Need to decide what topics priorities the most value and impact to the County.
- c. HOMEWORK:
  - i. Email will be sent to Committee team to provide top five list of priorities the Committee should focus on in 2024.

7. Roundtable

- a. Jenn Brown (via text)
  - i. Tawas Wellness Warriors is looking to expand the Tawas Summerfest 5k race to include a 10k race. Final decision is dependent on Tawas Chamber and Tawas Wellness Warrior board approvals.
- b. Tom Wdowik
  - i. CVB has financially supported the construction of the Iosco Exploration Trail/Iron Belle Trail as well as Corsair.
  - ii. CVB applied for the Trail Town designation in 2023 but was unsuccessful as they were seeking designation for Oscoda, AuSable, and Greenbush and was told it can only be for one community.
    1. Will be reapplying in 2024 and for Oscoda only to be designated as a Michigan Trail Town.
  - iii. AuSable Township portion of the Iosco Exploration Trail will be constructed in 2024.
  - iv. Priorities are important for this committee to be successful.
  - v. While the CVB works independently, we need to reach outside of our boundaries to promote our county and region.
- c. Vicki Barnes
  - i. Recommended that Iosco County have a contingency attend the Pure Michigan Governor's Conference on Tourism.
    1. [Pure Michigan Governor's Conference on Tourism | Michigan](#)
- d. Pam O'Laughlin
  - i. Excited about the committee and the discussion that is occurring.
- e. Gary Blaser
  - i. A study was conducted in the past on where people were visiting Iosco County from. There were people from Traverse City who visited our area because they wanted to get away from the hustle and bustle and the low use of our assets.
  - ii. Keep in mind that in mind as we progress with our committee and promotion of the County and region.
- f. Rich Castle
  - i. The Consumers Energy Put Your Town on the Map pitch grant and Planet Awards were recently announced and participation from Iosco County and northeast Michigan was impressive. Looking forward to the top 10 finalist list and hoping northeast Michigan is well represented.