Hancock Trails Club
Board Meeting Minutes
August 19, 2025

Attendance: Jay Green, Eric Watkins, Brett Hauswirth, Mark Roberts, Nate Laakonen, Mark Klein, Ian Helman, Mare Grohowski, Murphy Mallow, Dean Woodbeck, and Keith Meyers. Absent: Jesse Wiederhold Guests: John Diebel and Norma Veurink

Jay convened the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

Agenda: As shown below in these minutes with the addition of last month's agenda items for anything missed in committee reports.

Minutes: Eric noted that committee organizers were not necessarily the chairs as noted in the draft minutes. Mark Roberts will make this change. Eric moved that minutes be approved with that revision Murphy supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Comment: Norma Veurink expressed concern about the bike park. The first time she heard about the project was at the time of the solicitation. Norma does not believe the current space is underutilized as she indicated a lot of walkers use it. Norma indicated that she does not oppose the concept of a bike park but believes it should have been located at the Driving Park. Norma feels that the Lower Grillhouse Trail should not be developed for bikers. She has concerns about bikers in the gorge because of how wet it is. She stated that Lower Grillhouse should be left as is for walkers. Norma went on to state that if the Club is planning big changes in the future to please notify the members. She noted that she is a biker, but she still wants this area reserved for walkers. She went on to state that the board should reach out and get feedback. Nate noted that this had been discussed with the City Council. Eric also discussed the delay with getting the first newsletter out. Ian noted that digital communication has not been our strong suit. Mare thanked Norma for coming, noting that she understood what she was talking about. Mare went on to note that she is not a biker, but she appreciates the improvements biking has brought to the trails and encouraged Norma to continue registering concerns she may have to the board. Mare thanked Norma again for sharing her voice. John mentioned the addition of the trailhead as helping to disperse traffic. Norma responded that she feels this will cause traffic to increase, stating that she has never seen a biker out there. Murphy feels the improvements will help everyone in the long term and it will be safer. John indicated that he would like to see more discipline in the spring on mud holes. This led to a discussion about needing more current information on trail conditions. Dean mentioned the total voluntary nature of the Club. Ian noted that he has updated the trail routes on Trailforks and that this may be an effective way to crowd-source the conditions. Mark Roberts mentioned the importance of having a walking trail that is separate for dogs which led to a discussion of high dog use of trails from the Fairgrounds and Tomasi. Eric noted that people are entering with their dogs where it is most convenient. Norma indicated that she feels the upper loop would be an option. Nate responded that the project goes back to the 5-Year Recreation Plan. The City's goal is to get more people into the gorge. This project facilitates access and that was a motivation for him to lead this project.

Treasurer's Report: John indicated that he and Brett met before the meeting and Brett is ready to take over the Treasurer's role. John noted that all transactions have now been entered into QuickBooks. John highlighted that liquid assets (checking and money market) total $120,419.77. This includes $16,000 in recent transactions, funding coming in through Patronicity, Far North design work, and $54,000 to Far North for half of the work on the project. John noted that there is far more to come in. John also noted that he will start mowing again tomorrow. Keith moved acceptance of the treasurer's report. Mare supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Committee Reports:

Executive Committee: Jay noted that he is the chair. Eric commented that the committee should report on anything being worked on, giving the plat maps as an example and to track current tasks. This involves updating for landowners who may not currently be under the City's liability coverage.

Finance Committee: Brett is the Chair, and we should let him know if there is something we want to see in reports. Eric wants a more concrete look. Dean indicated that he would like to see year-to-date this year versus year-to-date last year.

Trails Committee: Nate reported that they met on August 11th. Winter grooming personnel was discussed and the previous payroll reviewed. The committee would like to create a hierarchy for staff expectations and determine what kind of relationship we should have (with either us as the employer or paying the city to function as the employer). This would also include having an established person to whom the head groomer would report and reporting conditions to Keweenaw Trails. They will have John Pekkala meet with the committee and follow up with Swedetown on its practices. Mark Roberts brought up how the Keweenaw Land Trust is farming out its payroll for a fee. Nate indicated that we need to confirm if Tyler will be employed this winter. Mare expressed concern about too much on the head groomer's plate. Nate responded indicating that it takes a team to get the job done. Mark Klein indicated that he would continue to be the head snow bike groomer and that he hopes to have Kyle available again this winter. The Copper Shores Community Foundation Recreation Grant was discussed as an opportunity to improve the Creekside Trail or improve snow grooming equipment. The latter is the choice, but a concept paper needs to be submitted by Friday. Mark Klein discussed a larger groomer as a priority. The grant timing is for 2026. Mark Klein is willing to take the lead but will need help with editing. Mare indicated a willingness to help with the editing. Jay noted that information is available in old grants. Dean noted that this is a two-page maximum and the focus could be better grooming means more people using the trails. This led to a discussion about the Snow Rabbit. The question was raised about whether our bridges could handle it. Mark Roberts said yes. Jay indicated that the price would be about $150,000. Eric noted to be general on the cost. It was noted that using a Snow Rabbit would require only one pass which would reduce fuel cost and that since it runs on diesel it could be fueled up at the DPW garage without hauling fuel as we currently do. Nate noted that we should point out that we are lagging both MTU and Swedetown on grooming. The Creekside Connector bridge to replace the swamp mat bridge was discussed as an immediate need. The cost was identified as $3,500. Jay moved to approve spending $3,500 to build this bridge on the Creekside Connector Trail when the time comes to do so. Murphy supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously. Mark Roberts indicated that this bridge could be built in a couple of days. John said that the new mower is not operational due to serious damage to the mower deck, but the old mower is now operational. On the Long Bridge, Mark Klein will address the loose planks, and Mark Roberts will assess the joists. The Keweenaw Land Trust may be able to help with this need. On the Creekside drainage repairs at Railroad Ravine, Nate has had no luck with getting MJO out. Dean indicated the City asks that the Club defer any work until the FEMA project is closed out, which should be soon. Nate highlighted recent weedwhacking activities. The walkaround with Dave Mattila with Superior Sand & Gravel was discussed. There is no immediate threats to the trails. We may need to shift closer to the gorge at some point. The Lower Creekside project started on August 11th. McGann's delivered fencing and work is going on schedule. Andy Moyle has expressed interest in the trails with Ebb & Flow performing work. Jay discussed the grant funding for the new UTV and asked when we wanted to order it. The Kawasaki was discussed as having the better cab. Keith mentioned a concern about buying a new UTV when the Snow Rabbit might be a better option for the use of the funds. Mark Roberts noted that there would be good re-sale value a year out. Dean noted that the City's contribution was for the purpose of buying the UTV. There was general agreement that the new equipment would address the breakdown issues that contributed to last winter's grooming issues. Jay indicated that we should get with M & M on availability. John indicated that he would get with Chad at M & M. Jay indicated that an email vote will occur once we have the cost. John indicated that he would get the Kodiak up for sale. Eric thanked the Trails Committee for their work.

Event Committee: Mark Roberts chairs the committee. The event list was shared and reviewed for event organizers. Keith will take the lead on the Heikinpaiva Parade. Jay will ask Wayne about taking the lead with Barkell Elementary. Diane Oplet from the Ski Tigers will take the lead on the Barnelopet. Eric indicated that Ishi is willing to Lead the Glide-N-Gorge. Mark Roberts pointed to his binder of materials from past Glide-N-Gorge events. Mare volunteered to digitize it. Jay will also contact Candy about helping Ishi. The bikers will discuss the future of SnoDuro. Murphy will lead the Chain Drive. Mare will take the lead in running events.

Communications/Outreach Committee: Jesse to chair the committee. Business sponsorship activity will start on September 1st. There will be a September 8th digital kickoff with in-person follow-up two weeks later. Keith also noted a potential Club outreach opportunity through WMPL where he has become a regular on Elaine Hendrickson's morning show and talked recently about last year's work on the Creekside Connector in conjunction with current bridge and boardwalk work taking place at KLT's Boston Creek.

Organizational Committee: Eric and Mare – the agenda format has been working well so far. The objective is to get the board meetings down to an hour in length. Chairs should submit agenda items in advance to increase transparency. Eric feels today's format was very productive. Eric would like to be invited to the Trails Committee to work on the Gant chart. A trails club sustainability plan will help to keep trails in usable condition. Eric has talked with Corey McDonald on the Copper Harbor Trails Club who indicates they have someone who does this. There was also discussion about working toward an automatic transcription of board meeting minutes. Nate also brought up the possibility of having a dial in option for meetings when board members cannot attend in person. It was determined that our by-laws do allow for voting in that format.

Jay noted that he will address the Hancock Township land purchase in September.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.