

**Hancock Trails Club
Board Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2025**

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

Jay convened the meeting just after 7:01 p.m.

Agenda: No changes

Minutes: Jay noted four names that needed to be corrected in the minutes. Eric moved that the minutes be approved as amended. Jesse supported the motion with a second. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Treasurer's Report: Delayed until Brett's arrival.

Dean Woodbeck and Mary Babcock addressed the board about making two major changes. The first being that the Club start doing the payroll for the groomers. Last year's grooming costs came to \$10,400 with bonuses. The second being taking on repair costs, which were around \$4,000 last year. Mary indicated that the City would keep it in the budget this year. Mary expressed concern about repairs being done in the past before the City had a voice in it with our groomer making the decisions. Fuel was also paid for by the City, which was about \$2,400 last year. The City will cover this, but we need a better way to communicate. After a good deal of discussion, Mary summarized that the existing approach costs the City more and that the Club needs to ask what it needs to operate to create better controls. Mary indicated that the City could re-look at repairs and fuel next summer, highlighting the march/April budget process. Regarding payroll, Mary also spoke about the challenge with bonuses and level of pay as well as impact on benefit eligibility. Dean noted that these changes will clarify the line of authority and the head groomer/DPW relationship. John Diebel noted the Club's previous resistance to taking on the payroll due to the expense. Dean discussed how his church utilizes Paychex. Eric asked for clarification of ownership/storage of equipment. Mary indicated that the equipment can be kept on the City's insurance. Eric also asked about budget process. Mary asked that the Club predict a year out and present to the City Council and to bring equipment needs through the Recreation Commission which brings in \$110,000/year through the millage. Mary also noted that bills have come in from the Club three months after the fact. When asked by Jay about the payroll this year, Mary indicated that it would be good for the Club to take it over this winter. Jay went on to indicate that he and Brett will be working the budget and will come to talk to the City. John Diebel highlighted that key portions of the Club's revenue come in during the first two months of the year through memberships and Giving Tuesday. Nate followed up on Eric's question about equipment ownership. Mary indicated that equipment could be re-titled to the Club. Mary then emphasized that the City is not changing its funding of the Club, but the dynamic by which it

occurs. The City expects the Club to take on the payroll this year and present in March what we will need with equipment needs brought to the Recreation Commission in January. Dean indicated that he has six years of data that he can share with the Club. The Club should also clarify its point of contact with the City. Mary offered to collaborate with the Club on the details of the changes discussed. The City is okay with the groomers punching in on the City's time clock.

Treasurer's Report: Brett summarized details provided in his email to board members ahead of the meeting. M & M was the largest item at almost \$18,000. There is \$66,152 in checking and \$109,000 in the money market for a total of about \$176,000. Dean asked if these reports could go to the Google Group. Eric indicated that he would send out a request for all emails to be used by the Google Group as the report is on the Google drive. Jesse moved that the Treasurer's Report be accepted. Nate supported the motion with a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

Executive Committee: Jay reported that the Land Purchase agreement was sent to Hancock Township. They did not take it up at their most recent meeting. Jay contacted the Supervisor and he will sign and notarize the agreement a week from today as the board has already authorized it. The agreement goes to the title company next with closing on or before December 15, 2025. There is a question about how much to insure for as the township paid \$1,800 for it out of the Land Bank ten years ago. In July we can seek a refund for the taxes we pay in February.

Finance Committee: Jay, Eric, and Brett met. Brett will be putting together a spreadsheet that will include what the City is looking for. We will look at Paychex as well as third party options. Keith indicated that he would check on who Chassell Township is using. The Giving Tuesday application was submitted on October 28th, but there has been a delay in the announcement by Copper Shores.

Trails Committee: Nate discussed Andy Moyle's proposal for the Club to absorb the Bayside Trails. Eric sought clarification as to why and Nate indicated that Andy was looking to offset potential liability. Mark Klein gave the example of the East Bluff and the Copper Harbor Trails Club as a similar example. This led to a discussion about liability coverage. The City and Club have policies. Nate noted that not all landowners are on the City policy. Mare asked if we could see the Club's policy. Nate went on to indicate that Andy Moyle would make a \$25,000 donation if we do this and that he would pay for maintenance. Nate talked to the Copper Harbor Trails Club. They recommended that we have control to close features. Eric expressed concern about volunteer needs. Nate will talk to Andy about our concerns then invite Andy to a meeting. Mare wants to see the insurance first. Dean will provide the City information and Mare will get with the Tervo agency about the Club's coverage. Nate feels the Bayside Trails would fit within our by-laws. Brett asked if Andy would have a say on what we do with the \$25,000 contribution. Nate indicated that Andy would expect us to work with a local trail builder. Jay indicated that either party should have the ability to cancel an agreement. Ian discussed the Creekside Bike Park. The two bottom features are completed, and they are chipping away on the big flow trail. Eric commented positively about the view and Jesse indicated that Visit Keweenaw was impressed. Mark Klein indicated that he has been doing volunteer work on the Lower Grillhouse tread using the mini excavator. Ian indicated that he is working on non-motorized signage and guidelines for the features looking at best practices. Jesse encouraged a ribbon cutting

promotional event. Eric commented that he is already seeing use. Nate indicated that the Copper Shores Community Health Foundation has given us the okay to move forward with a full proposal, so we will need to decide on our direction as the deadline is December 19th. Jay noted that a new Snow Rabbit would be \$150,000, but \$160,000 with all the equipment. Discussion centered on moving forward and being specific. On groomers, Nate indicated that this is in John Pekkala's hands. Jay indicated that four to five are interested, including Kyle Forsman, Kevin Syth (who helped with mowing), Wolf Meingast (if no one else can), and Jeff Bloom. We are waiting for a recommendation from John Pekkala. It was decided to have John Pekkala come to us with the recommendation at the board level, but to tell him what it is we can pay. At the same time make the decision on Paychex or a third-party payroll. The Club will develop job descriptions for the head and assistant groomers with pay scales. Nate indicated that we need to make sure John Pekkala knows that we are not hiring through the city and that we will do payroll. Dean will put draft descriptions together. As an employer, we will be responsible for workers' compensation and unemployment. On signage, the board discussed having Chris Schmidt develop an overlay for the signs for the Creekside Trailhead bike park.

Events Committee: Jay discussed the Snowshoe Social to take place at 2 p.m. on the day of Heikinpaiva. It was noted that Heikinpaiva is on the Visit Keweenaw website, but not on the City calendar. John Diebel is coordinating with Tiff DeGroot at the Keweenaw Land Trust on this event that the City requested. The Retro Ski will be on February 15th. For Make a Difference Day, we will have a crew out to do weedwhacking.

Communication/Outreach Committee: Ian reported that follow up is underway to close out sponsorships soon. The Newsletter went out yesterday.

Organizational Committee: On trails sustainability, Eric indicated he is doing research with Copper Harbor Trails Club looking at tracking maintenance and volunteer hours. Mare discussed looking at the grants we want to pursue and getting a document put together. Nate noted a list of grant opportunities available through CUNA for non-profits. Jay noted the need for grant application tracking.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.