



US 23 Heritage Route
 Management Council Meeting
 March 4, 2015, at 10 am
 Online

MINUTES

Present:

Anne Belanger, Steve Schnell, Belle Flora, Leisa Sutton, Adam Poll, Patty O’Donnell, Doug Wilson, Kevin Schaedig, Mary Ellen Jones, Brandon Schroeder, Kari Vanderheuel, Blake Gingrich, Stephanie Gandulla, Larry Clark, and Denise Cline.

Anne Belanger called meeting to order at 10:05 am.

*Motion by Belle Flora to approve the minutes from October 23, 2014.
 Seconded by Steve Schnell. Motion carried.*

Michigan Heritage Routes to Pure Michigan Byways

Denise Cline gave a background on the reason for the change to Pure Michigan Byways. She noted that there has been some confusion about how that affects the route names. She confirmed with MDOT that the individual route names do not have to change if the local Management Council does not want to. A lengthy discussion occurred on the benefits of using the word “heritage”. It was noted that our logo and the word “heritage route” has been used extensively in brochures, website, and in the videos. If the name US 23 Heritage Route is kept, a tagline “A Pure Michigan Byway” will be added to the website. Several members of the Council indicated that the words “heritage”, “coastal” and “US 23” all help to make it sound interesting and in communicating geography. The group review the results of the survey. 87 people responded and the majority was in favor of keeping the name “US 23 Heritage Route”.

Denise explained that a new “Pure Michigan Byway” sign design is in progress with MDOT and Travel Michigan. Once approved, MDOT will produce the signs in-house and will install them according to the current sign replacement schedule. If a byway wants their signs installed sooner, they would have to contribute funding to pay for that installation. The Pure Michigan Byway sign does not replace the current US 23 logo, but it is beneficial for all byways in the State to have the same Pure Michigan Byway roadside signage denoting them as all part of the same program.

In addition, Patty O’Donnell explained that all of the routes will be featured on a webpage for “Pure Michigan Byways”. The individual route names will appear under that heading. Denise added that NEMCOG had purchased a set of URLs (i.e. www.puremichiganbyways.com along with variations on that name) that they will redirect to the Pure Michigan Byways page on www.michigan.org when the page is ready. They did this in order to prevent someone else from purchasing the URLs first since MDOT cannot purchase URLs themselves.

Voting Members:

1. Sue Stein (Arenac County)
2. *Vacant (Arenac County)*
3. Dave Wentworth (Iosco County)
4. D. Jay O’Farrell (Iosco County)
5. Marlina MacNeill (Alcona County)
6. Karen Sanderson (Alcona County)
7. Greg Sundin (Alpena County)
8. Ken Gauthier (Alpena County)
9. Anne Belanger (Presque Isle County)
10. *Vacant (Presque Isle County)*
11. Steve Schnell (Cheboygan County)
12. *Vacant (Cheboygan County)*
13. Heidi Dewald (Private Tourism Rep)
14. Jeff Czymbor (Private Tourism Rep)
15. Sarah Waters (TBNMS)
16. Belle Flora (Sunrise Coastal Coalition)
17. Patty O’Donnell (MDOT)
18. Don Seal (Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe)
19. Mary Ellen Jones (MACNE)

Non-Voting Members (Ex-Officio):

1. Kari Vanderheuel (US Forest Service)
2. Blake Gingrich (Michigan DNR)
3. Brandon Schroeder (Michigan Sea Grant)

Alternates for voting members

1. Jim Klarich (Alpena County)
2. Rich Sullenger (Alpena County)
3. Frank Cloutier (Saginaw Chippewa Tribe)
4. Pat Shiflet (Sunrise Coastal Coalition)
5. Doug Wilson (MDOT)
6. Stephanie Gandulla (TBNMS)

Motion by Steve Schnell to maintain the name "US 23 Heritage Route". Seconded by Mary Ellen Jones. Roll call vote – motion carried unanimously.

It was noted that the tagline "A Pure Michigan Byway" will be used. In addition, all of the keywords including "scenic byway", "sunrise coast", etc will be used on the website.

Lake Huron Discovery Tour:

Mary Ellen updated the group on the tour planned for October 9-12, 2015. The Discovery Tour committee has been working on getting funding raised and getting the word out through a call to action. Businesses and communities up and down the coast are encouraged to plan events and add them to the special events calendar that has been created for this on the US 23 site. Denise added that a checkbox is now available to denote that an event is part of the tour. When enough events are added, the special events calendar will light up on the front page. The committee is also looking for business sponsors to participate.

New Management Council Seats:

A short discussion occurred about adding seats to the Council. It was requested that a seat be added for the US 23 South Bay Corridor Committee at the next Management Council meeting.

Motion by Belle Flora to add a seat for Chambers/CVBs and for the NRTM Committee (Negwegon, Rockport, Thompsons's Harbor). Seconded by Steve Schnell. Motion carried.

Denise asked each county team to get together and determine who their representatives on the Management Council will be. The County Board of Commissioners then makes those appointments. The Council has had several vacant seats in recent years. Several people have been not in attendance for quite a while so those seats need to be looked at.

Program Updates: Denise Cline

- Website statistics – website has surpassed half a million hits. Ann Arbor was the city bringing the most visits to the site in the past 12 months.
- Sunrise Coast Birding Trail – Denise showed drafts of the birding map guide and explained that the new website www.sunrisecoastbirding.org will be part of the US 23 website with interactive sites, bird calls, and photos. Signs were produced and will be installed as soon as the snow melts (paid for by Consumers Energy). The local Audubon Societies put a great deal of effort into designating the sites and providing the content. NEMCOG completed the map as part of the themed map project (National Scenic Byways grant).
- Travel Shows – NEMCOG staff attended the Grand Rapids Camper, Travel and RV show in January with the Northeast Michigan booth.
- Advertising – NEMCOG is advertising the US 23 Heritage Route in the Michigan Agritourism Directory. In addition, Denise is writing eight articles for The Guide – one of these will focus on US 23.
- MDOT Travel Guide – Denise showed a very preliminary draft of the MDOT Pure Michigan Byway Travel Guide that is being developed.

Updates:

Michigan Sea Grant:

- Brandon Schroeder introduced new Americorp member Meaghan Gass.

- Over 5,000 youth have been engaged in environmental stewardship.
- Ella White Elementary in Alpena is up for a STEM Award, so Brandon encouraged everyone to vote.
- Brandon is working on funding for the next two years, so a partnership agreement will be written for US 23.
- Brandon also suggested that youth be engaged in the Lake Huron Discovery Tour – he will connect with Mary Ellen on this issue.
- Spring Lake Huron Fisheries Workshops: April 23 in Oscoda, April 28 in Cedarville, and April 30 in Bay City.

Sunrise Coast update: Belle updated that they still need to hear from Arenac and Presque Isle County. Iosco, Alcona, and Alpena are where they need to be for the \$25,000 buy (total \$50,000) for spring/summer. Also, any new photos of the communities should be sent to Ken Yarsevich.

MDOT: Doug Wilson updated the group:

- Completed US 23 south of Oscoda.
- 2015 - Sealing cracks at the north end of Alcona County.
- 2017 – Reconstruct US 23 from Tawas to Kirkland.

DNR: Blake Gingrich updated the group:

- Overall, recreation passport participation rates could be better (29%) in Alpena County. However, Presque Isle and Cheboygan Counties were 40%.
- Iron Belle Trail appears to have skipped over the coastal area of Northeast Michigan even though the NEST is in existence.
- Negwegon, Rockport, and Thompson’s Harbor are in the next phase of planning.
- Sunrise Coast Birding Trail – dedication at Duck Park on May 2. Trail signs were delivered and will be installed at the State Parks.

USFS: Kari Vanderheuel updated the group:

- Sprinkler Lake Educational Camp – received “Kids in the Woods” grant to hold two, one-week programs in July.
- Bird trail signs were delivered and will be installed.
- Recreation budget flat this year.
- ATV connectors – connect trails from State land to US Forest Service land.

US 23 South Committee: Larry Clark updated the group:

- Navigator Scout Crew – painting.
- Bear Point Subdivision resident – painted fire hydrants.
- Flower pot update.
- Created South Bay Corridor Redevelopment Committee.
- Applied for \$70,000 DEQ grant. However, the match will have to be figured out since they were not chosen by U of M design students as a project. They are currently looking at a similar program at MSU.

Cheboygan County: Steve Schnell updated the group on the possibility of the City of Cheboygan purchasing property to begin building a larger port.

Alpena County: Adam Poll noted that there would be a new brewery opening in May to be added to the website.

Up North Trails: Steve updated the group on direction of the Executive Committee. They are forming partnerships with the DNR and are looking into marketing the site better. Denise updated the group on the trail signage that has been designed in conjunction with the DNR and that will be available for any community to use. They received funding to implement the pilot project on the Northeastern State Trail and in Grayling and Atlanta.

Meeting adjourned at noon.

Submitted by Denise Cline