

Sunrise Coast Pure MI Byway

Management Council Meeting Minutes

June 24, 2025, at 1 p.m.

Location: Charter Township of Alpena Office/virtual



Present:

1. Anne Belanger (Presque Isle County);
Chairperson
2. Denise Cline (NEMCOG)
3. Doug Baum (NEMCOG)
4. Montiel Birmingham (City of Alpena
Planner)
5. Abbi Kaszubowski (Charter Township of
Alpena)
6. Mary Ellen Jones (Alcona County)
7. Rich Castle (Consumers Energy &
Develop Iosco)
8. Kevin Schaedig (MDOT)
9. Dean Martin (Mackinaw City)
10. Clayton Sigmann (MDOT – Byway
Program Manager)
11. Belle Flora (Oscoda CVB)
12. Chuck Ball (Mackinaw City Chamber)
13. Palma Leonatti (Oscoda AuSable
Chamber of Commerce)
14. Ken Gauthier (Sanborn Township)
15. Jason Kunath (MI State Police)
16. Ben Taylor (MDOT Planning Intern)

Call to Order: Anne Belanger called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

1. **Agenda:** Motion by Montiel Birmingham to approve the agenda as presented. Support by Rich Castle. Motion carried.
2. **Minutes:** The minutes of September 13, 2024, were presented. Motion by Montiel Birmingham to approve the September 13, 2024, minutes as presented. Support by Anne Belanger. Motion carried.
3. **Executive Management Council Updates:** Denise Cline provided a summary of Management Council activities, including print materials and website updates.
4. **Subcommittee Updates:**
 - a. **Marketing Subcommittee:** Anne Belanger gave an update on the marketing committee. They met and identified 4 key things: dark skies, updated signage (dark skies), print materials (recently completed by NEMCOG), and the discovery tour. Also discussed the legislative tour (maybe push this back to later in the year) and merchandising. Doug Baum gave an update on merchandising efforts through NEMCOG. Doug has been in contact with a company to produce logo gear and has spoken to a business owner who has agreed to sell US 23 logo gear on endcaps in his stores along the coast. Doug noted that fundraising will be needed to get samples put in stores.
 - b. **Dark Sky Subcommittee:** Rich, Anne, and Denise met to discuss the dark sky initiative. They tried to identify potential dark sky viewing areas using criteria such as location, accessibility, site conditions, and existing amenities. Tawas Point is not ideal due to its proximity to Tawas/East



Tawas. They are looking at locations on River Rd such as Lumberman's Monument and will need to work with the US Forest Service. Will need to update the generic byways signs with dark sky signage. They also came up with a slogan – Sunrise to Dark Skies.

5. Public Comment: None.

6. **Partner Updates:**

a. **MDOT:**

- i. **Pure Michigan Byways:** Clayton Sigmann - FHWA is returning to a focus on safety. The Byway program is following that focus. FHWA notified all state byway programs asking them to identify byways that may want to seek national scenic byway designation. That is something US 23 may want to look into. Would be additional recognition and possible additional grants. There will be a Pure Michigan Byway 4orkshop in Gaylord in November. Clayton gave a presentation. A discussion regarding America 250 events occurred. The group will need to start planning now.
- ii. **Alpena TSC** – Kevin Schaedig - MDOT will rebuild US 23 in Tawas and East Tawas in 2027. Submitted a TAP grant application as part of that to complete IET through the Tawas area. Will know about TAP grant this fall.

b. **Municipal Representatives:**

- i. **Mackinaw City:** Dean Martin - Working on several grants for park improvements. Working on new trail (Tip of Mitt Trail) and received a large grant from Mi Trails Fund and looking to install a boardwalk along the trail.
- ii. **Presque Isle County:** Anne Belanger – Just completed celebration for Murals on Main and Art Walk.
- iii. **City of Alpena:** Montiel Birmingham - Working on several park projects. Nominated for a central historical district in downtown. Approved through the State but still needs Park Service approval. Hopefully can start doing some programming and activities, historical education surrounding that program. Made some changes in zoning regarding dark sky. Does not require compliance with dark sky but encourages and provides information.
- iv. **Alcona County:** Mary Ellen Jones - First mural going up on courthouse. Funding by Community Foundation. Wine, food and brew fest coming in July. Harmony weekend in August.
- v. **Iosco County:** Rich Castle – Develop Iosco is working to promote Iosco County and the committee is developing a plan to maximize effort. AuSable Township had a ribbon cutting for their Trailhead Marketplace (Iron Belle/IET trail head and farmers market).



c. **Organization Representatives:**

- i. **NEMCOG:** Doug Baum - NEMCOG assisted East Tawas and AuSable Twp in securing recreation project funding (\$365,000).
- ii. **Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary/Friends of the TBNMS:** Stephanie Gandulla - World ROV competition just concluded and brought over 1,000 people to town. Teams came from all over the world and the country. Two Viking ships were in town at the same time. The next big event is the DOD Silent Swarm which will bring a lot of people to town.
- iii. **Oscoda Chamber of Commerce:** Palma Leonatti – Discussed new bike trails. Art on the beach is coming soon, Lots of events and vendors. 4th of July parade and events coming up. AuSable Canoe Marathon coming in August and lots of events with it.
- iv. **Oscoda CVB:** Lighthouse in Harrisville talk was very good. Lots of literature provided and now available at hotels, etc. Hosted a walleye tournament, a national event, but was unfortunately cancelled due to small craft warning/weather. losco - CVB is helping sponsor a mermaid and pirate event in August. Trying to set a Guinness world record for the number of mermaids in one spot.

7. **Public Comment:** none

8. **Old Business**

- a. **Item 1: Corridor Management Plan** - Denise Cline gave a brief overview of the CMP and the updates to it. Discussion and questions regarding the updates to the plan and potentially reviewing the plan further before approving. Denise explained that this update has been reviewed multiple times and needs to be adopted at this time. The next CMP update will need to be a full rewrite. The Byways program requires new components to CMPs that will have to be addressed next time. Motion by Abbi Kaszubowski to approve the CMP as presented. Support by Anne Belanger. Motion carried.
- b. **Item 2: Signage** - No update
- c. **Item 3: Print Materials** - Denise Cline provided an update on the status of the print materials. The update is completed, and they are at the printers. They should be done soon.

9. **New Business**

- a. **Item 1: FY26 Work Program** - Denise provided an overview of the annual work program that must be submitted by July 1. The website is the most important task due to the current website software being phased out. LIAA is not going to continue offering website services.



Motion by Rich Castle to approve the agenda as presented. Support by Montiel Birmingham.
Motion carried.

- b. **Item 2: Website** - New website needed as discussed under the work program.
- c. **Item 3: Identification of projects eligible for National Scenic Byways Program grants** – To be discussed at next meeting.

10. **Next Meeting/Adjournment:** To be virtual meeting. Maybe in October. Denise to send Doodle Poll to set a date. Anne will send a Doodle Poll to set a date for the marketing subcommittee.
Adjourned at 3:05

Minutes Compiled by: Nico Tucker, NEMCOG

