

West Branch

T O W N S H I P

RECREATION PLAN | 2024-2028



“The Perfect Township”

Adopted on April 16, 2024, by the West Branch Township Board of Trustees. This Recreation Plan was prepared by the West Branch Township Recreation Committee and Planning Commission, with technical assistance from, *Northwoods Planning & Zoning Services, LLC*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TOWNSHIPBOARD

Jack Heidtman - Supervisor
Michelle Christal – Clerk
Catherine Shaw – Treasurer
Tim Overmyer – Trustee
Kris Shaw – Trustee

PLANNING COMMISSION

Deena Barnhart – Chairperson
Nellie Turton
Kris Shaw – Board Rep.
Ray Johnson
Wayne Theurer

RECREATION COMMITTEE

Kris Shaw
Nellie Turton
Michelle Cristal
Jennifer Smith
Ray Johnson
Chris Sudinsky
Catherine Shaw
Brandon Chmiko

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INTRODUCTION

The *West Branch Township Recreation Plan | 2024-2028*, shall serve as a road map for recreation planning and development within the community over the course of the next five years. The plan's primary focus is to ensure that quality recreational opportunities are provided for users of all ages and abilities. Recreation provision in West Branch Township is a key component of community planning, as it serves as a benchmark for how residents and visitors view their quality of life. As residents already know, West Branch Township is home to some world-class, four-season recreational opportunities. Between public, private, and state-owned recreational properties, West Branch Township is truly a destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

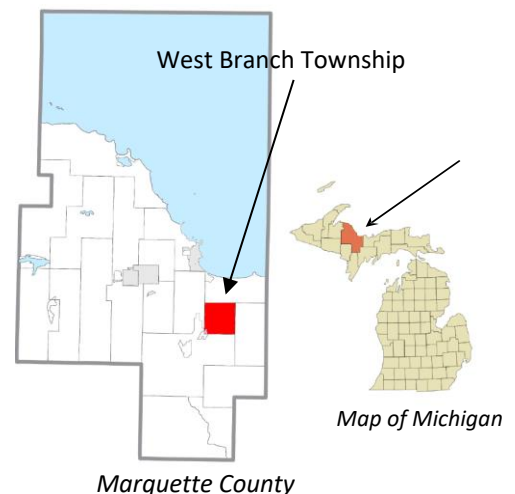
This plan was written in accordance with the [Michigan Department of Natural Resource's Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks & Recreation Plans](#), as administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grants Management team. It has also been developed with the acknowledgment of [Michigan's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#). Many of the goals and objectives found in this plan reflect similar intentions of the SCORP and this plan aims to align West Branch Township's recreation planning with many of the state's long-range recreation planning objectives.



The plan provides ways to achieve West Branch Township's long-range outdoor recreational goals and allow eligibility to apply for financial assistance from the [Michigan Department of Natural Resources](#). The five-year Action Program, which can be found later in the document, is based on input from residents and stakeholders, as well as elected and appointed officials. Additional input was received at an open house discussion at the West Branch Township Hall on March 4, 2024. Once complete, the final draft document was distributed to surrounding municipalities, agencies, partners and the public for review and comment on March 15, 2024. The plan was also available for review on township's website at www.theperfecttownship.com as well as their Facebook page.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

The jurisdiction of this plan represents the desired outdoor recreation needs for residents and visitors of West Branch Township. Other municipalities within Marquette County also conduct recreation planning at varying levels. Where and when feasible, West Branch Township will coordinate with other governmental, educational, and stakeholder's efforts to advance their respective recreational goals. The plan speaks to a broader, regional audience further along in the document.

West Branch Township is a civil township located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, within Marquette County. It is located approximately 15 miles southeast of the city of Marquette, which is the largest population base in the county with approximately 20,400 residents. As of the 2020 U.S. Census, there were 1,702 residents living in West Branch Township. The community has a land area of 36 square miles. Additional community demographic information from the 2020 US Census can be found on the next page.



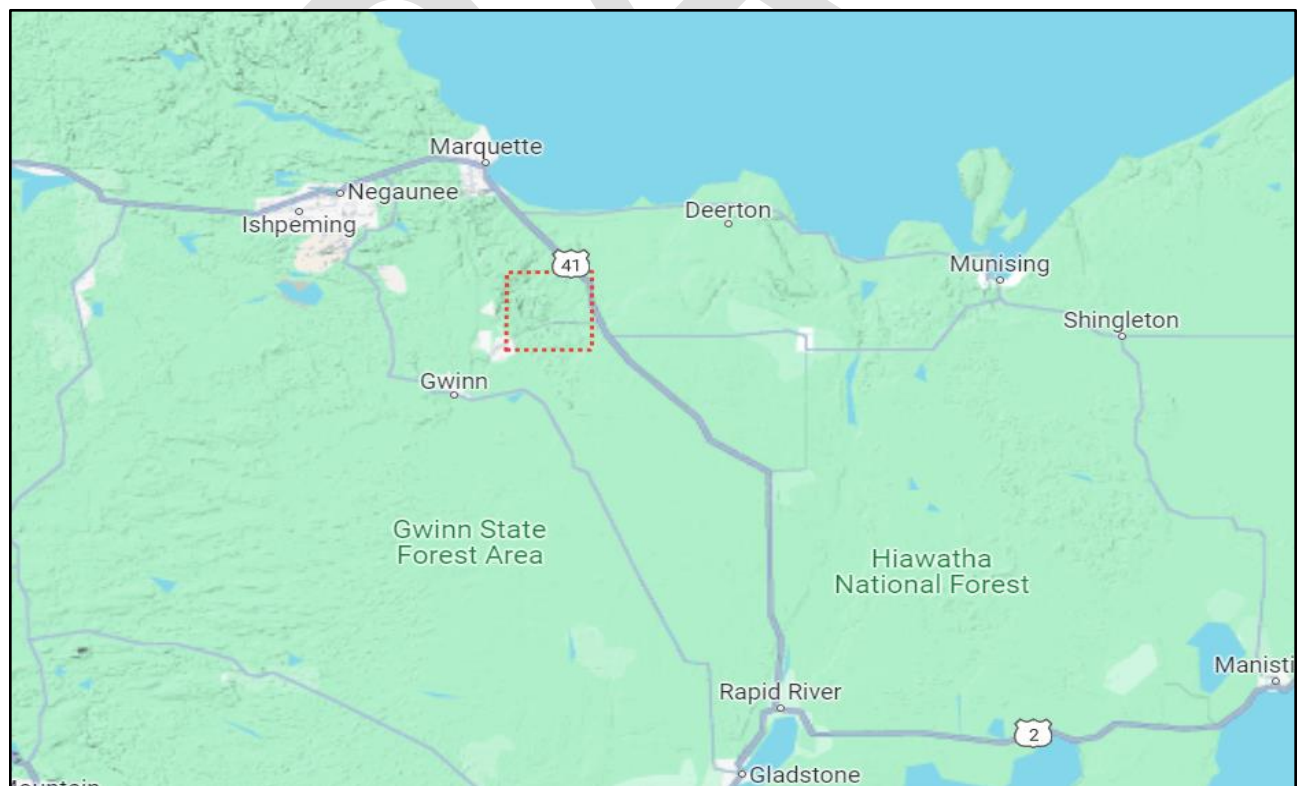
| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
|  | Populations and People Total Population 1,702 |  | Income and Poverty Median Household Income \$59,402 |
|  | Education Bachelor's Degree or Higher 31.6% |  | Employment Employment Rate 55.6% |
|  | Housing Total Housing Units 843 |  | Health Without Health Care Coverage 5.4% |
|  | Families and Living Arrangements Total Households 594 |  | Race and Ethnicity Hispanic or Latino (of any race) 33 |

2020 US Census Bureau Data

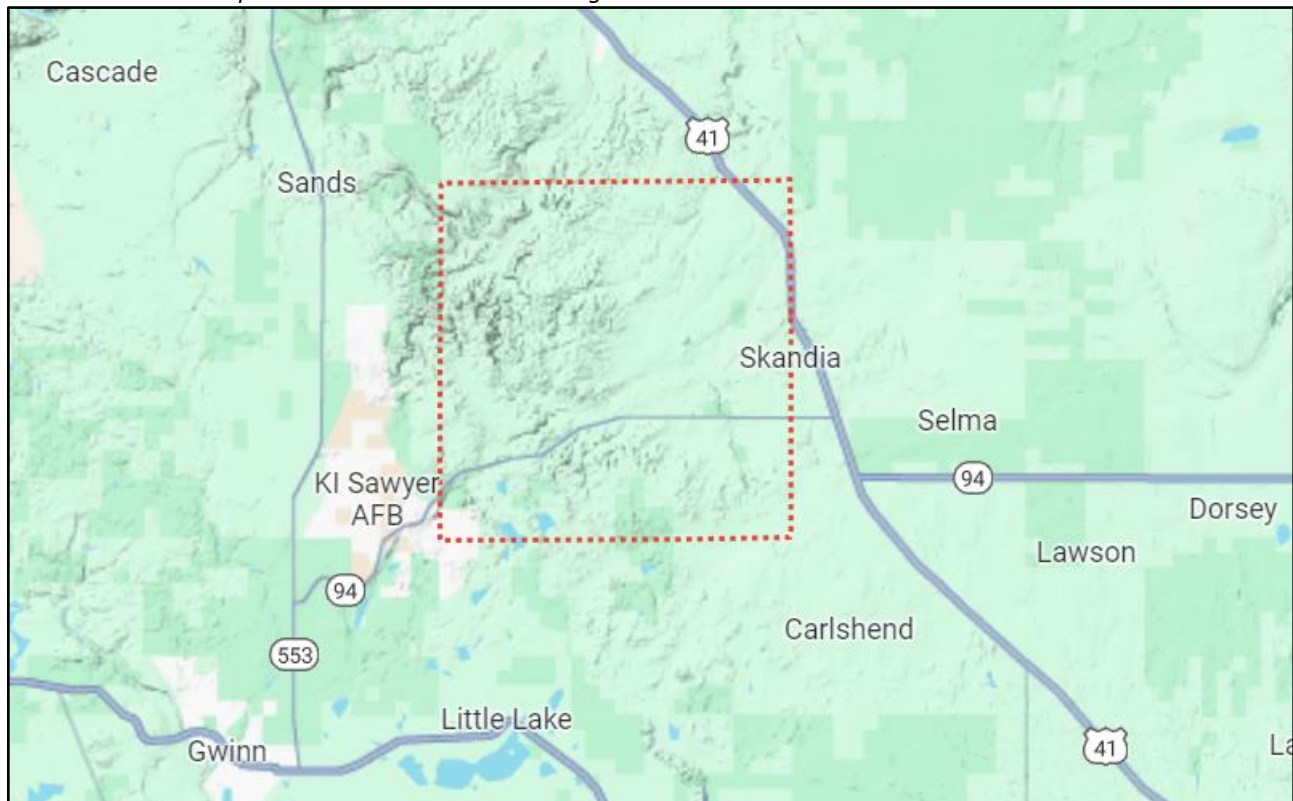
The Township's geographic location is relatively remote from large urban areas of Michigan. It is nearly a seven-hour drive to Detroit and 5 hours to Milwaukee. However, the city of Marquette is located within close proximity to the Township and offers amenities found in larger urban areas, such as higher education, healthcare, entertainment, and shopping. Many other recreational and resort areas of the Upper Peninsula are within close proximity to West Branch Township.

The major transportation route in West Branch Township is U.S. Highway 41. M-94 travels east and west, along the southern portion of the Township, where US-41 traverses north and south along the east side the Township. US-41 is an important north/south corridor that connects the southern half of the Upper Peninsula with the northern portion and beyond.

West Branch Township is shown in red outline in the below base map – Figure 1.



West Branch Township detail shown in red outline – Figure 2.



ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Roles of Planning Commission & Recreation Committee

Being a small, rural township, recreational operations, maintenance, and the proposed Action Program projects will all be administered by the West Branch Township Board of Trustees. Project financing will come from township's general fund, potential local donations, and grant opportunities. The Township Board of Trustees serve as the "Recreation Director," in the sense of budgeting, coordinating programming and facility maintenance schedules. The Planning Commission (established per, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Act 33 of 2008, and the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, Act 110 of 2006, as amended), the Recreation Committee (established per, Act 156 of the Public Acts of 1917, as amended), serve as advisory entities to the Township Board of Trustees.

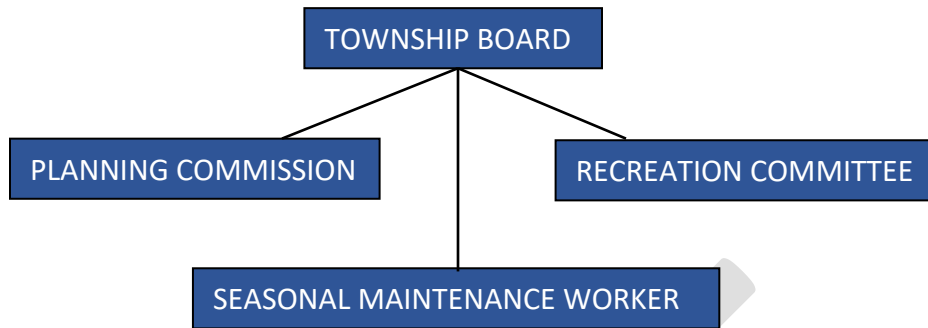
The Planning Commission and Recreation Committee assisted with the drafting of this plan. Along with public input, they provided context and relayed resident desires that have been expressed both at meetings or when out in public.

The Township's Recreation Plan will be administered by the Township Board and reviewed annually to assure that its goals, objectives, and Action Program are focused on providing the highest and best recreational opportunities for the community. It is anticipated that this Recreation Plan will be reviewed and updated every five years, with the assistance of the Recreation Committee and Planning Commission.

Department, Authority and/or Staff Description & Organizational Chart

As, a small, rural community, West Branch Township does not offer a Recreation Department. The Township Board does hire a part-time maintenance person in the summer months to maintain their

existing recreational facility. This employee is also charged with providing general maintenance and upkeep to the Township Hall property. An organizational chart for West Branch Township is provided below.



Annual and Projected Budgets for Operations, Maintenance, Capital Improvements and Recreation Programming

Annual budgeting from the general fund for the development of proposed, recreational opportunities is administered by the West Branch Township Board. Funding for recreation over the past five years was as follows:

2020 - \$1,000
2021 - \$1,000
2022 - \$5,000
2023 - \$5,000
2024 - \$5,000

Current Funding Sources

Along with the amount budgeted each year for recreation and maintenance, the township also has approximately \$200,000 set aside for recreational opportunities, or for providing matching funds for potential grant opportunities that may arise.

Further, the Recreation Committee, Planning Commission, or a consultant can assist the community with identifying possible grant sources. They may also provide input in developing and preparing grant applications; however, preparation and submittal of grant applications are still the responsibility of Township Board.

The Township Board has tasked the Recreation Committee and Planning Commission with updating their 5-year recreation plan so that they may be eligible for one or more of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund grant programs to further develop the Township-owned property adjacent to the Township Hall. Based on recent public input, recreation has become more important to residents than in past years.

Role of Volunteers and Organizations

Two vital components of recreation provision in West Branch Township are volunteerism and stewardship. Each Action Program improvement or maintenance project at a township-owned park property aims to involve assistance from residents, service group volunteers, as well as public and private financial assistance. This plan also aims to focus on improving and building upon the community's volunteer base.

Currently, a local Women's Group holds pie sales throughout the year and one of the sale proceeds are donated to West Branch Township for recreational purposes (~\$1,500/year). The Skandia Lions Club has also donated approximately \$5,000 towards future recreational opportunities in West Branch Township.

Relationships with School Districts and Other Public Agencies Involved in Recreation

West Branch Township does not feature a school in the community. Student-age residents of the Township attend the various school districts in the area due to Michigan's school of choice policy.

RECREATION INVENTORY

This next section provides an inventory of existing parks, recreational facilities, and natural resource assets located in the West Branch Township planning area. Both the public and private sectors provide recreational opportunities within the Township. The Township has eleven recreation facilities including those that are privately owned.

Description of the Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory

These sites provide a wide spectrum of opportunities that Township residents can enjoy year-round. In 2024, the inventory of existing public recreation areas and facilities within the Township was updated with the assistance of Township officials and their consultant. This inventory included the following, currently available facilities:

Inventory of all Community-Owned Parks & Recreational Facilities

West Branch Township Hall & Recreation Area

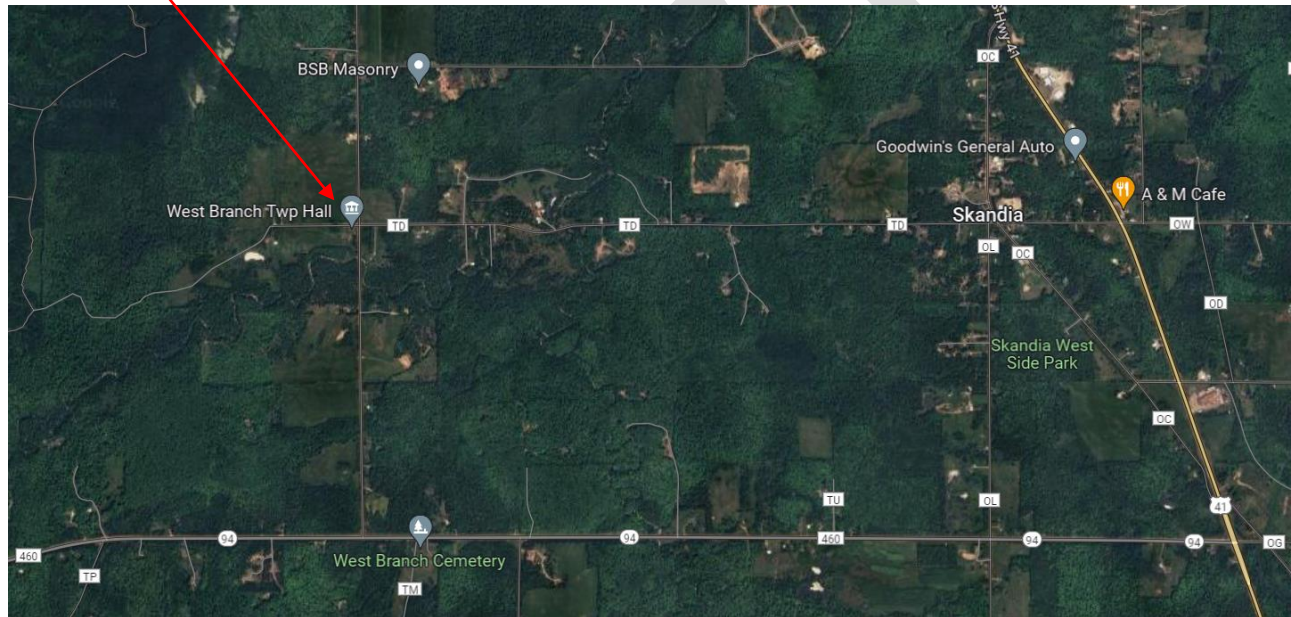
The West Branch Township Hall and surrounding property serves the community as a meeting space, administrative offices, and as an event location for various indoor and outdoor activities. This 40-acre community recreation site is located next to the Township Hall at the corner of CR 545 and CR TD (Town Hall Road). The West Branch of the Chocoy River (Silver Lead River) runs through the parcel of land. A pavilion was erected on this site in 2000. The site also features a play structure.

West Branch Township Hall, Play Structure & Pavilion





West Branch Township Hall/Park Property (1016 Co Rd 545 N, Skandia, MI 49855)



Accessibility Assessment

The West Branch Township Hall and surrounding property serves the community as a meeting space, administrative offices, and as an event location for various indoor and outdoor activities. This 40-acre community recreation site is located next to the Township Hall at the corner of CR 545 and CR TD (Town Hall Road). The West Branch of the Chocoley River (Silver Lead River) runs through the parcel of land. A pavilion was erected on this site in 2000. The site also features a play structure. This site features an ADA accessibility grade of 2.

Inventory of all Non-Community-Owned Parks & Recreational Facilities

Maple Lane Cross-Country and Hiking Trail

This privately-owned recreation trail system is located on a 69-acre parcel of land along Kreiger Drive (just West of US Highway 41), near the eastern limit of the Township. The site is used during the summer months for hiking and archery shooting and during the winter months for cross-country skiing. The facility offers ski rental and sales, an archery range and shooting course, and archery equipment sales and service.

West Branch Sportsmen's Club

A privately-owned sportsmen club located on a seven-acre parcel of land along Engman Lake Road off of M-94 West in the south-central portion of the Township. Facilities at the site include the clubhouse, rifle range, and trap & pistol shooting area.

Engman Lake Access Site

A Michigan DNR owned and operated access site located on a 4.6-acre parcel of land in the southwestern portion of the Township, along Engman Lake Access Road. Facilities at the site include a hard surface launch ramp, public restrooms, and associated parking.

Sporley Lake Access Site

A Michigan DNR owned and operated access site located on a one-acre parcel of land in the southwestern portion of the Township, off CR TAC. Facilities at the site include hard surface launch ramp, public restrooms, and associated parking.

Big Trout Lake Access Site

A Michigan DNR owned and operated access site located on a 5.2-acre parcel of land in the southwestern portion of the Township, off Sporley Lake Road. Facilities at the site include hard surface launch ramp, public restrooms, and associated parking.

Public and CFR Forest Lands

Approximately 600 acres of state-owned land, which is part of the Escanaba River State Forest, is located within the Township. This acreage is located in the southwest corner of the Township. It is open to the public for outdoor recreation activities like hunting, fishing, and hiking. In addition, over 4,300 acres of Commercial Forest Reserve (CFR) lands are located in the Township. These are privately-owned parcels of land that are open to the public for hunting and fishing.

In addition to the sites listed above, residents of the Township have access to a wide variety of recreational facilities in neighboring communities.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Based on community input, the following recreational facilities have been expressed by residents as having propriety when considering future recreation planning:

Picnic Area/Playground/Horseshoe Court/Basketball Court/Volleyball Court

The development of this area, near the Township Hall, currently has two handicap accessible picnic tables and a pavilion. This provides Township residents a place for picnics, reunions, and other social gatherings. The Township would also like to develop a playground, horseshoe court, basketball court, and sand volleyball court near this picnic area. Residents living in the local vicinity and on occasion by residents and

non-residents using the facilities for special events and gatherings would likely use these facilities on a day-to-day basis.

Fishing Platform/Bridges

The scenic West Branch of the Chocolay River (Silver Lead River) runs through the center of the 40-acre parcel that makes up the Township recreation area. The Township would like residents and visitors to have access to the river for fishing and viewing. The Township is planning to construct a handicap accessible fishing platform along the river in the eastern portion of the property and bridges across the river in central and northern portions of the property. These facilities would be tied into the site's walking/nature trail system.

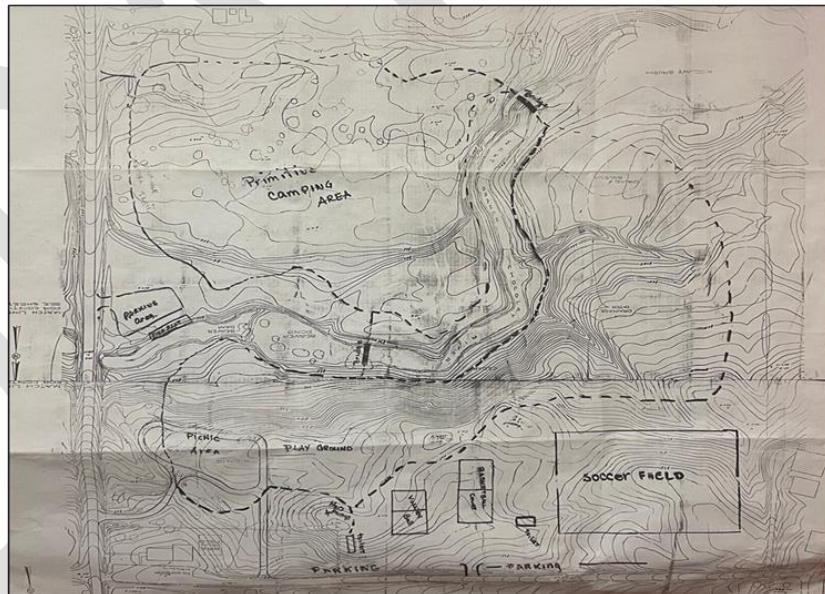
Soccer Field

Due to the growth of soccer, there has been an increased demand for soccer fields. To solve some of the demand issues, the Township is planning to construct a soccer field in the northwestern portion of the Township recreational area property. The Township intends to work with local youth soccer organizations in the design of the new soccer field.

Rustic Camping Area

With all the beautiful natural features offered at the Township recreation area, residents would like the Township Board to consider the design and construct a camping area in the southeastern portion of the site. This camping area would be primitive in nature and allow only non-motorized access.

Conceptual rendering of proposed recreational improvements at the West Branch Township Hall property.



Additional Considerations

Regional recreational trends also show that people are also interested in bird watching, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, disc golf, and pickleball. These activities, and their potential place in the community, should be discussed during the Township's next 5-year Recreation Plan update.

Status Report for all Grant-Assisted Parks & Recreation Facilities

None known.

Inventory of Existing Harbor/Marina Facilities

Not applicable.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

In this section, West Branch Township's planning method is discussed. This method is intended to assist with the assessment of the township's park, recreation and open-space requirements.

Planning Method

West Branch Township will utilize the system planning method. This planning method will use the township's metrics, priorities, needs, level of service and community-wide issues and opportunities to guide annual planning efforts. As planning efforts and projects are implemented, the system can be re-evaluated to measure success and guide future planning goals.

Since the community has only minimally participated in long-range recreation planning, the community naturally has needs based on appointed official's observations, resident and visitor inquiry, and public input. Additional discussion on this topic is presented below.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

In this section, we detail the approach used to incorporate public input into the recreation planning process. Residents' opinion on recreation and open-space priorities is a key factor in this plan's development.

Early Public Input

Because our residents' opinions on recreation and open-space priorities are paramount in this plan's development, a Community Input Session was held at the West Branch Township Hall on March 4th of 2024, from 6-7:30 PM. This session offered a chance for to share their outdoor recreation ideas, as the township was preparing to draft their first DNR 5-year Recreation Plan. Six (6) total attendees were present to offer their input. The comments from those in attendance are detailed within the meeting minutes and have been utilized in the development of the Goals & Objectives and the Action Plan.

30-day Review Period

The draft of the updated Recreation Plan was made available for review on March 15th of 2024. Notice was posted in the Mining Journal Newspaper, on the Township's website and on their Facebook page. Copies of the draft plan were placed for review at the Township Hall. Instructions for providing additional comments on the plan were included in the public notice placed in the newspaper.

WANTED: YOUR RECREATION IDEAS!

This is a chance to bring your recreation ideas into ACTION, as West Branch Township prepares an update of their Five-Year Recreation Plan, and discusses potential grant opportunities.

Please join us for a **Community Input Session** on **Monday, March 4, 2024 at 6 PM** at the

**West Branch Township Hall,
1016 Co. Rd. 545 N
Skandia, MI 49885.**

Bring your friends and family!



Public Hearing & Resolution of Adoption

Advance notice for the proposed adoption Public Hearing was also provided in the ad that was placed in the Mining Journal Newspaper, on the Township's website and on their Facebook page. The public hearing occurred on April 16th of 2024. A copy of the Public Hearing Notice, Adoption Resolution, and official meeting minutes will be provided, as required prior to DNR approval.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Michigan *State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)* aided in developing West Branch Township's recreational goals and objectives. The goals and objectives from the SCORP have been adapted to fit our community's recreational needs. Public input from our residents also provided helpful engagement by way of our Public Input Session. Many of the below goals and objectives are shared by our surrounding municipal neighbors. There are also provisions to collaborate with those entities if and when those opportunities should arise.

Goal #1 – Foster stewardship and conservation with businesses, organizations, and individuals in protecting West Branch Township's natural and cultural resources.

Objectives:

- Encourage efforts directed at improving both the visual and physical characteristics of all recreational opportunities in West Branch Township.
- Support and promote initiatives to improve and/or maintain the quality of recreational opportunities in West Branch Township.
- Promote the preservation and expansion of recreational opportunities and other recreational-oriented business opportunities for recreation and tourism.
- Collaborate with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for financial assistance in developing and preserving additional recreational opportunities in West Branch Township.

Goal #2 – Improve collaboration with recreation stakeholders to meet the outdoor needs of Township residents and visitors

Objectives:

- Collaborate with surrounding municipalities, trail networks, non-profit organizations and other recreation program providers for the purpose of expanding recreational opportunities in the area.
- Consider a network of trails by collaborating with adjacent municipalities, trail organizations, and recreation providers.
- When feasible, participate in regional recreational planning.
- Collaborate with the surrounding municipalities regarding mutual planning issues and opportunities.

Goal #3 – Raise the awareness of residents and visitors on the variety of outdoor recreational opportunities available in West Branch Township.

Objectives:

- Coordinate regional recreational planning when feasible; build environments and programming activities that identify opportunities, fill deficiencies, and avoid duplication of services and efforts.

- Encourage cooperation and coordination between surrounding municipalities, school districts, recreational service providers, and developers with regard to recreational opportunities.

Goal #4 – Improve recreation accessibility for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

Objectives:

- Promote bicycling, walking, and other rolling activities that provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.
- Provide Americans with Disability Act (ADA) access, Universal Design features, and multisensory experiences to enhance access and attract all types of recreational users.
- Develop recreational tourism opportunities such as interpretive cultural and/or historical signage, farmer's markets, and the like.

Goal #5 – Provide quality outdoor recreational experiences in balance with township resource management capabilities.

Objectives:

- Purchase additional property to set aside in perpetuity, for recreational use, where and when feasible.
- Identify, acquire and develop trail easements that connect residential, commercial, and recreational nodes.

Goal #6 – Enhance the health of West Branch Township residents and visitors by providing physical outdoor recreational opportunities.

Objectives:

- Per the Action Program, develop the township-owned 40-acre parcel with the suggested uses and activities.
- Consider the development of a motorized and non-motorized transportation system and integrate with other regional trail networks.

Goal #7 – Enhance economic prosperity by supporting a high-quality of life to retain residents in West Branch Township

Objectives:

- Where and when feasible, acquire local, state, federal and private funding to develop a myriad of recreational opportunities that will enhance additional economic development opportunities in the area.
- Take advantage of opportunities to develop trailheads, public access sites, and other facilities which further encourage hiking, biking, skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hunting, and other recreational uses of the natural assets in West Branch Township.

ACTION PROGRAM

The action program is the section of the plan where you identify how you intend to meet or work toward meeting your goals and objectives over the next five years. Describe specific projects identified during the planning process and how they will meet goals and objectives. You also may include organizational, staffing, programming, public information, operation and maintenance actions, as well as land acquisition and facility development, if applicable. A capital improvement schedule for park development projects is not required, but may be useful for planning purposes and may include the type of improvement, the estimated cost, funding sources and a schedule of construction.

2024

- Complete draft of *the West Branch Township Recreation Plan | 2024-2028* and submit to Michigan Department of Natural Resources for approval, so as to become eligible for funding assistance from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund grant opportunities.
- Begin planning for 2025 MNRTF development grant application submittal.
- Begin land clearing for proposed improvements at the West Branch Township Hall/Park property, without the aid of grant funding.

2025

- Construct baseball/softball field on township-owned 40-acre parcel.
- Construct co-located basketball/tennis/pickleball court on township-owned 40-acre parcel.
- Construct sand volleyball court on township-owned 40-acre parcel.

2026

- Install modern, all-inclusive play structure on township-owned 40-acre parcel.
- Install park amenities such as recycled plastic picnic tables, benches, trash, and recycling receptacles on township-owned 40-acre parcel.
- Complete the park with native landscaping installation throughout the township-owned 40-acre parcel.

2027

- Construct dugouts at newly constructed baseball/softball field located on the township-owned 40-acre parcel.

- Identify, clear, and develop rustic camping sites on the township-owned 40-acre parcel.
- Identify, clear, and develop a picnic area on the township's 40-acre site.

2028

- Install ADA accessible fishing platform(s) on the township-owned 40-acre parcel.
- Develop trails and a pedestrian bridge on township-owned 40-acre parcel.
- Restroom/concession/storage building for township-owned 40-acre parcel.
- Construct disc golf course on township-owned 40-acre parcel.

Additional Potential Funding Sources

The Township Board may also want to consider a recreation millage in the future to provide matching funds for proposed future projects, as well as maintenance and upkeep of proposed facilities. It is also recommended that a study be conducted regarding the other West Branch Township-owned properties to determine the feasibility of developing (or not developing) additional recreational opportunities in the community.

WANTED: YOUR RECREATION IDEAS!

This is a chance to bring your recreation ideas into ACTION, as West Branch Township prepares an update of their Five-Year Recreation Plan, and discusses potential grant opportunities.

Please join us for a **Community Input Session** on **Monday, March 4, 2024 at 6 PM** at the

**West Branch Township Hall,
1016 Co. Rd. 545 N
Skandia, MI 49885.**

Bring your friends and family!



AGENDA

WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP

PLANNING COMMISSION

MARCH 4TH, 2024, 7PM

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Agenda**
- 3. Minutes**
- 4. Public Comment**
- 5. Old Business**
- 6. New Business**
 - A. Update Zoning for Sawyer**
 - B. Public Input Session for 2024
Recreation Plan Update.**
- 7. Master Plan Review**
- 8. Adjournment**

West Branch Township
Planning Commission Meeting
March 4th, 2024, 7pm

Chairperson Deena Barnhart called to order at 7:19pm

Present: Chairperson Deena Barnhart, Secretary Nellie Turton, Ray Johnson, Kris Shaw. *Absent:*
Wayne Theurer

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Kris Shaw and supported by Ray Johnson. M/C

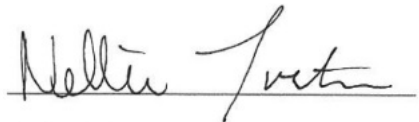
Motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held February 5th, 2024, as presented was made by Kris Shaw and supported by Deena Barnhart. M/C

Public Comment: Jason McCarthy discussed the process for zoning changes on Section 31. Jason McCarthy discussed with the Planning Commission and Recreational Committee to have a public input session for the Recreational plan and a Planning Commission public hearing for finalization of the Master Plan scheduled on April 16th, 2024, 6:30pm. **Jason McCarthy indicated that this session offered a chance for residents to share their outdoor recreation ideas, as the township was preparing to update their DNR 5-year Recreation Plan. Six (6) total attendees were present, including members of the Recreation Committee, to offer their input. The comments from those in attendance are listed within the Action Program that was formulated as a result of public input.**

Old Business: None.

Master Plan Review: In the finalization process.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40pm

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Nellie Turton', written over a horizontal line.

Submitted and signed by Nellie Turton

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS & NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

- 1) West Branch Township has completed a draft Recreation Plan update that aims to guide the township's next five years of outdoor recreation planning and allow eligibility for grant opportunities from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund Program. The draft plan is available for review for the next thirty (30) days on our community website at: www.theperfecttownship.com and at the West Branch Township Hall at 1016 County Rd 545 N, Skandia, MI 49885.

The West Branch Township Planning Commission will hold an additional Public Hearing to gain additional public input on the proposed, draft five-year recreation plan on Wednesday, April 16, 2024 at 6:30 PM at the West Branch Township Hall, located at 1016 County Rd 545 N, Skandia, MI 49885. The public is invited to attend the meeting to provide comment and input on the draft plan.

Any questions and/or comments regarding the draft recreation plan may be directed to:

West Branch Township
ATTN: Recreation Plan Update
P.O. Box 56
Skandia, MI 49885
Phone: (906) 942-7400
Email: wbtwp@tds.net

- 2) The West Branch Township Planning Commission will conduct a Public Hearing to consider the adoption of the Township's Master Plan update, as well as a subsequent recommendation to the West Branch Township Board, for concurrence. The meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 16, 2024, at 6:30 PM at the West Branch Township Hall, 1016 County Rd 545 N, Skandia, MI 49885, as required under the provisions of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the Master Plan has been submitted for public comment to the interested entities as required under Section 41 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, and the Planning Commission hereby welcomes public comment on the Master Plan update. A hard copy of the Master Plan is available at the West Branch Township Hall, or is available on the Township's website at www.theperfecttownship.com. You are invited to attend this Public Hearing. If you are unable to attend, please call or submit written comments in lieu of a personal appearance, or if you wish to request a copy of the Master Plan please call or write:

West Branch Township
ATTN: Master Plan Update
P.O. Box 56
Skandia, MI 49885
Phone: (906) 942-7400
Email: wbtwp@tds.net

The Mining Journal

Upper Michigan's Largest Daily Newspaper
249 W. Washington St., Marquette, Michigan 49855. Phone (906)228-2500. Fax (906)228-3273.

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

STATE OF MICHIGAN

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

For the County of: **MARQUETTE**

In the matter of: Notice of Public Hearings
West Branch Township
Five-Year Recreation Plan
Master Plan
April 16, 2024

Size: 3 x 5

State of **MICHIGAN**, County of Marquette ss.

ANN TROUTMAN

being duly sworn, says that she is

PUBLISHER

of **THE MINING JOURNAL**

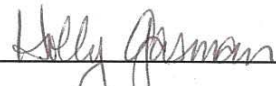
a newspaper published and circulated in
said county and otherwise qualified
according to Supreme Court Rule; that
annexed hereto is a printed copy of a
notice which was published in said
newspaper on the following date, or
dates, to-wit

March 15, 2024



ANN TROUTMAN

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 15th day of March, 2024.



HOLLY GASMAN

Notary Public for MARQUETTE County, Michigan
Acting in the County of Marquette
My commission expires: May 25, 2025

APPENDIX E

WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP

1016 County Rd 545 N

Skandia, MI, 49885

PH# (906-942-7400)

www.theperfecttownship.com

RECREATIONAL PUBLIC HEARING & PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

TUESDAY APRIL 16TH 2024 – 6:30PM Start time.

1. Call Meeting to Order.
2. Roll Call.
3. Approval of the Agenda
4. Public Comment
5. New Business
 - A. Public Hearing #041624-1.** Public Hearing & Potential Adoption of the updated West Branch Township Master Plan, 2024-2028.
 - B. Public Hearing #041624-2.** Public Hearing & Potential Adoption of the West Branch Township Recreation Plan, 2024-2028.
6. Unfinished Business.
7. Correspondence.
8. Reports.
9. Announcements.
10. Public Comment.
11. Adjournment.

RECREATION PLAN HEARING
APRIL,16 2024 6:30

Meeting opened by Chair Kris Shaw, present Vice Chair Ray Johnson, Secretary Michelle Christal, Nellie Turton, Jen Christal, Brandon Chimko, Jason McCarthy and Lions Club Representative Catherine Shaw. Absent Chris Sudinsky. Also West Branch Supervisor Jack Heidtman.

Jason spoke about the other Townships he has been involved with and the jobs he has done, explained on how things will be done to get grants. Stated he is a grant writer and the future and intent to get grants and in kind services.

Kris thanked Jason for his work and he spoke on concerns and thanked him for his input,

Gloria Urban asked if there was an environmental study Jason said no. Also is concerned on camping site says no supervision, she is opposed.

Greg Hardy spoke on his concerns and are in his letter on file. Kris spoke we have to have a plan in place before we can apply for grants also spoke on the things residents have asked about. We will be asking for input and for volunteers from our community. Ray spoke we did try to get people to come to community meeting, and we have to have a 5 year plan.

Julie Sanford spoke on camp ground horrors always problems.

Natasha Lantz thanked the committee for their time and work on project.

Jack Heidtman spoke there are grants for recreation, free money. No grants for roads, spoke on parking.

Brent Haykoop appreciates us and the work that has been done.

Allison Heykoop interested in park and concerned on the noise from ball games and trash on grounds. Would like to see bike and walking trails.

Ray spoke on people and what they would like to see in our community, and lets give more to our area. Also said we have resources lets give it to the kids and community.

Charles DeVoght spoke on all of the kids signed up for baseball over 150 expects 300 this year. Would like to see soccer fields there are none in area for teams to play.

Scott Caldwell stated camp ground scares him but is all for playground.

Some residents asked if we would remove camp ground, board is willing to remove from plan.

Mark Krans asked if there was a time line for grants. Jason stated April next year.

Motion to approve Recreation Plan with removal of camp grounds made by Ray supported by Kris. M/C

Motion to recommend to West Branch Board made by Ray supported by Michelle. M/C.

Hearing adjourned

Next meeting May 13th

West Branch Township
Marquette County, Michigan

**RESOLUTION OF CONCURRENCE IN SUPPORT OF
THE MASTER PLAN UPDATE
#041624-1**

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008), authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare and periodically update a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared an updated Master Plan and submitted said plan to the Township Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, the Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan update prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized the distribution of the updated Master plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008); and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group as provided in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008); and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a required Public Hearing on April 16, 2024, to consider the public comment received on the proposed Master Plan update, and to further review and comment on the Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing concluded on April 16, 2024, a Master Plan Update Adoption Resolution was offered by Commission member Kris Shaw, supported by Commission member Ray Johnson and supported unanimously.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

The West Branch Township Board of Trustees does hereby concur with the action of the Planning Commission by passing this resolution on the 16th day of April, 2024.

Yeas: 7 Kites, Kris, Tim, Mark, Luke

Nays: 0

Absent/Abstain:

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of a resolution adopted by the West Branch Township Board of Trustees at the time, date, and place specified above; pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Date: April 16, 2024

By: Michelle Chustal
West Branch Township Clerk

West Branch Township
Marquette County, Michigan

Planning Commission Resolution #041624-1

At a regular meeting of the West Branch Township Planning Commission held in person, on Tuesday, April 16, 2024, the following resolution was offered by Commission member Ray Johnson and supported by Commission member Kris Shaw

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE UPDATED WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN | 2024-2028

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008), authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare and periodically update a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared an updated Master Plan and submitted said plan to the Township Board for review and comment; and

WHEREAS, the Township Board received and reviewed the proposed Master Plan update prepared by the Planning Commission and authorized the distribution of the updated Master plan to the Notice Group entities identified in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008); and

WHEREAS, notice was provided to the Notice Group as provided in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008); and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on April 16, 2024 to consider the public comment received on the proposed Master Plan update, and to further review and comment on the Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that the proposed Master Plan update is desirable, proper, and reasonable, and furthers the use, preservation, and development goals and objectives of the Township;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. The West Branch Township Planning Commission hereby adopts the proposed Master Plan Update, including all of the chapters, figures, descriptive matters, maps and tables contained therein.
2. Distribution to Notice Group. Pursuant to MCL 125.3843, the Planning Commission approves the distribution of the adopted Master Plan update to the Notice Group.
3. Findings of Fact. The Planning Commission has made the foregoing determination based on a review of existing land uses in the Township, a review of the existing Master Plan provisions and maps, and input received from Planning Commission members and the public, as well as with the assistance of the Township's professional consultant. The Planning Commission also finds that the amended Master Plan will accurately reflect and implement the Township's

goals and objectives for the use, preservation, and development of lands within West Branch Township.

4. Effective Date; Repeal. The amended Master Plan shall become effective on the adoption date of this resolution. The prior Master Plan is hereby repealed upon the updated Master Plan becoming effective.

Yeas: Ray I J

Nays:

Absent/Abstain:

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of a resolution adopted by the West Branch Township Planning Commission at the time, date, and place specified above; pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Date: April 16, 2024

By: Kris A Shaw

Kris A Shaw
Planning Commission Chairperson

WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP
REGULAR MEETING

APRIL 16th, 2024 7:50PM

Members present included Supervisor Jack Heidtman, Clerk Michelle Christal, Treasurer Catherine Shaw, Trustee Kris Shaw, and Trustee Tim Overmyer. Clerk Michelle Christal was absent. Also present were Zoning Administrator Mike Beltz, Karla Hardy, Greg Hardy, Melissa Krans, Mark Krans, and Natasha Lantz.

AGENDA: A motion to approve the Agenda was made by Kris Shaw and supported by Catherine Shaw. M/C

PUBLIC COMMENT: Natasha Lantz spoke on happenings at the library. Karla Hardy asked about the township's webpage. Melissa Krans spoke on a possible millage for roads. Mark Krans state he feels there should be a millage proposal for roads. Discussion was held about millage and road repair,

MINUTES: A motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes as presented was made by Catherine Shaw and supported by Kris Shaw. M/C

JOB BILLS PAYABLE: A motion to approve the payment of the JOB Bills for year end 2023-2024 totaling \$10,601.87 and the April 2024 bills totaling \$30,047.35 was made by Jack Heidtman and supported by Catherine Shaw. M/C

JOB BUDGET REPORT: A motion to approve the JOB Budget year end and April 2024 as presented was made by Jack Heidtman and supported by Catherine Shaw. M/C

FINANCIAL REPORT: A motion to approve the Financial Report as presented was made by Kris Shaw and supported by Michelle Christal. M/C

BUDGET REPORT: A motion to approve the Budget with the addition of moving \$38.18 from Public Works to Zoning and 55.40 from Public Works to Cemetery Lights and to approve the 2024-2025 budget was made by Kris Shaw and supported by Michelle Christal. M/C

BILLS PAYABLE: A motion to pay the total bills totaling \$20,405.14 was made by Jack Heidtman and supported by Catherine Shaw. M/C

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR: Zoning Administrator Mike Beltz reported on his activities for the month.

ASSESSOR REPORT: Everything is up to date.

PLANNING COMMISSION: A motion to adopt the Master Plan was made by Kris Shaw and supported by Jack Heidtman. M/C
The next Planning Commission Meeting is in September.

RECREATION TEAM: A motion to adopt the Recreation Plan with the removal of camp ground was made by Kris Shaw and supported by Michelle Christal. M/C

JOINT OPERATIONS: Minutes are on file.

SOA: Tim Overmyer spoke on the SOA meeting and things that are happening at Sawyer.

CORRESPONDENCE: SEMCO franchise agreement is still with Bonnie Hoff.

OLD BUSINESS:

A: BUILDING CODES: Tabled until next month

B: FLOOD PLAN: Nothing needs to be done.

C: SEMCO: A hearing needs to be held.

NEW BUSINESS: Nothing at this time.

EXTENDED PUBLIC COMMENT: Ray Johnson spoke on the agreement with the County and Building Codes.

BOARD COMMENT: None.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm


Submitted by Michelle Christal, Clerk