

**Minutes from the Work Session  
Harris Town Board  
Wednesday, March 18, 2015 at 7:00pm**

A work session of the Harris Town Board was held on Wednesday, March 18, 2015 at Harris Town Hall, 21998 Airport Road Grand Rapids, MN. The work session was called to order at 7:00pm by Chairman Rosato. (This work session was open to the public, but was not televised nor recorded by ICTV.)

In attendance were Supervisors Rosato, Kelley, Kortekaas, and Ives, as well as Clerk Smith. *Absent:* Supervisor Key, and Treasurer Adams.

Glen Hodgson, the townships road engineer from SEH was also in attendance.

In addition, there were approximately 17 people there who represented Harris Township (as residents), the City Motorized Trail Committees, and Wildwood Township. (*See attached sign in sheet.*)

**The purpose of this meeting, as posted, was:**

- Consider motorized trail route options in Harris Township as requested by the motorized trails task force

1. Pledge to the flag, followed by the reading of the Harris Township mission statement
2. Welcome and introductions by Harris Township, Wildwood Township, and the City Motorized Trail Committee

After the meeting was called to order, everyone in the room introduced themselves and if they were affiliated with Harris Township, the City Motorized Trail Committee or Wildwood Township – who had been invited by the Harris Town Board for collaboration purposes.

In addition to the town board, there were approximately three township residents, one person from Wildwood Township (Bruce Christianson), and apx thirteen from groups who made up the City Motorized Trail Committee – including Rapid Riders ATV club, Visit Grand Rapids tourism, Itasca County Forestry, Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, Grand Rapids Park and Rec, etc.

3. Presentation by the City Motorized Trail Committee

Sara Thompson – Itasca County Land Dept/Forestry Recreation and Megan Christianson – Visit Grand Rapids shared the background of the motorized trail committee with the board which was formed last fall to look for more recreational opportunities in the city of Grand Rapids. They reviewed the UPM Blandin trail that was finished last year, near 9 Mile, and determined they would like to explore options to connect this trail south to the City of Grand Rapids for tourism and economic growth.

The committee has an idea of where a connecting trail could go, but nothing has been officially designated nor set in stone. The group instead wanted to reach out the neighboring townships and residents first to gather their perspectives and feedback before deciding on a route. They met with Wildwood Township about a month ago, and will also meet with Harris Township, the Itasca County Board and Transportation Department, the City of Grand Rapids, and any affected landowners (i.e. Blandin).

Some items of discussion were:

- Rapids Riders are the club that would maintain the trail. They apply for grant money every year for maintenance. The county and DNR monitor as well as trail ambassadors who are out there to talk and educate people.
- There would be no liability by the township or any private land owner for the trail. The club is covered and has liability coverage. This is similar to the snowmobile trails.
- This new trail would have a season. Speed limits would be set, and dust control is an option for the grant-in-aid.

- A handout of the *“Itasca County Policy and Process for the Permitting and Management of All-Terrain Vehicles and Off-Highway Motorcycles in the Public Right of Way on Designated Roads under the County’s Jurisdiction”* was shared by Thompson, and noted that the township could use this as a template for their use in regulating the motorized ATV and OHM trail in their township. They would maintain road authority and could put special restrictions in if desired. *(A copy of this document will be attached to these minutes.)*
- Currently, side by sides ATVs can ride on county roads but single ATVs cannot; they have to ride on the back side of ditches.
- A connection trail would allow Grand Rapids to connect to roughly 500 miles of trails. The Blandin trail is part of larger trail system that connects to other trails that lead to Moose Lake, Wisconsin, Cass Lake/Cass County. It connects to the Sioux Line trail, which is a part of the Northwood’s trail system.

4. Several MAPS were reviewed by the board and audience members showing the area between Grand Rapids and UPM Blandin Trail (near Nine Mile) – including the area between Pokegama Lake and County Road 67. A wetlands layer was included to help to know where they are located.

5. Wrap up and feedback by the board

The committee’s proposed trail area was evident in the map review, and the location seemed to make sense to those in attendance.

There was discussion of a proposed trail on both sides of the road, or just one. Headlight issues of oncoming traffic need to be considered.

In response to an erosion concern, Thompson commented that ‘trail building guidelines’ are followed. Storm water permits are gotten, when needed, and the look at the soil type and bring in material to repair if needed.

Feedback from the Harris Town Board:

- Glen’s Hodgson of SEH as road authority said he was pleased to see route where it is; it’s all on county ROW not township ROW. He liked the plan but said residents may have concerns as very little of the proposed trail is down in the ditch. And it’s proposed for both sides of road – one direction each side, though this has not been decided on for certain. Overall, the route location looked very logical.
- Rosato – Felt comfortable bringing the City Motorized Trail Committee’s proposed route location to public.
- Kortekaas: Had some concerns regarding driveways and how to handle the potential jumping over driveways. Where the trail is on the shoulders, it would allow them to go up and around the driveways. A comment from the audience was that sometimes bituminous or ground up cement is put on slopes of driveways to prevent erosion.
- Kelley: Proposed location of the trail looked good, but wondered how to responds to those residents who maintain their property right up to the road. The response was that this would depend on how the county has designated the ROW; they would look at that and may need permits.
- Ives: He thought the county road ditch sections were doable but wondered how the snowmobile trail would mesh with this? Overall, he commented it a great start and as an ATV trail, it looked good. However, If Wendigo changes ownership and no longer wants the snowmobile trail on that property, could this new trail be an option for redirecting it?

6. Next steps:

The City Motorized Trail Committee will have open houses with township residents to hear their comments about the proposed trail location. They don’t want the people to feel like the committee has come in to say “This is the route”. They want to ask and find out what residents think? They stressed that it’s not yet a designated route.

The committee will also meet with the county board and city of Grand Rapids and their residents. Overall, it's still in the preliminary stages right now. They talk about next steps during their next committee meeting in April.

The Harris Town Board thanked groups and residents for coming out. Chairman Rosato commented that they recognize that tourism is important to the township residents – as is having a fun and safe trail for ATV use. They don't want to be the missing link in having a connection to the community.

5. Adjourn

***The trails work session was adjourned at 8:24pm by Chairman Rosato.***

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Smith, Harris Township Clerk