PRESQUE ISLE TOWNSHIP
Parks and Recreation Special Meeting Minutes
August 20, 2026 - 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order

6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Pledge was recited.

Roll Call

Present: Chair Paige Mead, Vice Chair Kelsey Mitchell, Secretary Devon Idalski, Board Liaison Kate Szydlowski and member Karen Torsch.
Absent: None.

Approval of Agenda:

A motion was made by Szydlowski, supported by Mitchell, to approve the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Unfinished Business:

a. Park Project – Overview and Public Comments

Proposed Park Project Overview

Mead explained that the purpose of the meeting was to gather public input before proceeding with further planning for the park. Using a proposed map as a visual aid, Mead outlined the Committee's vision for a multigenerational park incorporating nature, environmental education, recreation, and art while preserving the property's existing natural features.

Preliminary concepts discussed included:

- An ADA-accessible walking trail.
- Preservation and enhancement of the existing meadow, potentially including educational signage identifying such things as local plants, butterflies, birds and other features.
- Educational and interactive elements along the trail, including a "megaphone", outdoor musical instruments, and public art. It was noted that Alpena High School has agreed to build the megaphone.
- A small parking area where the old baseball field currently stands.
- A playground near the parking area utilizing natural materials.
- Possible additional amenities, including a dog park.

Public Input and Discussion

Residents and Committee members next discussed the proposed park project at length. Discussion focused on the following subjects and concerns:

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- **Environmental Protection:** Residents encouraged the Committee to obtain professional environmental guidance before proceeding with development. A tree inventory was also recommended before clearing undergrowth or establishing trails. Potential resources mentioned included Huron Pines, HeadWaters Land Conservancy, Presque Isle County District Forester Jacob Grochowski, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and MSU Extension. The Committee stated that preserving mature trees and minimizing disturbance to the property are priorities. It was noted that the proposed parking area was selected in part because it is located on previously disturbed ground, and the preliminary trail route was developed with the intention of avoiding mature tree removal.

- **Parking:** Residents expressed concern regarding the adequacy of the proposed parking area and potential impacts on nearby residents. Alternative parking and access arrangements were discussed, including the possibility of evaluating access from Grand Lake Road and whether pedestrian crossing improvements could be made. Idalski suggested surveying potential park users to better estimate expected usage and parking needs.

- **Maintenance:** Residents questioned whether existing Township staffing would be sufficient to maintain another park, including trail upkeep and trash collection. Volunteer cleanup efforts were suggested as a possible supplemental resource.

- **Funding:** Mead informed the audience that approximately $30,000 in funding is currently available to begin work. She stated that the project is estimated to take approximately five years to complete and that the Committee plans to pursue additional grants and donations. The formation of a “Friends of the Park” 501(c)(3) organization was suggested to assist with fundraising and volunteer activities. MSU Extension and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were also identified as potential sources of grant funding. It was further noted that MSU Extension could provide Master Gardeners for volunteer projects.

- **Playground Safety and Liability:** Questions were raised regarding liability and safety requirements for a natural

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playground. Idalski explained that any playground would be professionally designed and would incorporate required fall-protection and safety measures, such as engineered wood fiber.

- **Dog Park:** Residents discussed issues associated with operating a municipal dog park, including noise, access control, vaccination requirements, maintenance, and liability considerations. Mead noted that a possible dog park had been considered in response to prior community interest but was not a committed component of the proposed plan. She further indicated that the concept would require considerably more evaluation before being pursued.

- **Arts, Parks, and Community Partnerships:** Residents suggested examples of other parks incorporating natural play and outdoor art, including Belle Isle Park, Crystal Mountain's Michigan Legacy Art Park, and Bernheim Forest and Arboretum in Kentucky. Other audience members recommended exploring partnerships with arts organizations and other community groups, including Friends of Rockport Besser Natural Area and the BIA.

- **Community Outreach:** Residents encouraged the Township to maintain communication with neighboring property owners and the broader community. Suggestions included direct outreach, providing updates on the Township website, and sharing information at upcoming Parks and Recreation community events.

Next Steps

Mead stated that the Committee would review all of the audience comments at its next meeting on Monday, August 24, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. She also indicated that the Committee would consult with Huron Pines and Presque Isle County District Forester Jacob Grochowski in the near future.

Adjournment: With no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Upcoming Meetings:
Regular Meeting: Mon., Aug. 24, 2026, 6:00 p.m.