

Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

Tuesday January 20, 2026, 8:00 AM

Tuscola County Purdy Building Conference Room

125 West Lincoln Street, Caro, MI 48723

Call to Order:

At 8:09 A.M., Michael Clinesmith, Chairperson, called the meeting to order.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Michael Clinesmith led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Mark Putnam, Secretary, called the Roll.

Appointed Members Present: Michael Clinesmith, Chairperson; Nancy Barrios, Vice-chairperson & Tuscola County Board of Commissioners Member; Mark Putnam, Secretary; & William Thomas.

Appointed Members Absent: Isabella Hill excused; Vacant; & Vacant.

Ex-Officio Present: None.

Ex-Officio Absent: Planning Commissioner absent; Dara Hood, Drain Commissioner excused; & Julie Matuszak, Road Commissioner absent.

Public Present: None.

Ex-officio Members Elevated to Voting Status:

None.

A quorum was present with four members.

Public Comment:

Mark Putnam shared an update on the Friends of Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Facebook page. He refreshed the site with new content, including summer photographs assembled into a short reel set to music. As a result of these updates, the page has seen increased activity and engagement, drawing renewed attention both from Mark and from a growing number of visitors.

Approval of Agenda:

Mark Putnam, seconded by Nancy Barrios, moved to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes:

William Thomas, seconded by Nancy Barrios, moved to approve the October 21, 2025, Regular Meeting Minute.

Motion passed unanimously.

Nancy Barrio, seconded by Mark Putnam, moved to approve the November 25, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes.

Motion passed unanimously.

Review of Financial Reports/Budget Adjustments:

Chairman Michael Clinesmith reviewed both the proposed Commission budget and the final Board-approved budget for the Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Commission (hereafter referred to as “the Commission”).

In December 2025, the Commission received a reimbursement of \$1,875 from America250MI. In early 2026, the Commission is expected to receive an additional \$3,125 from America250MI, bringing the total to \$5,000 over 2025 and 2026. This funding represents the full amount of a grant written by Mark Putnam.

Also in 2025, the Commission received a separate \$5,000 grant to fund a site plan for “The Parcels” at the intersection of Chambers and Washburn Roads along the Cass River. This site is expected to be developed as a picnic area with parking, and possibly a future launch site. That grant application was written by Nancy Barrios.

The Commission received \$10,000 in grant funding during 2025 that was paid in that year but some of it remains receivable in 2026. At the close of 2025, the Commission posted a positive Net of Revenues and Expenditures of \$475.28.

The Board-approved 2026 budget, which may be amended during the year, projects a net decrease in the Commission’s fund balance of \$20,095. This balance largely reflects revenues and expenses associated with Vanderbilt County Park and Campgrounds.

In recent years, the Commission has consistently posted positive annual Net Revenues over Expenditures, adding to its fund balance. However, those years largely reflected routine operations and maintenance, with limited investment in long-term planning or capital improvements.

It is important to note that the Commission, like any public agency, cannot generate profit from grant funding. Grants must be spent on eligible improvements or renovations—often capital

assets—and in many cases require the Commission to incur expenses beyond the grant amount itself.

Budget Summary

For 2026, the Board has budgeted \$5,000 in grant revenue. Routine operating revenue is projected at approximately \$24,100, bringing total projected revenue to \$29,100.

Significant non-routine expenditures are planned for 2026, reflecting an increased focus on planning and capital improvements. One increase includes higher per diem costs due to the addition of two new Commission members and an increased number of meetings, totaling \$2,250.

Planned Vanderbilt Park improvements include \$3,625 for the Historical Kiosk and \$4,000 for additional park amenities, such as a cornhole game. A site plan for Vanderbilt Park is budgeted at \$5,000. Professional and contractual administrative expenses are budgeted at \$6,500.

Total projected non-routine expenditures amount to \$21,375. Routine operating expenditures are budgeted at \$27,820, bringing total projected expenditures for 2026 to \$49,195.

While projected revenues total \$29,100, the planned increase in expenditures results in a projected net decrease of \$20,095 to the Commission's fund balance.

This anticipated reduction is largely attributable to one-time expenditures for planning and capital improvements—investments intended to benefit Vanderbilt Park, Tuscola County, and residents for years to come.

Mark Putnam, seconded by Nancy Barrios, moved to accept the January 20, 2026, Financial Reports & Budget Adjustments.

Motion passed unanimously.

By-laws Review:

Michael Clinesmith reviewed the current Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Commission bylaws and requested that Commission members read them thoroughly and bring any ideas or suggestions for updates or improvements to upcoming meetings.

Site Plan Update:

Regarding the Spicer proposed options for *The Parcels*, Chairperson Michael Clinesmith opened discussion on two alternatives: **Plan I**, which places parking at the top of the bank above the Cass River, and **Plan II**, which locates parking below the rise near the river's edge. Both options received thoughtful discussion and support from Commission members. Chairperson Clinesmith also referenced guidance from the current Master Plan as it relates to the Parcels site.

Mark Putnam, seconded by Nancy Barrios, moved to approve **Plan I** and to direct Spicer to proceed with that option.

The motion passed unanimously.

Following the agenda, Chairperson Clinesmith led a discussion on the overall **goals for The Parcels** site. He noted that the next Parks & Recreation Master Plan update will cover the years 2028–2032 and that work on the five-year plan must begin in the fall of 2026, if not earlier. The Commission discussed whether the Master Plan update should be completed in-house or contracted out, with outside services estimated to cost \$6,000 or more. Spicer was mentioned as a potential firm to provide a quote. Chairperson Clinesmith emphasized that if the plan is completed in whole or in part internally, compensation for those contributing to the work would be appropriate.

The next agenda item, **Renaming of The Parcels**, was discussed briefly and postponed until the March 2026 meeting.

Michigan Trails & Greenways Association:

Michael Clinesmith presented the idea of the Commission becoming a member of the Michigan Trails and Greenways Association. Mark Putnam noted that the annual membership cost would range between \$100 and \$200, depending on the level of membership selected by the Commission.

Vanderbilt Park:

The **Historical Kiosk sign** is currently stored in Caro at the Tuscola Recycling Center. Mark Putnam noted that the final deadline to request reimbursement from America250MI is expected to be mid-May 2026, and that all vendor payments must be completed prior to that date.

It was suggested that, since the Commission is required to provide a down payment for the foundations for both the Historical Kiosk and the **cornhole game** at Vanderbilt Park, a portion of that down payment could be applied toward the final payment for the kiosk foundation before installation. This would allow the Commission to submit a reimbursement request to America250MI earlier, potentially in April or May 2026.

Discussion regarding the cornhole update at Vanderbilt Park was postponed, as were agenda items related to the **Vanderbilt Park site plan** and **general park condition** updates.

Additional Future Meeting Items:

We briefly discussed the **Vanderbilt Property Line Resolution, Vanderbilt Park Potential Fencing, Off Season Camping Access, and The Pacels Budget Plans**.

Adjournment

Appointed Member William Thomas departed the meeting at 9:15 A.M. Upon his departure, a quorum would no longer be present.

Nancy Barrios, seconded by Michel Clinesmith, moved that the meeting be adjourned.

Motion passed unanimously.

This Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Commission Special Meeting ended at 9:07 A.M.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 17, 2026, at 8 A.M. at the Tuscola County Purdy Building Conference Room located at 125 West Lincoln Street, Caro, MI 48723.

Mark Putnam, Secretary, respectfully, submits the minutes:
