Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday August 18, 2026, 8:00 AM

Tuscola County Purdy Building Conference Room

125 West Lincoln Street, Caro, MI 48723

Call to Order:

At 8:01 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, Tuscola County Board of Commissioners Member; Mark Putnam, Secretary; & William Thomas.
Appointed Members Absent:	Joseph Ewald, Excused; Isabella Hill, Vice-chairperson; Excused; & Vacant Position.
Ex-Officio Members Present:	Stephenie Dusute, Drain Commissioner & Jane Rymarcyzk, Planning Commissioner.
Ex-Officio member Absent:	Julie Matuszak, Road Commissioner, Excused.
Public Present:	None.
Ex-officio Member Elevated to Voting Status:	Stephenie Dusute, Drain Commissioner; & Jane Rymarcyzk, Planning Commissioner.

A quorum was present with six voting members.

Approval of Agenda:

- Action: Nancy Barrios, seconded by William Thomas, motioned to approve the agenda as amended.
    - Change August 17, 2026, to August 18, 2026.
    - Change June 21, 2026, to July 21, 2026.
    - To the Vanderbilt Park section the following were added:

    - Email from Park Guest.
    - Flea Market at the park.
- Result: Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

Public Present: Charles Militello, Park Host; Robert Zeilinger; & Joseph Toth. Tom McLane, Tuscola County Grounds Department, was also in attendance.

The Commission's public comment period again proved both constructive and engaging. Cass River Greenway representatives Robert Zeilinger and Joseph Toth offered updates on ongoing river-access initiatives. Mr. Zeilinger noted that although the Cass River Greenway (CRG) operates entirely through volunteer membership, comparable organizations elsewhere in Michigan receive paid staffing. The CRG's mission centers on habitat restoration and water-quality improvement along the Cass River.

He explained that while pontoon boating and fishing were once the dominant recreational uses, kayaking now represents the most common activity on the river. The CRG has successfully established multiple launch sites, with the long-term vision of providing continuous, free public access from Evergreen Park in Sanilac County through Frankenmuth and beyond. Launch types range from fully accessible installations to rustic, low-impact sites.

Mr. Zeilinger further reported that the Cass River has been designated a State Water Trail, one of only thirteen in Michigan. The newly established "Ishdonquet—Crossing Cloud Memorial Park (ICCMP)" on Washburn Road near Chambers Road is expected to become the uppermost launch site on the Cass River above the M-46 launch and below the Caro Dam. Within the Caro Dam corridor, ICCMP is considered a leading candidate for future launch development.

He noted that the M-46 Launch was constructed on State land using approximately $20,000 raised by community groups and suggested that a similar incremental approach could be used at ICCMP—beginning with a gravel parking area, picnic space, and basic water access. Commissioner Nancy Barrios reiterated that the Commission's initial vision for ICCMP was a rustic park, while Mr. Zeilinger emphasized that ADA accessibility is required for DNR grant eligibility, and Tuscola County may be well-positioned for funding due to historically fewer grant requests compared to other regions.

Joseph Toth supported beginning with a parking lot and then establishing a rustic walking path to the river. Mr. Zeilinger added that Frankenmuth Credit Union may be willing to assist with grant funding and combined with potential support from the Tuscola County Community Foundation, the project could reach the $20,000 range. Mark noted that Vanderbilt Park is performing well and may also be positioned to contribute.

On a separate informational matter, Commissioner Nancy Barrios reported that Sunset Bay Marina is currently listed for sale and inquired whether Tuscola County should consider pursuing the property.

Approval of Minutes:

Michael Clinesmith noted that the name Ewald was misspelled Edwald in the minutes.

- Action: Nancy Barrios, seconded by William Thomas, motioned to approve the minutes as amended.
- Result: The motion passed unanimously.

Options for Spicer Plan (Bob Zeilinger):

Discussed in Public Comment.

Review of Financial Reports/Budget Adjustments:

The Commission recommended adjusting three proposed budget line items for 2027:

- Master Plan Development should be reduced from $20,000 to $10,000.
- Vanderbilt Park Renovations should be reduced from $8,000 to $6,000.
- Ishdonquet Park Renovations should be increased from $2,000 to $5,000.

These adjustments were reflected in the draft budget. A final recommendation will be presented to the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners at the Commission's October meeting. Tom McLane, Director of the Tuscola County Grounds Department, will also review the proposed budget prior to that meeting.

Acceptance of Resignation of Joseph Ewald:

- Action: Nancy Barrios, seconded by Mark Putnam, motioned to accept the resignation of Joseph Ewald with regrets.
- Result: The motion passed unanimously.

Historical Sign Dedication:

- Historical Narrative — Mark Putnam will present a brief reflection on the history of the Vanderbilt Park property and its future development.
- Dedication Refreshments — Nancy Barrios will provide cookies and refreshments for the dedication of the Historical Kiosk at Vanderbilt Park.

Vanderbilt Park:

- **Review of Park Rules:**
  - There was discussion about the rules for Vanderbilt Park.
- **Vanderbilt Site Plan:**
  - The Trail to the Bay was discussed. In winter, it is well used.
  - A Flea market was discussed.
    - **Action:** Nancy Barrios, seconded by Mark Putnam, moved that the commission recommend to the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners

that Charles Militello may organize a Flea Market at Vanderbilt Park from September 18th to 20th with sellers only being campers.
        - **Result:** The motion passed unanimously.
    - Halloween event was discussed.
        - **Action:** Nancy Michael Clinesmith, seconded by Mark Putnam, moved that the commission recommend to the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners that Charles Militello may organize a Halloween Event for the public for the last two weekends of October.
        - **Result:** The motion passed unanimously.
    - **Updates on Park Condition:**
        - An email from a guest/camper at Vanderbilt Park was read by Tom McLane.

Attendance Update

Jane Rymarczyk departed the meeting at 9:44 a.m., following the Park Rules discussion and prior to the Vanderbilt Site Plan agenda items.

Master Plan Submission:

We discussed the current & future Master Plans.

Adjournment

- Action: Nancy Barrios, seconded by William Thomas, motioned to adjourn the meeting.
- Result: The motion passed unanimously.

This Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Commission Regular Meeting concluded at 10:25 A.M.

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday October 20, 2026, at 8:00 A.M. at the Tuscola County Purdy Building Conference Room, located at 125 West Lincoln Street, Caro, MI 48723.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Putnam, Secretary

Mark Putnam
10-20-26