

ALERT

New park in the works

State awards grant for waterfront park in Milton Township

BY SHERI McWHIRTER smcwhirter@record-eagle.com Jun 10, 2018

KEWADIN — Officials in a small hamlet on the northern shore of Elk Lake have a big park project in the works.

Milton Township recently received approval of a \$295,000 development grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to build a new public park on approximately four acres split between the Elk Lake shoreline and an empty lot across the street. Among the many features at the coming Kewadin Waterfront Park is an already-installed handicap-accessible kayak launch, the first of its kind on the Chain of Lakes water trail and in all of Antrim County, in fact.

“It offers more access to a broader amount of paddlers,” said Deana Jerdee, of nonprofit agency Paddle Antrim, which contributed to the cost of the kayak launch. Even paddlers without mobility issues often use the special kayak launch because it helps increase stability while loading and avoid tip overs, she said.

The new park in Kewadin will provide much-desired waterfront access for local residents, including a state-sanctioned designated swim area with buoys, said Liz Atkinson, township treasurer. A recent resident survey showed a desire for more lake access, she said.

“All we had in Milton Township were road ends for people to use,” Atkinson said.

Park plans call for an existing building — all that’s left of the old Water’s Edge resort — to be converted into universally accessible bathrooms and an open-air pavilion with an observation deck on an upper level. Also, the project includes planned beach enhancements, walkways, a shade pavilion, interpretive maps, benches, picnic tables and a fire pit.

Across the street workers are building a new parking lot for vehicles and trailers associated with the public boat launch adjacent to the park.

Park planners are working on a push-button signal for a pedestrian crossing to provide additional safety when park users cross from their vehicles to the waterfront area, said Todd Vigland, of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy.

The conservancy is a local nonprofit agency that helped the township not only with the grant request for the park's development, but also with prior state grants to purchase the land.

Atkinson said the park will be designed with a greenbelt of native plant species near the water's edge, as well as a rain garden in a current retention area near the boat ramp.

Funding for the approximately \$60,000 kayak launch came from a number of sources, including Paddle Antrim, Elk Rapids Area Community Endowment, Rotary Club of Elk Rapids and Rotary Charities of Traverse City.

"We've had a lot of support," Atkinson said.

Parking lot construction at the park is already underway, while bids for the building renovation are expected to go out this year with plans for work to happen in the spring next year, said Lon Bargy, township supervisor.

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