

PUBLIC HEARING ON ORV ORDINANCE
KEWEENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
NOVEMBER 13, 2019

The Public Hearing was held for the ORV Ordinance on Wednesday November 13, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the Courthouse in Eagle River, MI and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioners present: Sandra Gayk, Jim Vivian, Del Rajala and Don Piche. Absent: Bob DeMarois.

Chairman, Don Piche started the meeting by stating that the issue on ORV's on Brockway Mountain were a moot point because the State denied access. Piche then explained that no decisions would be made and that the purpose of the meeting was to let the public speak about their questions and concerns. Piche read the letter regarding the ordinance that was proposed/changed by Gregg Patrick on behalf of the Keweenaw County Road Commission.

Response from the Townships regarding ORV's on the roads:

Grant Twp: Yes

Eagle Harbor Twp: No

Houghton Twp: No

Allouez Twp: The meeting has not been held yet, but no complaints so far.

Sherman Twp: Did not respond.

Sheriff Luokkanen discussed the old ordinance v. the new ordinance. He stated that in 2008, Keweenaw County did not have a designated ORV trail. Luokkanen said that Keweenaw County adopted the ordinance and it was always assumed that ORV's could travel from point (A) to point (B) if they followed the law, stayed off to the side of the road, single file, obeying speed limit, etc. He stated that Keweenaw County did not have designated ORV trails until 2012. Sheriff Luokkanen said he wants to tighten up the what is a "designated trail."

Piche reminded everyone about the 3-minute rule and then opened the meeting up for public comment.

The public that commented against the ORV ordinance, stated that there were safety issues and concerns, they didn't like the noise and congestion from the constant ORV traffic going by their homes. They fear that if the new ordinance takes out the "point (A) to point (B) that ORV traffic will increase and make the situation worse. People wanted to know why the Sheriff's Dept. wasn't pulling ORV's over and siting them. The Sheriff stated that it is illegal to pull over an ORV just to ask them where they are coming from and where they are going. If they are obeying the law, they will not be pulled over. Sheriff Luokkanen also stated that State Highways are different. ORV's are not permitted on M26 or US41 at all. He has and will cite people on ORV's if they are operating on the State Highways.

The public that commented in favor of the ORV ordinance stated that they appreciate the concerns of the people against the ordinance, but they are worried about losing customers at their businesses. They stated that the season is short and if they lose the ORV traffic, it will be harmful to them. Business owners feel that ORV riders, as well as all other customers should be welcomed and should be able to safely get to businesses and to the trails. ORV riders don't like riding on the roads if they don't have to. They want to ride the trails in the woods, but they also need to get gas or would like to stop at other establishments or businesses as well.

The Keweenaw County Road Commission and the townships can shut down the ordinance, but if the townships decide to do this, they will be responsible for enforcement and the Sheriff will no longer be involved.

Mike McMahon from the Keweenaw ATV Club stated that basically everyone just needs to work together on this. He asked that the townships come to them and tell the Club what they want. He suggested that the townships come up with designated trails so that riders can safely get to the businesses and onto the trails. The club will put the signs up.

Both sides agree that they really aren't that far apart and hope that they can all work together to make this work for everyone.

Motion by Rajala, supported by Gayk to adjourn at 7:55 p.m.

Donald Piche, Chairman

Roxanne Billing, Deputy Clerk