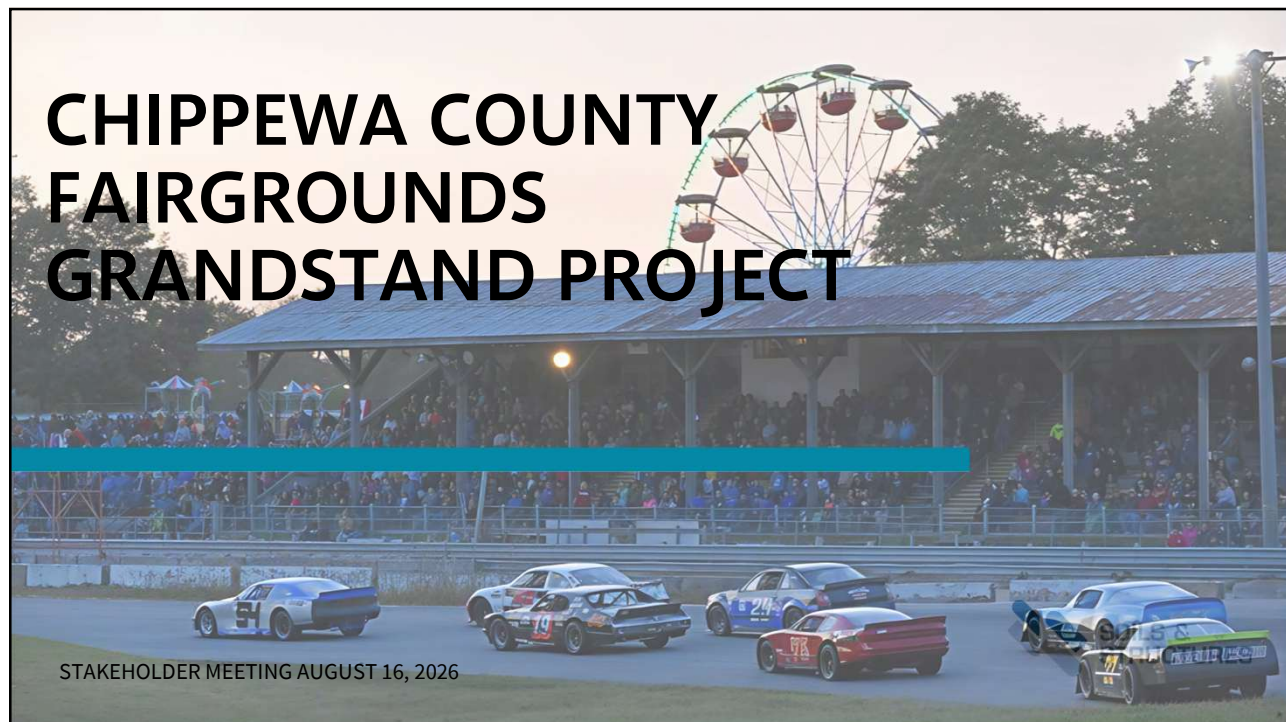




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HOW WE GOT HERE

- 2023 STRUCTURAL INCIDENT AND REDUCED SEATING
- 2024 ENGINEERING REVIEW AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS
- FUNDING RESEARCH, APPROPRIATIONS REQUESTS, LETTERS OF SUPPORT, MEETINGS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS, SITE TOURS, AND THE WORK UNDERTAKEN TO APPLY AND FINALLY SECURE FUNDING
- RISING CONSTRUCTION COSTS AND DIFFERING OPINIONS ON SITE USE MADE IT IMPORTANT TO PAUSE, REGROUP, AND PURSUE PLANNING FUNDS TO BETTER DEFINE WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS AND WHAT THE BUDGET CAN REALISTICALLY SUPPORT.



2

2

2025 Chippewa County Fairground Grandstand Replacement

Kinross Charter Township, Chippewa County, MI

Chippewa County is situated just North of the Mackinac Bridge and has a connection to South Ontario. What was once a thriving area has seen its share of infrastructure problems exacerbated by the deterioration and closing of the Guelph Air Force Base in 1977 and population loss of 10,000.

This rural community is now heavily dependent on tourism and recreational opportunities including a 100-acre all-season fairground. The fairground property is unique in that it encompasses a swimming area and beach, animal barns, a 4-H Event facility, camping areas, a racetrack, exhibit buildings, horse arenas, and numerous support facilities. With the help of several smaller MOWARD grants, the fair has been able to add a bathhouse and do several deferred electrical upgrades, but the public infrastructure is generally past its service life.

The wooden grandstands were built in 1976. The grandstands and track see a variety of uses including concerts, stock car racing, pageants, snowmobile racing, mud drops, harness racing, horse pulling, church services, demolition derbies, and tractor parades within the calendar year. A spectator fall through the stands in 2023. A structural engineering firm then reviewed the condition of the grandstands and recommended immediately reducing allowable occupancy to 60-70% due to the condition of the wooden decking and support structure. The structural firm also recommended seeking a complete replacement within the next 5 years. Grandstand events are the primary money maker for the fairgrounds and drive over a million dollars in local economic activity between events, parking, tickets, breakfast outings, and more.

The Grandstand Replacement and Expansion project at the Chippewa County Fairgrounds aims to dramatically improve the safety, accessibility, and functionality of one of the community's most vital public spaces. The plan includes demolishing several adjacent aging structures and increasing seating capacity from approximately 1,800 to 4,000, while creating a fully ADA-accessible, all-season atmosphere for spectators. Modern amenities including accessible restrooms, concession areas, and a meeting room will be constructed underneath the new grandstands, providing year-round usability and enhancing the overall visitor experience. The estimated project cost, based on comparable upgrades at other County Fairgrounds, is approximately \$5 million.

Kinross Township, which owns the fairgrounds property, is deeply committed to public recreation and long-term resource stewardship. Both Kinross Township and Chippewa County have endorsed the project, recognizing its value to the community, but neither government has the funding capacity to fully finance the improvements. The Chippewa County Fair, which leases and operates the fairgrounds, brings in about \$540,000 annually and pays set roughly \$750,000 in operational costs, leaving only \$30,000 per year for maintenance and improvements. Historically, county fairs like Chippewa's relied heavily on revenue from horse racing and state funding tied to the racing industry. That funding source was eliminated between 2008 and 2010 when the state restructured its support model, leaving rural fairs with aging infrastructure and limited alternatives. The Chippewa County Fair continues to serve the region with dedication, but replacing the grandstands is beyond its current financial reach. Support for this project would revitalize a key community hub, expanding opportunities for recreation, cultural events, and economic development throughout the region.



For more information contact: Project Manager & Grant Specialist, Tracey Laitinen
SOILS & STRUCTURES (906) 322-4932 tlaitinen@soilsandstructures.com

PROJECT FUNDING & MANAGEMENT PARTNERS



3

3

MEET THE TEAM



MARK RICE

KINROSS CHARTER
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR



DON DUNKIN, PE

SOILS & STRUCTURES



TRACEY LAITINEN

SOILS & STRUCTURES
PROJECT MANAGER & GRANT
SPECIALIST



STEPHANIE BOILEAU, PE

PUBLIC PROJECT SUPPORTER



4

4

BUDGET

TOTAL PLANNING BUDGET \$80,000

- \$56,000 MDARD GRANT
- \$24,000 GRANT MATCH
- 2025 PRELIM ESTIMATES
 - \$7,000 SURVEY
 - 20,000 GEO
 - \$53,000 DESIGN

Contracts over \$5,000 must be competitively bid per MDARD Grant Award



5

5

STAKEHOLDERS, USERS, & MATCH PARTICIPANTS

Chippewa County Fairground

MATCH \$

KINROSS CHARTER
TOWNSHIP \$19,500

MIDWEST
INTERNATIONAL RACING
ASSOCIATION -
MIRA \$2,000

CHIPPEWA COUNTY FAIR
\$1500

SAULT STE. MARIE
ROTARY CLUB \$1,000

LETTERS OF SUPPORT & FACILITY USERS

CHIPPEWA COUNTY ROAD
COMMISSION (CCRC)

CHIPPEWA COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION (CCEDC)

EASTERN UPPER PENINSULA
REGIONAL PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT (EUP RPD)

SAULT STE. MARIE TRIBE OF
CHIPPEWA INDIANS

KINROSS LIONS CLUB

CONSOLIDATED COMMUNITY
SCHOOLS

CHIPPEWA CO. GOV'T

KINROSS SPEEDWAY

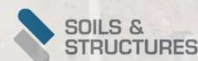
EASTERN UPPER
PENINSULA HORSEMAN'S
ASSOCIATION (EUPHA)

DAFTER LIONS CLUB

MICHIGAN HORSEPULLING
BOAT ASSOCIATION

EASTERN UPPER
PENINSULA ANTIQUE
EQUIPMENT ASSOCIATION
(EUP AEA)

FUNDAMENTAL BAPTIST
CHURCH



6

6

MDARD PLANNING GRANT – WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVIDE



What it does not do

It does not immediately build a new grandstand.

It will not produce final construction plans with every detail, such as exact water-valve locations.

Those final details, permits, and construction documents will follow a preferred concept and construction funding are secured.



7

7

MDARD PLANNING GRANT – WHAT IT DOES PROVIDE



Site survey, mapping, and utility review.



Soils and geotechnical investigation.



Preliminary water, sewer, drainage, and site-layout planning – locations of where everything would be.



Grandstand concepts, planning-level cost estimates, and a future bid schedule.



8

8

TIMELINE

- FALL 2026: SURVEY, SOILS, GEOTECHNICAL WORK, AND UTILITY/SITE INFORMATION GATHERING.
- WINTER-SPRING 2027: CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES AND PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING.
- SUMMER-FALL 2027: PLANNING-LEVEL COST ESTIMATE, BID SCHEDULE, AND FINAL PRELIMINARY DESIGN PACKAGE.
- LATE 2027: GRANT REPORTING AND A STRONGER APPLICATION PACKAGE FOR CONSTRUCTION FUNDING.



9

9

CURRENT FACILITIES

- BUILT IN 1976
- APPROX SEATS 1,800
- CURRENTLY AT A REDUCED SEATING CAPACITY TO 60% OF AVAILABLE SEATING ~1,080
- NO BATHROOM FACILITIES
- SEVERAL STRUCTURES NEED TO BE DEMOLISHED



10

10



11

WATER & SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

- Modern water and sewer service is an important part of making the fairgrounds safer, more functional, and better prepared for year-round events and future improvements.
- Extending utilities would support future restrooms, concessions, livestock and equestrian uses, camping, event operations, fire protection, and a new or improved grandstand facility.
*recent fire of 4H Event Center
- Preliminary estimates identify approximately 11,510 feet of 10-inch watermain with 23 hydrants and an 11,600-foot sanitary sewer extension, including a lift station and service connections.
- The proposed sewer route is intended to serve the fairgrounds and opportunities for future connections along the corridor—an approach that may create opportunities for coordination and cost sharing with adjacent development.



12

12

WATER & SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE CONTINUED

- Utilities should be evaluated as part of the overall fairground's improvement package. A lower-cost grandstand option could allow more project funding to be directed toward water and sewer infrastructure.
- Phasing may be necessary. The Township will use the MDARD planning grant to evaluate needs, define practical construction phases, determine appropriate watermain sizing, refine costs, and identify funding strategies for both the grandstand and utility components.
- The goal is not simply to replace seating—it is to develop a practical, phased plan that improves the fairgrounds' core infrastructure and positions the site for future community use.



13

13

GRANDSTAND PROJECT EXAMPLES

EMMET – CHARLEVOIX

2,700 SEATS

BUILT IN 2003 FOR JUST \$200,000

TICKET BOOTHS, BUT NO LARGER FACILITIES, NO W&S



INGHAM CO EXPECTED 2027 (2025 EST. WAS \$3.9M)

1,382 SEATS + ADA

SEVERAL RESTROOMS

STORAGE, FLEX SPACE, & CONCESSIONS



<https://fair.ingham.org/grandstand/index.php>

14

14

POSSIBLE FUTURE FUNDING STREAMS

Sources

- Federal Congressionally Directed Spending
- MI Dept of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD)
- USDA Rural Development
- Local, Private, Philanthropic Partners
- *Most likely will be mixed funding/multiple sources*

Grant Match Expectations

- Most grants require a local match of approximately 20–50% of total project costs.
- Match funds may come from millages, general-fund dollars, fundraising, sponsorships, donations, fair revenue, partner contributions, or other eligible grants.
- A stronger local match demonstrates community commitment, makes the project more competitive, and helps outside grant dollars go farther.
- Example: A \$5 million project with a \$1.5 million local match (30%) would require \$3.5 million in grant or other outside funding.



15

15

QUESTIONS FOR ATTENDEES

- WHAT EVENTS AND USER GROUPS NEED TO BE ACCOMMODATED?
- WHAT SEATING, ACCESSIBILITY, SAFETY, TECHNOLOGY, PRESS BOX, RESTROOM, CONCESSIONS, OR OPERATIONAL NEEDS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED?
- WHAT SITE, TRAFFIC, PARKING, DRAINAGE, WATER, OR USER-ACCESS CONCERNS SHOULD BE STUDIED?
- ARE THERE COMMUNITY PARTNERS, DONORS, OR FUNDING LEADS THE TOWNSHIP SHOULD PURSUE?
- WHO WANTS TO REMAIN INVOLVED AS THE PROJECT ADVANCES?



16

16

SUMMARY

- THE GRANDSTANDS ARE A MAJOR FAIRGROUNDS ASSET AND THE SITE'S ONLY PERMANENT SPECTATOR SEATING.
- THE 2024 REVIEW IDENTIFIED DETERIORATED DECKING AND SUPPORT STRUCTURE, LEADING TO REDUCED SEATING CAPACITY AND A RECOMMENDATION TO PLAN FOR REPLACEMENT.
- THE GOAL IS A SAFE, FUNCTIONAL LONG-TERM SOLUTION—NOT A SHORT-TERM PATCH.
- TONIGHT IS NOT A VOTE ON A FINAL GRANDSTAND DESIGN. IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN THE PLANNING WORK NOW UNDERWAY, GATHER LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, AND MAKE SURE THE TOWNSHIP'S FUTURE FUNDING AND DESIGN DECISIONS REFLECT THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.



17