Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission
Board Meeting
Wednesday, January 23, 2013
12:00 Russell’s Diner, Eckerman, MI

Members Present:
Jim Hill, Mackinac Co.
Diane Patrick, Mackinac Co.
Ron Ford, Luce Co.
Bill Ferguson, Chippewa Co.
George Kinsella, Chippewa Co.
Greg Zimmerman, Chip. Co. Private

Beverly Holmes, Village of Newberry - Luce Co.
Richard Timmer, Private
Don McLean, Chippewa Co.
Jim Durm – Moran Twp., Mackinac Co.
Dean Reid, Mack. Co. Private

Michelle Walk, MSU Extension
Kristen Claus, Chip Co. SSM
Eric Becks, LSSU

Guest:
Paula Ramelis

Staff:
Jeff Hagan
Ellen Benoit
Nathan Coon

CALL TO ORDER
Meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m., by Chairman Hill.

AGENDA APPROVAL
Chairman Hill asked if there were any changes to the agenda, there were none. D. Timmer moved to accept the agenda as presented, supported by D. Reid, motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING
Chairman Hill asked if there were any questions or comments regarding the minutes of the last meeting. D. McLean noted that the meeting was held in Trout Lake not Eckerman and that on page 3 regarding the Crisp Pt. Lighthouse it may have been J. Moore, but not him that brought up that topic. G. Kinsella updated the Board on the Hiawatha Forest Service’s plans for the Iroquois Pt. Lighthouse and seeking more input from BMIC and other groups for the short and long term plans. K. Claus noted that both her and E. Becks were at that meeting also. A motion to accept the minutes with those changes was made by D. McLean and supported by M. Walk. The motion passed unanimously.

FINANCIAL REPORT -
E. Benoit delivered the Financial Report to the Board. Two reports were presented, one breaks down each of the funding programs from their start date to the end of the quarter showing the percent of time and expenses. The second financial report shows the financial position for all programs over the First Quarter of FY Year 2013 October 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012. D. Timmer asked how the cash flow was, and staff responded it has been good with EDA advancing their quarterly payment and with the Little Rapids draw down on funds directly deposited overnight. Only the Transportation reimbursements take about 3 weeks to process. J. Hill asked about the Portage Twp. Zoning Plan and the progress being made. Director Hagan responded that the sub-contractor has been working with the planning commission on that and it is very close to being completed. D. McLean wondered if Mackinac County had approved the GIS funding as it was to be a mutually beneficial partnership with Chippewa County. Chairman Hill and Commissioner Patrick affirmed that it had been approved.
A motion was made by E. Becks to approve the financial report as presented. The motion was supported by D. Timmer. The motion carried unanimously.
NEW BUSINESS

Broadband Initiative

Director Hagan announced that Tom Stephenson from Connect Michigan encountered car troubles and was not able to make it and proceeded to update the Board members on the Broadband Initiative effort. Paula Ramelis from the EUP ISD was also present and provided an overview of the effort that she, Director Hagan and Carmen Pittenger from the Luce County EDC have undertaken with regard to the Connect Michigan program. An assessment has been conducted as a critical first step to identifying assets, areas of adoption and outlining usage of broadband service, this assessment also outlines availability and services currently provided. The assessment also allows us to identify those areas where services are not provided, underutilized or under capacity. Resulting from the assessment a strategic plan will be developed for each county in the Region. Better internet service has been provided in the Curtis by Lighthouse Computers and Newton Township is considering making the town hall a “hot spot”. Information at meetings has helped both providers and users gain more insight and see how improved internet can improve economic development through home business or at an industrial park as well as improve educational opportunities. Cloverland’s purchase of Edison Sault has also included increased fiber optic opportunities. Discussion by Board members ensued and all agreed this was an important effort worth pursuing to show the State Government how internet should be considered a necessary infrastructure on the same level as electricity, water and roads. The UP Link project was briefly discussed, as well, which would allow video conferencing opportunities throughout the region at designated public agencies. LSSU and the SmartZone have sent letters of support and willingness to be a place that would offer a room for the video conferencing. Locations are currently sought in Mackinac County as well. It was recognized by the Board that accessibility and affordability of internet as well as cell phone capability is extremely important to this region. As technology increases more band width is needed in the communication efforts.

OLD BUSINESS

D. McLean announced that after meeting with State representatives and hearing the incentives that were offered to replace the potential loss in tax revenue when this land became public, both Chippewa and Luce County were more in favor with the Crisp Pt. land deal.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

EDA

- We have been notified that prior to renewal of another 3 year district planning grant we will need to complete a peer review, Lee Shirey our EDR for Michigan will be setting up this review for early May (probably the first week) – the board chair, staff and a member of the REDAC will need to be present and participate in the review. There will be numerous items that staff will need to prepare for our peer review organization prior to the review.
- The 2013 CEDS Annual Update call for projects was mailed out late last week to all units of government, economic development organizations and various non-profits in the Region.
- St. Ignace DDA strategic plan technical assistance requested
- Mackinac County Master Plan 5-Year Review / Plan Update – underway.

MSU EXPORTING

- The Bi-National Conference on economic development was a big success with over 100 attendees during the 1 ½ day conference, hosted as part of the Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance meeting.
- MSU has completed work on the regional exporting strategies, which will be reviewed by the REDAC and incorporated as an appendices.
- The MSU exporting grant was amended and extended through December 31, 2013, during this amendment phase we will be working with LSSU to develop a product database and website to internationally market products manufactured in the Eastern UP. MSU has also incorporated in the scope of work a 2nd Annual Bi-
National Conference on economic development, it appears this will take place during the last week of October, 2013.

LITTLE RAPIDS NOAA GLRI PROJECT
- Early November open house at LSSU, over 70 attendees
- Still controversy over why federal funds being spent on habitat restoration projects
- Hosted the township board for a breakfast meeting on 11-14-12, township supervisor, treasurer, clerk and one trustee attended and expressed their concerns with various aspects of the project.
- Main concern was maintenance of traffic during construction. Circled back to RFP and noted that two lanes of traffic would be required during construction, subsequently URS revised the design plans to add in the 2nd lane of traffic.
- Project review team met several times via conference call to discuss narrowing down the various options, the group agreed to move forward with Alternative “A” which is a 600 ft. opening, with various options within, including – a bridge, box culverts, 3 sided culverts and then either full length fishing, fishing at either end and parking area improvements.
- I attended the Township Board meeting in December, along with a road commission meeting and a EUPTA board meeting to update all parties on the progress to date on the project.
- Public meeting held on January 8th at the Sugar Island Community Center, approximately 50 residents and stakeholders attended. Still a few comments on why federal funding is spent on projects such as these, but far less opposition as the first meeting in November. Beginning to get more Twp. Board support as they better understand the project now through the materials we have provided on the flow modeling etc.
- A small group including myself, LSSU, DNR and Jim Pim from Sugar Island met with Bill Boyne at his home on Friday over lunch, he is one of the more vocal opponents of the project, we heard of concerns regarding recreating in the Little Rapids bay, amongst other things. This was an important informal meeting to have, and in the end I think we came to agreements on some items but he still opposes the project over all but wanted us to know that he respects us and was grateful for us coming over to meet with him.
- At this point we have the various options under alternative “A” on display at the Community Center until the end of February, during this time period we hope to have an editorial printed on the project outlining the history, the funding opportunity and what will be accomplished by this phase of the project and provide a mechanism for residents and stakeholders to provide input to us on what options they would like to see.
- A formal extension on the project was awarded by NOAA through June 30, 2013, we anticipate that the design work and environmental assessment will be wrapped up by the end of April/early May. LSSU will be developing a monitoring plan under this grant and that work should be completed by June 30, 2013.

HEALTH CARE PA 152 RESOLUTION
Director Hagan presented the Board with a Resolution to opt out; D. McLean stated that if the Board didn’t opt out then it would have to consider a compensation package to replace the health care and made the motion to approve the resolution. D. Timmer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

P.A. 152 of 2011 RESOLUTION (#01-2013)

Overview
Director Hagan reviewed Senate Bill 7, Public Act 152, and the options the Act provides for employees paying a portion of their health care costs. Initially, the State was considering ways to reduce health care costs for public school districts. Public Act 152 now applies to limiting the employers’ contribution to medical benefits – does not include dental, vision, or short term disability – and impacts all municipal employees, including teachers, but excludes State employees. The Michigan Townships Association’s position was the law would take effect on the date of the medical plan year beginning on or after January 1, 2012; for the Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission, our annual renewal would be January 1. The Commission must take action to annually decide: (1) to exempt itself under Section 8 of the law; (2) require an employee pay 20% of the annual health care premium; or (3) follow the maximum annual “caps” the Township would pay, which will probably be updated annually with the increase of premiums:

$ 5,500.00 for employees with single person coverage [Township Annual Cost $8,343.00];
$11,000.00 for employees with individual and spouse coverage [Township Annual Cost $18,824.00];
$15,000.00 for employees with family coverage [Township Annual Cost $22,006.00]

WHEREAS, Section 8 of 2011 P.A. 152 authorizes a local unit of government, defined to include the Commission, to by a 2/3 vote of its governing body each year, may exempt itself from the requirements of this act for the next succeeding year.

WHEREAS, the Commission does not receive any Statutory Revenue Sharing, i.e., Economic Vitality Incentive Program (EVIP), School Aid Funding, etc., therefore the Commission would incur no penalty if we exempted ourselves from the requirements of PA 152. To exempt itself from the Statute, the Commission must annually pass a resolution with a 2/3 vote [twelve] of its members at its January meeting annually.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that acting pursuant to the authority granted the Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission under Section 8 of 2011 P.A. 152 the Commission’s Board hereby exempts the Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission for 2013.

**SOLID WASTE COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

Director Hagan updated the Board on the Solid Waste issue that arose when the DEQ sent out letters to those exempted waste facilities being run by local units of government stating they would need to be included in the Solid Waste Plan or go through a Site Process. Whitefish Township was a recipient of the letter and Director Hagan has been working with the Township Supervisor to resolve the issue.

B. Holmes informed Director Hagan that the new DPW Supervisor would serve on the Solid Waste Committee replacing Bill Glims appointment.

D. Reid wondered about recycling options for Mackinac County as they are losing a facility in the County, and wondered about the possibility of a regional facility. Discussion ensued. D. Timmer said the County’s 1 mill as well as partnership with Mental Health and Sheriff’s department has made Chippewa County’s recycling facility successful and provides more than just recycling in providing jobs for the mentally handicap and community service. G. Kinsella has talked to recyclers on the western end of the U.P. who say that their facilities could be funded by used computer recycling alone. D. Patrick said it was in Clark Township where they lost the volunteer recycling facility because the cost was just too high. Emmet Co. has been successful with a starting County millage of 2 mills for 2 years. Director Hagan said that Smith may be heading in that direction and his facility on M-28 may be the place to set up a regional facility. The information gleaned from EUPRP&DC’s USDA grant in 2008 showed that Mackinac County may be willing to consider a millage, but Luce County was not.

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BOARD APPOINTMENTS
Director Hagan introduced and welcomed Ron Ford to the Board as a Luce Co. Commissioner replacing Mike Herbst. Chippewa County’s Township seat will be up for renewal and if B. Ferguson is still willing and able, he will need to send a letter to the County expressing his interest in remaining on the Board.

After the October meeting it was brought to the Director’s attention that we ought to discuss the composition of this governing board, with each of our counties not at 5 commissioners, Luce County would like to discuss moving to one county commissioner from each county with one designated alternate. It appears from the by-laws that the county commissioner requirements were established when the Commission was established in the late 1960’s when I am certain each county board was much larger than they are today. Current board composition is as follows:
Chippewa (6 members) – 2 county board, 1 city of SSM, 1 township, 2 private
Luce (4 members) – 2 county board, 1 village of Newberry, 1 private sector
Mackinac (5 members) – 2 county board, 1 city of St. Ignace, 1 township, 1 private sector
Other members: LSSU, MSU Extension, Workforce, Chambers of Commerce, other higher ed

At this point if the board wants to discuss this further the Executive Committee should meet either with each County Board or our reps from those boards to determine the interest in modifying the membership requirements. D. Patrick expressed her opinion as there is value in two as they may see things differently and would like to continue with the two. R. Ford also agreed with that saying a variety of experience is brought to the table. The Board unanimously agreed to leave it as it is.

PUBLIC COMMENTS
D. Reid wondered about the Mascoma Project and progress. The project was delayed due to the filing of a federal lawsuit by a resident of Kinross, the case was ultimately thrown out and it appears the project will move forward during the 2nd quarter of 2013 with groundbreaking.

B. Holmes updated the Board on the Newberry Streetscape project moving forward with request for bids going out in March. Seven grants were obtained to get the funding in place and the Village is applying for 2 more enhancement and passport recreation grants for the Community Recreation Center.

N. Coon briefly updated the Board on GIS activities in Chippewa and Mackinac Counties and progress by subcontractor on the parcel layer GIS digital transfer and announced the U.P. GIS User conference will be held in Sault Ste. Marie this time instead of Marquette and is tentatively scheduled for end of March/early April. Also EUPRP&DC has been approached by Bay Mills and the Sault Tribe for partnership on GIS projects.

ADJOURNMENT
Next meeting date was announced to be 9 AM, April 24, 2013, at Russell’s Diner.

Motion made by D. Timmer to adjourn the meeting, supported by B. Ferguson. Meeting adjourned at 1:45 PM.