Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission
Board Meeting
Wednesday, July 28, 2010
5:00 p.m. McGowan’s Restaurant, Trout Lake, MI

Members Present:
Jim Hendricks, SSM
Dick Timmer, Chippewa
Jeff Holt, SSM Tribe
Bill Ferguson, Chippewa
Don McLean, Chippewa

Dean Reid, Mackinac
Michelle Walk, Mackinac MSU
Jim Durm, Moran Twp.

Jill Maki, Luce
Rita Lemanek, Luce
Billie Jo Hermanson, Luce
Bev Holmes, Newberry

Guests:
Jesse Knoll, Chippewa

Staff:
Jeff Hagan
Ellen Benoit
Nathan Fazer

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Chairman Timmer at 5:15 p.m.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chairman Timmer asked if anyone would like to make any changes to the agenda. There were none. A motion to approve the agenda was made by J. Hendricks and supported by J. Durm. It was approved unanimously.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Chairman Timmer asked if there was any discussion on the Minutes from the April 28, 2010 EUPRPDC Board meeting that was sent along in the packet. Being no additions or deletions to the minutes, a motion was made by Commissioner Durm to approve the minutes as presented, and was supported by Commissioner Reid. The motion was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS -

Chippewa County – Chairman Timmer - Renovations are underway on the City/County building. A energy grant was received to update the boiler system with a more energy efficient system. Mascoma is holding a meeting tonight in Kinross. The anticipated schedule of starting construction in the 2nd Quarter of next year is still on track. The Farmers Market is going very well in the Sault and is growing out of the space already. There are 6 markets throughout the area. Commissioner Timmer expressed his desire to see economic growth in this industry and the spin-off businesses. Commissioner Walk said the Mott Group is starting up a statewide project in September called “Scaling Up Local Food”, where they will create a team to work with local growers to increase value-added output as well as look at other infrastructure to help with producing home-made products. Bay Mills Community College is looking into developing the property out on M-221 into an agricultural incubator type situation where tribal members can use the land to grow and produce their own food.
Commissioner Ferguson – In Whitefish Township, preparations are underway for the blueberry festival to be held the 3rd weekend in August. The new emergency generator has been installed in the community town hall.

Commissioner Holt – talked about the SummerFest the Sault Tribe recently held. There were some issues, such as parking, but such was to be expected for the first time. The Tribe will continue to learn and improve to make this an annual event and expand to outlying areas. They are still crunching the numbers but it was a big draw of people to the area and initial figures indicate it was a successful event. The Sault Tribe recently had an election and now has 4 new Board Members.

Commissioner Hendricks – The City Planning office worked on the energy grant with the County for the boiler systems upgrades in the new City building as well as the City/County Building. A new firm has taken over the old Sault Plastics building in the Industrial Park. AMI hopes to employ 40 this first year and possibly 160 in the 2nd/3rd year. They have a contract to make parts for GM. Downtown is busy with construction of the CSO road work and healthcare facilities. The new doctor building will be attached to the parking deck and the hospital with overhead walkways. A question was asked regarding the LSSU plan for using municipal waste in a new heating system. They are looking at the possibility of a feasibility study, and issues of cost and raising the capital are being discussed.

Commissioner McLean talked about the need to develop a cost projection of what it would take to perhaps provide an additional staff person at EUPRP&DC that the Counties could share in for a grant writer/administrator. There seems to be a need in Chippewa County to assure that grant requirements are being met as well as pursuing more funding. This is the time of year the Counties are discussing their financial budgets and would be a good time to plant the seed of sharing services such as this and GIS so that the Counties can possibly put this in the budget in the future.

Luce County – Commissioner Hermanson – talked about a group coming in to the Ericson Center to put on a play this weekend.

Commissioner Lemanek informed the Board the Luce County EDC got the okay to go ahead and get bids for expansion of the Industrial Park. They had received a $1.5 million grant.

Commissioner Holmes talked about the grant projects the Village has been working on. Grant applications were made to MDNRE for fire equipment, brush chipper, sidewalk repair, plow truck and street sweeper/vacuum. Public hearings have been held. The Village also received a USDA grant to change the street lights to LED lighting in efforts to become more energy efficient. The CAA building is up and running and a nice improvement to the downtown. Commissioner Holmes agreed that the Ericson Center is a great facility and applauds all the events they have going on there. A question was asked about the brownfield property the Village has been asked to take possession of north of town. They are getting more information on the environmental aspect, but plans are in the works for a Civic Center and concepts are being discussed. Sharon Brown is going to work on a recreation plan for the Village so they can apply for the DNR trust funds.

Mackinac County – Commissioner Reid talked about a new maple syrup operation starting in Hessel, looking for small business assistance.

Commissioner Durm – Moran Township is working on grant/loan package for water improvements and they have been working to meet all the requirements before they can let it out for bid.

Commissioner Walk discussed the changes in the restructuring of the MSU Extension offices. Mackinac County Planning Commission has also been looking into the feasibility of an EDC for the
County, and now is investigating a working relationship with Northern Lakes Economic Alliance from northern Lower Michigan to consolidate and share services. St. Ignace and the Les Cheneaux area have jointly applied and have recently been chosen to be part of a MSU project called “Creating Entrepreneurial Communities”. It’s a 3 year project where MSU will provide training and coaching to get communities to look at where the gaps are at providing services to entrepreneurs. It fits in with what was discussed at the new economy training and regional growth strategies and the intent is not only to benefit those 2 communities but to share the information and what is learned with the whole region.

OLD BUSINESS - PROGRAM REPORTS

Chairman Timmer asked if everyone had a chance to review the program update report that was included in the mailing of the Board packet and were there any questions and or comments?

Staff reports included updates on the Economic Development Program, Transportation Program, Heritage Route Program, Asset Management Program, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs Program, GIS Inventory for Chippewa County, Community Development Block Grant Technical Assistance Program, Dafter and Bay Mills Township Master Plans, Whitefish Township and Luce County Wildfire Protection Plans and Chippewa County Communication Asset inventory project, Chippewa County 5 Year update of the Natural Hazards Plan, Portage Township’s CDBG-Infrastructure Capacity Enhancement (ICE) grant application, Marquette Township Master Plan and application for Coastal Zone Management grant.

N. Fazer informed the Board on the GIS activities and the hi-resolution aerial imagery concept that is being discussed. The Counties in the region had been approached by an aerial photography firm and discussions were being held at possibly trying to get the whole region flown with multi-agencies sharing the cost. Research has found that funding through federal programs has dried up. A rough estimate on costs depending on the level of resolution and accuracy for the region is $180,000 - $260,000. These hi-resolution photos can be used by various departments for planning and GIS activities – equalization, road commissions, health departments, addressing, 911, etc.

Commissioner Reid talked about attending a biomass conference at which the concern was raised for keeping track of these types of businesses that crop up on a regional basis and wondered if that could be kept track of through GIS.

FINANCIAL REPORT -

E. Benoit explained the current financial status. A financial packet was mailed with the Board Packet so it could be reviewed. This packet included financial reports on the status of the Agency as of June 30, 2010. One report showed the expenses for the fiscal year from October 1, 2009-June 30, 2010. The second report broke each program down individually from start date to June 30. Also included in the financial information was a listing of all checks written for the quarter. A projected budget for fiscal year 2010-11 was passed around.

A motion to approve the financial report as given was made by Commissioner Hendricks, and supported by Commissioner McLean. The motion was unanimously approved.
DIRECTOR’S REPORT

EDA – This grant was renewed as of July 1, 2010 which will run until June 30, 2013 in the amount of $276,977, the federal proportion being $193,884 and local match requirement of $83,093. That included the $10,000 supplemental increase that was awarded last year. There is also the potential for an additional increase depending on the bill going through legislature at this time. We continue to work with City of SSM Planning on their EDA grant in providing the requirements and additional information needed. EDA is restructuring their application process to reduce the time it takes to process these grants. EDA is drastically changing the way their grant process functions, typically it takes 291.5 days from the time of application until an award is made, on a webinar with Asst. Secretary Fernandez, he indicated there will now be 4 funding rounds annually, with a target of 63 days from application to approval, and applicants should know within 30 days whether or not their project will move to the 2nd level of further consideration. Fernandez also indicated he is doing away with the “Invitation to Apply” process, he feels that if communities/applicants have a worthy project they should not have to wait to be invited to apply. Staff has a detailed power point on the new process, which they hope to fully implement beginning October 1, 2010. If anyone would like a copy please contact the Commission office or email us.

Director has been working with a small group of stakeholders that attended the 101, 201 and 301 new economy workshops that LPI and MSU Extension held in the region this spring to develop the EUP Regional Growth Strategy, this effort will take existing plans such as the RIG and the CEDS and blend them utilizing existing strategies and goals and objectives. The first cut of broad strategies and tactics is due to LPI by July 29, 2010, so this is on a very fast track. We will have more time to vet out additional information and tactics during August and early September, with a final deliverable due to LPI by early October.

We began working with Marquette Twp. on their master plan and assisting the planning commission with a draft ordinance for wind turbines. Due to the death of the Chairman of the planning commission the timeline is unknown at this time.

MSU is setting up educational workshops in St. Ignace regarding land leases for energy or minerals.

We are currently involved in three active FHWA Scenic Byway projects, two on behalf of the Tahquamenon Scenic Heritage Route Committee (2007 and 2009) and one with the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society. The 2007 and 2009 grants appear to be inching closer towards obligation, which would authorize work to begin after October 1, 2010. Issues still remain with cash/in-kind match on the 2007 grant but the 2009 project should definitely be ready to move forward on October 1, 2010. The GLSHS project has hit a significant roadblock in the form of a letter of adverse effect resulting from our SHPO Section 106 Environmental Review. This project is for the preliminary design engineering to implement the Human Use and Natural Resource Management Plan for Whitefish Point. We will facilitate a meeting amongst GLSHS, MDOT and FHWA on the next steps for this project as FHWA will be working directly with SHPO.

The RPC coordinated a meeting at the request of Pat Lockwood and Carol Steffani in the Governor’s office for the Local Shared Public Services Initiative that the Governor has kicked off, they have held several similar sessions across the state to promote collaboration and sharing of services amongst units of government state-wide. At the current time the role we will play is to do an initial intake on any potential concepts, projects or ideas from communities to share services, after an initial determination on whether the proposed shared service meets the state’s criteria, we would then forward it along to the MML Foundation, and for their appraisal, if successful at the MML-F level, then
the MML-F would award a grant to pay for 50% of the expenses of doing a feasibility study, etc. with the local units of governments paying the other 50%.

A request for the Board to approve a resolution allowing staff member E. Benoit to purchase 5 years of service credit into the MERS retirement plan was made. The purchase would be made by a fund roll-over of the current IRA held by Ms. Benoit. Commissioner Hermanson made a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Reid supported the motion. It passed unanimously.

Director Hagan discussed several of the new and potential programs under consideration in the FY 2011 budget. The budget process is still taking shape and there are several relative unknowns in terms of grants applied for, that we have yet to hear back on any potential award. It does appear that most of the core programs will remain intact (EDA-secured, TRAN PLAN, ASSET, HERITAGE ROUTE). The CDBG program is an annual toss up, MCA is not known at this time. We have several other multi-year projects we will continue to work on through the next year, including:

- Marquette Township Master Plan Update - $2,900
- Continuation of the Whitefish Twp. and Luce County Wildfire Protection Plans
- Portage Township ICE Grant Administration - $5,000
- Potential: 2007 and 2009 Scenic Byways grants (EUP would receive $7,800 for administration)
- CZM Proposal (January 2011) - $46,000 if funded
- Rural Business Opportunity Grant through MSU - $27,000 if funded

After attending a conference on preparing financial statements/preventing embezzlement staff learned the current policies that are in place for the Agency could be improved. Some discussion had been held at previous meetings regarding the By-Laws. Director Hagan expressed a desire to have the Executive Committee meet at least four times annually in addition to the regular Board meetings, with perhaps two of those meetings as conference calls. The staff would review the current policies and develop an improved draft and work with the Executive Committee to bring before the entire Board. Potential dates were discussed.

Director Hagan updated the Board on board positions that have been filled since the last meeting, Jeff Holt has replaced Michele Hank as the Minority Representative (from Sault Tribe), due to Ms. Hank’s recent resignation due to employment outside of the State. In addition, Greg Zimmerman, Dean Reid and Billie Joe Hermanson have all accepted an invitation to serve another term as private-sector representatives from their respective County’s. Eric Dodson and Jim Hendricks terms have both long since expired, the Director has been in contact with Kelly Church at the Chippewa County Administrator’s office to see about re-appointing Jim Hendricks. Per recommendation from Gwen Worley at EUP Michigan Works! I have sent a letter of invitation to Jo Anne Lussier to serve as a representative from Workforce Development.

Director Hagan put forth a recommendation that beginning with fiscal year 2011 the Executive Committee meet no less than four times annually, with the meeting dates falling between our regularly scheduled quarterly Board meetings; and at minimum two of these being face-to-face.

November 24, 2010 (a.m. conference call); March 30, 2011; June 29, 2011 (conf call); September 28, 2011

Director Hagan brought to the Board’s attention recent information pertaining to the Regional Planning Act and action that the Michigan Association of Planning Law Committee is taking to work with Mark Wyckoff and others to re-write the Regional Planning Act, we do not yet know what changes are being proposed but have been told by MAP that we will be “in the loop” and able to
Director Hagan stressed the importance of keeping tabs on this, particularly in this environment of dwindling resources and the apparent rise of “unfunded mandates”.

Director Hagan updated the Board on his recent submission of materials for nomination on the Michigan Association of Planning’s Board of Directors; at the current time there is only one rep from Region One (1) which encompasses all of northern lower Michigan and the entire UP, this combined by what the Director views as a severe lack of public sector planning representation and, furthermore, lack of any representation of the Regional Planning Commission’s in Michigan, has prompted him to seek this opportunity. Elections are held prior to the Annual Conference in October.

The Board discussed a letter of support request from Northern Michigan University regarding their pursuit of federal funding to establish a UP Wide Center for Community and Economic Development, this was initially sent around last winter and at that time it was viewed as a serious threat to the Region’s federal economic development program and the work that is done through the EDD program,. It appears they have made some adjustments in exactly what they propose to do, but really have not addressed the issue of how they will work with the other 4 year institutions in the U.P. to form this UP wide center. This could result in competition for the RPC; because the University can use its massive pool of research expertise and cheap labor in the form of students to essentially do many of the things we do already, which we are doing at a very low cost to our constituents. LSSU is just now embarking on more involvement in economic development with the recent designation of the SmartZone, we are very active with the PDC and Smart Inc. in terms of grant writing and with the City along these same lines. Director Hagan is unsure as to how this effort at NMU would benefit us or compete with what is already going on. We have been assured that this will be a resource for us, but we have not received any confirmation that LSSU has been integrally involved in this process or the pursuit of the EDA University Center. They want to increase the flow of resources to the RPC’s in the U.P. At the current time the Board elected to take no official action on the request.

The next meeting date was set for 10/27/10 at 5 PM at McGowan’s Restaurant.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Maki with support from Commissioner Lemanek. The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM.