

Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning & Development Commission
Board Meeting
May 31, 2006
6:30 P.M. Maple Ridge Restaurant, Eckerman

Commissioners present: Rodney Richards, Rich Conboy, Bernard LaJoie, Bill Ferguson, Dawn Nelson, Sharon Brown
Staff: John Campbell, Ellen Benoit, Jeff Hagan

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Richards at 6:45 p.m.

Commissioner Lajoie made the motion to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2006 EUPRPDC meeting, supported by Commissioner Ferguson, the motion passed unanimously.

Financial Report – E. Benoit

Staff reported on the various grant funded programs currently being administered by the Region. Motion by Commissioner Lajoie, supported by Commissioner Conboy to accept the financial report as given. Motion passed unanimously.

Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs Minigrant Program – E.Benoit

The MCA mini-grant program was renewed for the upcoming fiscal year (06-07), there will only be two rounds this year. Staff presented a resolution for support, motion by Commission Conboy to support this resolution, supported by Commission Nelson, the motion passed unanimously.

TRANSPORTATION UPDATES

North Huron Scenic Pathway

We have been to three meetings of a recently formed committee that is looking at the feasibility of constructing/developing a pathway from St. Ignace to Drummond Island. The group originated out of the Cedarville area, initially to develop a pathway between Hessel and Cedarville, they were successful in obtaining a grant from the National Parks Service to receive technical assistance. This led into a larger discussion of creating this much LARGER pathway. Currently the group is attempting locate funding to do a preliminary feasibility study, which would lead into development of the pathway and is working with MDOT and the Region in developing an RFP for the feasibility study.

Tahquamenon Scenic Heritage Route

We continue to meet with the TSHR Committee, working towards completion of the updated Scenic Heritage Route Management Plan, next meeting will be held in late July, at which time we hope to have completed a set of draft maps, displaying amenities, signage and other resources within the Route. Management plan is on schedule to be completed by August, and reviewed by the committee, and then submitted to MDOT in Lansing for official designation.

Asset Management

Staff continues to work with Chippewa County Road Commission in submitting their internet reporting data and their born-on date information, as a component of the Asset Management program. Looks like we will also be assisting the City of St. Ignace in submitting their internet reporting as well.

MDOT's Transportation Asset Management Council will be conducting their regular business meeting in the Sault on June 7th, at the Ojibway Hotel, the council will meet in the afternoon, however, in the morning there will be a presentation by myself, Mike Lusk and Ellen Benoit on our experiences in performing the PASER ratings over the course of the past 2-3 years, we will also focus on a few segments in Chippewa County where there were some discrepancies in our rating versus what the MDOT quality control person came up with. This will be followed by an overview of the Asset Management program. See the handout for more details, if you are interested in attending please let me know by Friday (June 2nd). Lunch will be provided as well as a tour of the new border crossing station, after the meeting (2-3pm).

Bike Mapping (Non-Motorized Facility Mapping Project) – Jeff Hagan/Ellen Benoit

The consultant for this project prepared a draft map, which was displayed at the meeting, some discussion ensued regarding the potential of “customizing” the map to include more local features, instead of all the “prescribed” look and feel that MDOT is requiring. Map is on schedule to be completed later this summer.

Easterday Ave./ 3 Mile Road I-75 Overpasses – Jeff Hagan/John Campbell

One meeting was held between URS, the consultant on the project and the Bridge Study committee to review the work completed to date, first round of traffic/pedestrian counts was completed, 2nd round is currently being scheduled. During the last meeting, URS shared with the committee the software they use to input the traffic count info, was pretty impressive. Appears as though the study is on schedule to be completed by the October deadline. If anyone has any recently completed traffic studies in the vicinity of either overpass (3 Mile or Easterday) please let us know.

Economic Development Report – Jeff Hagan

Grant proposal for Fiscal Year 2006 was submitted to EDA in May; indications are that the EDD will be funded once again. Several changes loom on the horizon for this program, the handout being distributed illustrates some of the changes that are going to be required in the make-up of our governing board, John and I have reviewed these requirements and for the Regional Planning Commission, it is not going to result in any significant changes, the requirement of 35% from Private Sector will probably be met using current appointees. However, they are now requiring that our Regional CEDS Committee be composed of no less than 50% private sector representatives, in the past we have used the Tri-County EDC's as the CEDS Committee, and in looking at those boards, most already contain 50% (or more) private sector, might run into problems in Mackinac County, because they do not have a full nine (9) member board currently.

In addition the added private sector participation, EDA is making significant changes to how the CEDS is developed, they are looking at projects that are “regionally significant economic development projects which meet the following list of investment guidelines:

- Are market based
- Proactive investments
- Economic changes and diversification
- Private Capital investments
- High probability of success and includes:
 - A high level of local, state or private matching funds
 - A high degree of commitment of local political capital by elected officials
 - A high level of commitment of human resources to project outcomes
 - Higher-Wage/Higher-Skilled Jobs created
 - Return on taxpayer investment

Some regions are making radical changes to the way they take input on projects, however, I see this a bit differently, in that I will attempt to identify any projects that fit the above criteria, and too that end we will have to change some of the project information forms we include in our annual call for projects, but we will still send out surveys, meet with community leaders and take input on any number of projects and continue to include them in the CEDS report. One of the recommendations is that we meet with economic development leaders and obtain project input from them, well this is something we already do and have been doing for the past 4+ years, typically I go out and meet with the three County EDC directors, and the City of SSM EDC to discuss high priority projects, and various other issues related to economic development, for inclusion in the CEDS. This report is still a valuable tool for communities attempting to obtain grant funding from federal or state sources, not just EDA.

Approval was given by the executive board on a resolution for the region to apply for EDA Planning Grant funding, via telephone/email votes on or about April 24, 2006 (see handout). At this time we would like to present this resolution of support to the entire commission and request your approval.

Motion was made by Commissioner Conboy to pass a resolution of support for the Region's application to EDA for continuation of the Section 203 Planning Grant. Supported by Commission LaJoie, the motion passed unanimously.

Several potential projects are still in the hopper, including:

DeTour Village EDC Business Park (recent \$89,000 USDA Grant/Loan), they are currently timbering a portion of the parcel they acquired for this development, but they are having difficulties in managing the project, and are unsure that the Township/Village has the resources to hire a consultant engineer to assist them as they move forward.

Luce County EDC continues to explore funding resources for their industrial park expansion.

The Kretz Lumber project was approved, and awarded a \$120,000 grant from MEDC in the form of CDBG funds, for rehabilitating two buildings at the Chippewa County EDC's Industrial Park at Kincheloe. More information can be found in the news release

UPCOMING EVENTS

Michigan Township's Association will be holding a Broadband Conference at LSSU on Tuesday June 20th, see handout for full details.

Director's Report – John Campbell

Director Campbell discussed in further detail the changes in the EDA reg's and what they will ultimately mean for the Region, and also discussed the continued need to update the Regional Land Use Analysis, which staff have been working on updating for the past several months. This type of plan will be key for the region in obtaining any federal grants in the coming years. As any application will most likely need to be supported by some type of investment strategy or analysis.

Director Campbell then updated the Commission on the recently held Zoning Enabling Act workshop held in St. Ignace, there was much fanfare prior to this event about the changes within the zoning acts and how they were all repealed and replaced by one single zoning act. In all reality the changes are not significant, and the region is more than capable of assisting communities who need to make the necessary changes to their current zoning ordinances. Was suggested by Commissioner LaJoie to send a letter out to all of our constituents offering our assistance if needed.

The Solid Waste Committee met in May to discuss the potential of Republic Waste entering the EUP as a recognized hauler of solid waste. This issue was brought to the table by Moran Township and Mackinac County. However, this would require an amendment of the Solid Waste Management Plan, as a result of the meeting, the Committee voted 6-1 to not proceed with the amendment process. This was due in large part to some politicking prior to the meeting by Waste Management officials, who painted a rather doom-and-gloom picture if any competition were introduced within the Region. Commissioner Nelson indicated that Mackinac County intends to appeal this decision.

There is also a need to appoint two (2) members to the Solid Waste Committee. Mackinac County will be addressing that at their next board meeting.

Commissioner Brown inquired about the possibility of setting up some type of recycling program in Luce County, discussion ensued regarding a past recycling effort in the County that was not successful, but, that perhaps now is the time to renew such a program, as the Sault's Recycling Center has indicated that they have the capacity to handle recycling from Luce County. Would probably require some kind of County millage. Staff will look into the potential of getting a program set up and report back to Commissioner Brown on the status.

New Business

There being no new business brought before the Commission, a motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Ferguson, supported by Chairman Nelson. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.