

Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission
Board Meeting
Wednesday, October 22, 2008
6:00 p.m. McGowan's Restaurant, Trout Lake, MI

Present: William Ferguson, Bernard LaJoie, Mike Patrick, Earl Kay, Dawn Nelson, Billie Jo Hermanson, Rodney Richards

Regrets: Jim Hendricks, Greg Zimmerman, Ward Pulfrey

Staff: Jeff Hagan, Ellen Benoit, Nathan Fazer

Guest: Tina Kay

Meeting called to order by Chairman Richards at 6:15 p.m.

Chairman Richards asked for any public comments or questions, there were none.

Chairman Richards asked if there was any discussion on the Minutes from the August 27, 2008 EUPRPDC Board meeting that was sent along in the packet. Being no additions or deletions, a motion was made by Commissioner LaJoie to approve the minutes as presented, and was supported by Commissioner Nelson. The motion was unanimously approved.

FINANCIAL REPORT - Ellen Benoit presented the Board members with the current financial report on the various projects and programs underway at the Regional Planning Commission. A breakdown for each program from starting date to the present showing the expenses to date and the amount of time in each program as well as a total overall fiscal year (October – September) was provided. The program year has ended on September 30th and we are starting a new fiscal year. A budget was presented for the new fiscal year showing the projected amount of income expected for each program.

A motion to approve the financial report as given was made by Commissioner Patrick, and supported by Commissioner LaJoie. The motion was unanimously approved.

PROGRAM UPDATES

MCACA - E. Benoit reported that the agency had received its award announcement for this grant program. The funding level remained the same for both administration and re-granting. The first round deadline was August 1 and one application was received from the Bayliss Library. At the last meeting we were waiting for the review panel's recommendation. Since then, all of the review panel members recommended full funding of \$4,000. That project is a Poetry Café and has been started with 4 more scheduled poetry readings and workshops.

EDA – Staff members attended a great meeting of the State Association of Regions on Mackinac Island in late September to meet with other Regional Planning Commissions from across the country and their state associations in an effort to raise the visibility of our Association, which has long been functioning on a volunteer basis and not making much progress towards sustaining the Regions.

The RPC Director and a staff member attended a meeting in Mackinaw City to meet with several scholars from Michigan State University regarding a project they intend to work with us on to transform our Regional Economic Development Strategy, also known as the CEDS. This will be an 18-month project and will include the development of what they've termed "co-learning" plan and include detailed information on the recent Knowledge Economy index, overall it will help us to better align public and private investment priorities and really make our current report more strategic. Through this process

we will also be creating a Strategy Committee, a long standing requirement by EDA which we fulfilled by using our County EDC's, however, since only two thirds of our service area has a functioning EDC, Director Hagan thinks this will be a good thing. The committee will include EDC Directors/Staff, Workforce Development, Elected Officials, Community College Reps, LSSU, DDA, Chambers, Private Business interests, and the Tribes.

TRANSPORTATION – Staff continues to provide technical assistance to the Safe Routes to School effort amongst JKL School and Lincoln School, future potential districts include Pickford Area Schools.

Staff assisted the Chippewa County Health Department in drafting an RFP and reviewing proposals for a non-motorized facility from Pt. Iroquois Lighthouse to Sault Ste. Marie, this fell through due to lack of grant funding. Six proposals were submitted.

Staff continues to provide technical assistance as requested to the Superior Shores Trail group out of Brimley as the attempt to move forward, the group will be conducting a walkable audit from Pt. Iroquois to the Ellen Marshall health center next Tuesday morning beginning at 9am.

HERITAGE ROUTE – Scenic Byways grant has been delayed until spring of 2009 when the funding in the amount of \$74,597 will be “re-obligated” to the Scenic Heritage Route Committee. We will be working with the Committee during this fiscal year to implement some of the projects identified in the Management Plan, such as a website, brochures and two gateway entry signs. The Committee will meet next in mid-January with Velvet Green Productions to talk in more detail about development of a website for the Route.

RPC Director attended a Statewide Heritage Routes Conference in late September, it was fantastic opportunity to meet with many folks from all across the state who are involved with Heritage Routes and gained some great perspectives on what they're doing in their respective areas. Two pieces of information were enclosed in the meeting packet from the conference regarding byways.

RPC is assisting the local stakeholder committee to move forward on development of the Corridor Management Plan for M-134 from I-75 to Drummond Island, we have met with the committee down there and are currently trying to identify other stakeholders or partners to serve on the committee as we move forward. Our next meeting is scheduled for December 3rd at 9 am at the Clark Township Hall in Cedarville.

ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAM – N. Fazer reported that the yearly PASER ratings were completed on October 9, finishing up with Chippewa County. Mr. Fazer will continue working on the Regional Plan over the next few months, as well as providing assistance to the County Road Commissions on the Internet Investment Tool. Mr. Fazer also reported on an Asset Management workshop for elected officials being held across the state. One workshop is already planned for a Township in Mackinac County in conjunction with the MTA meeting on December 1, 2008. Mr. Fazer hopes to contact County Commissioners and well as County Road Commissioners to try to get more regional officials to this workshop.

CDBG – Contract from MEDC was received during September for this technical assistance program and are currently working with our Regional Account Manager to identify work items we can assist her with as well as the typical assistance we provide to communities or businesses in the region that are interested in the program. We have provided technical assistance on the following projects to date: Superior Fabrication building expansion/rehab, EUP Shavings business location/building rehab, MasComa, City of Mackinac Island Wastewater Treatment Plant, Clark Township Tax Abatement inquiry. Our Regional Account Manager (Cathi Cole) located out of Sagola, has recently been assigned duties from the Community Assistance Team (CAT) which provides many programs specifically for downtown districts, years ago our agency was contracted through MEDC to provide technical

assistance on these same programs, as a result I suspect we will be quite involved with our Regional person in providing T.A. to her as she beings to familiarize herself with the programs.

The City of Sault Ste. Marie and LSSU were awarded one of the three new SmartZones in the State of Michigan, it was an open competition and they are to be commended for this effort, the City will be working closely with the Prototype Development Center at LSSU, which was established with 21st Century Jobs fund dollars within the past 18 months. The SmartZone allows for recapture of tax dollars which would typically go to Lansing and functions similar to a TIFA district, where the recaptured taxes are reinvested into the Breeder building or incubator complex. There will be a CEO or Executive Director of the SmartZone, who will actively market and promote it, in an effort to attract companies with a similar vision and products as the PDC at LSSU. This will allow prototypes developed at the University to be brought to markets and patented. The only other Smartzone in the U.P. is located in Houghton/Hancock in partnership with Michigan Tech and has resulted in the creation of approximately 400 jobs and millions of dollars in private investment, and public investment into building rehab, construction and infrastructure improvements for companies locating in to the SmartZone.

NON-MOTORIZED INVESTMENT STRATEGY – The non-motorized investment strategy is currently being worked on. The outline for the strategy has been developed and now background, demographics, region profile, existing facilities are currently under development. The Trail Summit was a huge success with almost 60 participants. The speakers did a great job and inspired enthusiasm and new determination to get our area involved with trail development. Because Sault Ste. Marie was designated “A Cool City” we were able to coordinate a “walkability audit” by a nationally renowned specialist, Dan Burden. The group from Sault Ste. Marie took a long walk around the city and Mr. Burden presented his report later in the afternoon. He had a lot of good suggestions and examples and will be making a more detailed report available. Information from the summit has been placed on the web-site for download. Staff will now set up meetings around the area with State/Fed. agencies – MDOT, DNR, USFS and local units of governments, recreation committees and local trail initiative groups. A draft plan will then be submitted to each relevant agency/group and workshops will be set up to go over the draft plan. Any revisions will be incorporated and a final plan will be presented for public review before final printing.

SOLID WASTE PLANNING GRANT – USDA grant agreement was received in late August, total grant award of \$40,000 (\$8,000 local in-kind/cash match). We are currently undergoing a routine compliance review from USDA prior to being allowed to incur any costs on this grant, not sure of the timeline, hopefully soon it will be completed and we can schedule a kick-off meeting, I have been in touch with several folks in Luce and Mackinac County’s that are eager to move forward with this project. The first several months will be spent working with the committee to develop educational materials about recycling. The 2nd phase is to hold community workshops and school-level presentations regarding recycling in these Counties.

Solid Waste Plan Amendment Update - EUP Solid Waste Planning Committee met in early September with officials from Republic Waste Services to find out what their plans are for our Region. Came out of the meeting with no clear-cut information on what they are doing or what areas they are targeting other than St. Ignace/Moran. Representatives have indicated they will send us information on their landfill, i.e. hours of operation, types of materials accepted, location, so that we would have that information available for anyone requesting it, to date no information has been submitted.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

- Fraud Policy – having been brought to our attention by the last audit, the Agency needs a policy on fraud and inappropriate conduct. A draft fraud policy was submitted to each Board member in the packet that was received in the mail. There are some questions for the Board members to determine as to who would be the person responsible for reporting to, and deciding what actions should be taken. It was agreed that any suspected fraud should be reported to the Executive

Director or any member of the Executive Committee. If the Executive Director can, a resolution may be concluded in-house, otherwise the entire Executive Committee may have to meet to determine if an investigation is warranted. With the blanks filled in Commissioner Nelson moved to adopt the Fraud Policy as presented. Commissioner Patrick seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- SSM/Soo Township Access Management Study – Study has been completed, final copies are available at our offices or for download from our website.
- USFS Whitefish Bay Scenic Byway Plan - RPC has been awarded a contract through the USFS to complete a corridor management plan of the Curley Lewis Highway, from M-123 to the Pt. Iroquois Lighthouse (vicinity); the plan will be structured very similar to the Scenic Heritage Route Plan recently completed for M-123. Total contract is \$10,000. Plan will be completed by early to mid spring.
- Mascoma Project - RPC Director had the opportunity to meet with EDA officials from our Chicago Regional Office with regards to projects in our Region. We continue to work with Mackinac Island on their WWTP upgrade proposal, the Mascoma officials recently announced that they have selected a site in Kinross, it will be a parcel of land on the north-east side of Gaines Hwy, the land swap is currently being hammered out with DNR officials. The Governor also recently announced an additional \$26 million in investment from the Federal Dept. of Energy as part of her renewable energy portfolio legislation. This brings the public portion of the investments to about \$50 million. We have been approached by the Township regarding concerns with water and wastewater treatment; because of the size of this proposed establishment it is going to require significant upgrades in public infrastructure in Kinross, upwards of \$14 million.

OTHER BUSINESS –

The members were asked a preference on the meeting place, as the Maple Ridge Restaurant had limited winter hours. Trout Lake had the next most central area with a restaurant. It was agreed that McGowan's Restaurant was a suitable place to meet in the future.

Motion to adjourn this meeting at 7:50 p.m. was made by Commissioner Kay, supported by Commissioner LaJoie. Meeting was adjourned.