

**Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission
Board Meeting
Wednesday, August 27, 2008
6:30 p.m. Maple Ridge Restaurant, Eckerman, MI**

Present: William Ferguson, Bernard LaJoie, Dean Reid, James Hendricks, Dawn Nelson, Billie Jo Hermanson, Greg Zimmerman.

Regrets: Mike Patrick, Michelle Walk, Rodney Richards

Staff: Jeff Hagan, Ellen Benoit, Nathan Fazer

Guest: Mike Tackett, MERS

Meeting called to order by Vice Chair Nelson at 6:35 p.m.

Vice Chair Nelson asked for any public comments or questions, there were none.

Vice Chair Nelson asked if there was any discussion on the minutes from the April 30, 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 Reid. The motion was unanimously approved.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

After introductions of Board Members, Director Hagan introduced the guest representative from the MERS retirement pension plan. Director Hagan explained that due to legislative changes our pension provider will no longer accept funds into the current retirement plan and so after much research, has concluded that the Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) provided the best retirement plan option for the Planning Commission. Several other regional agencies in the state as well as Chippewa and Mackinac County were contributing to the MERS plan. Discussion and questions were asked of Mr. Tackett, which he answered explaining more details of the plan and background of the company. A consideration for the Board was - would any liability be created for the Company. It was concluded that with the current level of contributions the plan would be more than 100% funded and no liability would be incurred. The employee would be responsible for buying in previous years of service but would be credited those years for vesting purposes. After some discussion, the Board members agreed that it would actually be no change for the Company except for the place of investment.

Existing retirement plan, the 403(b) will be converted to an IRA and available to current employees, they can make contributions to this account on their own up to the allowable limit annually, as specified by the IRS.

A motion to adopt the Municipal Employees Retirement System Defined Benefits Program with a B-3 Multiplier, FAC of 5 years, Normal Retirement Age of 60 and a Vesting Period of 10 years by Bernie LaJoie, supported by Jim Hendricks, roll call vote:

Dean Reid-yes; Jim Hendricks-yes; William Ferguson-yes; Bernie LaJoie-yes, Billie Jo Hermanson-yes; Greg Zimmerman-yes; Dawn Nelson-yes.

The following resolutions were also adopted by the Board of Directors:

Resolution for defining a day or work or hours per month for MERS retirement purposes.

Resolution adopting Act 88

Funding Control Membership Agreement Resolution

Roll call vote:

Dean Reid-yes; Jim Hendricks-yes; William Ferguson-yes; Bernie LaJoie-yes, Billie Jo Hermanson-yes; Greg Zimmerman-yes; Dawn Nelson-yes.

Resolution For Adopting MERS Defined Benefits Programs

Resolution to Exclude Temporary Employees from Membership in MERS Under Plan Document Section 3(2)

Resolution Directing Electronic Payment of Invoices to the MERS System

Roll call vote:

Dean Reid-yes; Jim Hendricks-yes; William Ferguson-yes; Bernie LaJoie-yes, Billie Jo Hermanson-yes; Greg Zimmerman-yes; Dawn Nelson-yes.

Membership Agreement Resolution

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.

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

PROGRAM UPDATES

MCACA - E. Benoit presented the Board with the funding plan for the First Round of FY 09. There was one application received from the Bayliss Library. The reviewers have it in their hands and should be getting back by the end of the week for a funding or no funding decision and in what amount. Four reviewers – one from each county and an outside evaluator, score the application and an average of the funding recommendation is taken. The Commission still has not heard back on the application that was submitted for administering the program, but expects it to go through for the same amount as FY 08.

EDA – CEDS Annual Update was completed in June and submitted to EDA Chicago, copies of the report are available on our website at www.eup-planning.org, if anyone desires a hard copy, please call or email the office and one will be sent out.

Three current projects that we are involved in with EDA potential for funding, 1) Mackinac Island Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrades, 2) Masscoma/Kinross Charter Township, 3) Luce County Industrial Park infrastructure improvements.

Other local projects: Bay Mills Recreation Plan, Pickford Township Master Plan (start 9/1/08)

TRANSPORTATION – Local Projects – Safe Routes to School (SSM Area Schools/JKL Bahwaeting), Superior Fabrication TEDF Application

Technical Assistance to MDOT – Superior Fabrication TEDF application, TSC Summit-May, MDOT Spring mailing-May, facilitated one meeting amongst the co-chairs of the NHSP and MDOT officials in Newberry.

HERITAGE ROUTE – We are continuing to provide technical assistance to the TSHR Committee, working on a brochure, potential website, gateway signage and the Scenic Byways grant, which was approved in the amount of \$74,597, however, due to concerns from FHWA over the use of in-kind match in our proposal, this has caused a significant delay requiring additional paperwork and commitment letters which had to be obtained from any entity in our proposal that cited in-kind services or materials for match, rather than cash. We were given an August 6th deadline to come up with the information, which we did, but were subsequently informed by our State Director at MDOT that we would be gambling that FHWA would be able to certify on our in-kind match by September 30th, if they did not approve of it by then we would lose the grant award entirely, if we gave then a return obligation, then we would be re-obligated in FY09, which begins October 1st. We could not afford to take a chance with FHWA and lose out on the \$75,000 completely, so the Committee voted to return the obligation. In the long run, it does not set back our efforts to construct interpretive amenities at the Eckerman or Hamilton Lake sites at all, as the work was not projected to begin until late fall.

We have begun to meet with a group representing the M-134 corridor to start the process of developing a Corridor Management Plan and application for designation of M-134 as a Recreational Heritage Route. Two meetings have been held to date, next meeting is scheduled for 10/8/08 at 9 am at the Clark Township Hall.

Asset Management Program - Fazer updated the board on the progress of the Asset Management program, to date, Luce County, Mackinac County and the City of Sault Ste. Marie have had their PASER ratings completed, we are awaiting staff at the Chippewa County Road Commission, in order to move forward with completing ratings there. This year there was more emphasis on training so only ½ of the roads are being rate. The training included asset management based training and internet reporting training, wherein Act 51 agencies utilize an on-line tool to report road improvements or investments to the State. Mr. Fazer will be preparing an Annual Report for review by the Commission at a future meeting and once all the PASER has been completed.

North Huron Scenic Pathway – Preliminary engineering report has been completed, copies of the report were sent to each contributing entity, EUP has copies on disk available at the office. Will also try to post to the web (large file size may hinder this effort).

Non-Motorized Investment Strategy– E. Benoit reported that the date for the Trail Summit has been set for September 10, 12-5 PM. This meeting will be our kick-off for the development of the Regional Investment Strategy. We will have several speakers talking about trail development, what's happening in N. Lower Michigan and funding sources. We will make contacts with groups across the region to meet with in the future and get details on local community trail plans. We also are coordinating with the City of SSM and having a "walkability audit" of the city done by Dan Burden, Director of Walkable Communities, who will have a presentation of the results at the end of the summit meeting.

SSM/Soo Twp. Access Management Study – Final draft of the SSM/Soo Township Access Management Study was presented at a public hearing last Wednesday at LSSU, comments/changes received at this meeting are being reviewed by the consultants, copies of the report are available for review at Bayliss Library, City Hall and our office, the report can also be downloaded from our website www.eup-planning.org.

CDBG – We continue to provide technical assistance to communities with potential CDBG projects, however, we have no contract in hand for the program, we received a letter in March indicating that a contract would be forthcoming, unfortunately, there has been some turnover at MEDC and the State coordinator of this program has left, we are spending conservatively in this program, in the event that the money does not come through. 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.

Solid Waste – After considerable discussions and back and forth with the DEQ, in late June regarding whether or not we followed the appropriate protocol in Amending the Regional Solid Waste Plan, the plan was approved on Monday August 4th by the DEQ Director. Republic Waste Services is now an approved hauler and disposal option within the EUP Region, and Hiawatha Shores Landfill is also an approved disposal site within the Region.

Apparently Republic Waste Services has “bought” a majority of the shares of Allied Waste Systems, which has caused Waste Management to make a public offer on Republic shares, I do not yet know how this will all play out, but the press releases I have read from Republic seem to indicate they are holding firm and will not be bought out by Waste Management.

There are no local implications of the Republic/Allied merger as Allied Waste does not have any landfills within our Region or in northern Lower Michigan.

Sherrie Davie called yesterday to congratulate us on our approved USDA Solid Waste Planning grant to do a Recycling Education and Outreach program in Mackinac and Luce County's. This will entail development of educational materials and presentations to school districts in Mackinac and Luce Counties and a series of community outreach sessions in each county. Staff at the Chippewa County Recycling Center are involved in this effort and will be reimbursed through the grant for related expenses. Total grant award is \$40,000.

FY 09 Budget Review

Director Hagan went through the various projects and programs for the 2009 fiscal year, which begins October 1, 2008.

Base programs were sustained for 2009 including:

EDA District Planning Grant (year 2 of 3) \$78,040
Transportation Planning (MDOT) \$36,000
Asset Management (MDOT) \$20,000
Heritage Route (MDOT) \$30,000
MCA Mini-Grant Program \$6,800 (administration)

New programs/projects:

USDA Grant – Recycling Education/Outreach \$40,000 (\$8,000 local match) = \$48,000
USFS Whitefish Bay Scenic Byway CMP - \$10,000
Pickford Township Master Plan - \$1,500
Non-Motorized Investment Plan (MDOT) \$30,000 –year 2

Salary Review:

Director Hagan made a recommendation to the board for a cost-of-living increase of 4.22% for all full-time staff members, effective October 1, 2008 (beginning of FY2009), which is the national Cost Of Living Increase for the first six months of 2008. The staff has worked very hard on many projects

across the region this past year and collectively we have worked diligently to secure additional funding sources in order to sustain agency functions for FY2009.

B. LaJoie made a motion to approve the Director's recommendation for salary adjustments for the beginning of the fiscal year. D. Reid supported the motion. A roll call vote was taken:

Dean Reid-yes; Jim Hendricks-yes; William Ferguson-yes; Bernie LaJoie-yes, Billie Jo Hermanson-yes; Greg Zimmerman-yes; Dawn Nelson-yes.

Other business –

J. Hendricks informed the board of a grant that several agencies are collaborating on. The Centers for Regional Excellence grant will provide funding for a collaborative marketing project called the EUP Maritime Experience. A meeting is being held tomorrow for anyone who wants to attend. He asked for a motion to have the board approve a letter of support from this agency. A motion was made by B. LaJoie and J. Hendricks supported the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Reid reiterated a need for a regional energy plan or study for the area. Director Hagan has done some research for funding sources for such a project, but has not found anything as yet, and will continue to research it.

The next Regional Commission Board meeting is scheduled for October 29, 2008 however, due to a conflict Director Hagan asked the commission if this could be changed to October 22. The time was also discussed and it was agreed that the next meeting of the Regional Planning Commission would be held on October 22, 2008 at 6 PM here at the Maple Ridge Restaurant.

Motion to adjourn this meeting at 8:55 p.m. was made by Commissioner Reid, supported by Commissioner LaJoie. Meeting was adjourned.