

Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission
Board Meeting
Wednesday, January 28, 2009
6:00 p.m. McGowan's Restaurant, Trout Lake, MI

Present: William Ferguson, Richard Timmer, Mike Patrick, Dawn Nelson, Billie Jo Hermanson, Rodney Richards, Greg Zimmerman, Michelle Hank, Dean Reid

Staff: Jeff Hagan, Ellen Benoit, Nathan Fazer

Guest: Sue Bowlby, Anderson, Tackman Inc.

Meeting called to order by Chairman Richards at 6:11 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 October 22, 2008 EUPRPDC Board meeting that was sent along in the packet. Being no additions or deletions, a motion was made by Commissioner Reid to approve the minutes as presented, and was supported by Commissioner Nelson. The motion was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Reid requested a change in the Agenda format explaining he would like to see after the Financial Report – an item entitled “Old Business” – MAR Workshop Attendance, Program Reports and reports on County projects, then New Business – Energy Grants. Commissioner Reid moved that this change be made to the agenda, Commissioner Timmer supported and it passed unanimously. It was agreed that future agendas will follow a similar format (old business, new business, program reports).

FINANCIAL REPORT - Sue Bowlby, CPA from Anderson, Tackman presented and explained the financial statements for FY 2008 covering the period October, 2007 through September, 2008 the Commission's fiscal year. Questions were asked and responded to regarding FDIC insurance and security of funding if the bank should fail. It was agreed that the Agency funds were not large enough to exceed the coverage.

E. Benoit explained the current financial status. Two financial reports were passed out – one showing each program's expenses from inception to date and a second report showing the expenses from the start of the new fiscal year October 1, 2008 to date. As of this time the Agency is spending slightly less than the budget and is checking into the possibility of sub-contracting some work and/or hiring part-time college students for some GIS work.

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

OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Reid discussed with the Board the Michigan Association of Regions Meeting he attended with Director Hagan. It was a very informative meeting with round table discussions and an opportunity to meet the other regions across Michigan, the National Association of Development Organizations Director and the EDA Chicago Regional Office Director. Furthermore Commissioner Reid indicated that he gained valuable insights on ways we can improve the effectiveness of the Regional Planning Commission board. Grant opportunities, economic development, web site development and labor shed studies were some of the topics that were covered. Commissioner Reid went on to say he would like to see an Annual Report created for the Board and recommended that the RPC could utilize students from the area colleges in order to fill part-time temporary positions as projects/programs dictate.

Commissioner Reid also expressed an interest in keeping the Mascoma Project in the forefront and discussing it at future meetings as it may provide more opportunities for smaller business operations throughout the region.

Commissioner Reid also discussed the need for a broadband coverage map so County or Townships could use it as a tool in recruiting new businesses.

COUNTY REPORTS

Commissioner Nelson reported that in Mackinac County they are having their first meeting to re-organize and start up the Mackinac Co. EDC. They are hoping to develop a revolving loan fund. However, Mrs. Nelson also indicated that they hope to develop some goals and objectives for this body before appointing members to serve on the EDC board.

Commissioner Reid added that St. Ignace is considering a Community College (the Great Lakes Center for Lifelong Learning) for the area. Project Burn-UP through the U.P. RC&D council, a pre-feasibility study that was developed for the St. Ignace School, which has taken the next step to overhaul their heating system with woody biomass. The Council is currently pursuing other school districts and entities to conduct pre-feasibility studies. RPC staff will assist the RC&D council in contacting other school districts, etc.

Commissioner Reid also announced the Hiawatha Sportsmans Club approved towers for testing wind energy. Discussion ensued on need for more information/education for property owners considering leasing land for these wind turbines.

NEW BUSINESS

The Department of Energy has a grant opportunity available for renewable energy grants, there are several topic areas for which entities can apply, Commission Reid recommended RPC staff work with other stakeholders in this area within the Region to apply for an education and outreach grant. The deadline is early March. Commissioner Reid moved to have Director Hagan explore it further and potentially develop a proposal to submit for funding. Commissioner Nelson moved to accept the motion and it was passed unanimously.

PROGRAM UPDATES

MCACA - E. Benoit reported that the second round deadline is February 1 and has already received two grant applications one of which was a new applicant, the new snowmobile museum in Naubinway. There has also been numerous requests for applications. It is fairly typical state-wide that the second round gets more applications than the first round although there is a better chance in the first round for funding and the opportunity to fix items and re-apply in the second round if not funded the first time.

EDA – Director Hagan talked about the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Report that is a required component of our EDA Economic Development District Planning grant and the current project underway through the MSU Center for Community and Economic Development, to overhaul the current CEDS report, we are taking this opportunity to restructure the Region CEDS Committee, which will now be known as the REDAC, and meet at least 2-3 time annually. Probably a few more times this first year as we transition into the Comprehensive Intelligence Development Strategy report development, which will incorporate more of the research and data compiled by MSU for the Knowledge Economy Reports. REDAC orientation will be held on Wednesday, February 11th from 1-3:30pm at LSSU. Board members are welcome to attend to learn more about the project.

Director Hagan is continuing to provide assistance on two projects that may qualify for EDA funding, the Mackinac Island WWTP upgrades, although there are indications that they will be pursuing State

Revolving Fund for this project. The second is an expansion of the Luce County Industrial Park, which looks like EDA is seriously considering funding this expansion, as they seem to be contacting either RP&DC or Carmen Pittenger, daily with requests for information.

We are working through Kathy Noel at the Chippewa County EDC to identify potential grant funds to assist with the placement of needed infrastructure for the Mascoma Cellulosic Ethanol Refinery, which will be located off Gaines Hwy. in Kinross Charter Township, right now road, water, sewer, rail spur, and utility infrastructure is needed. Approximate project cost \$13 million, not including improvements to Gaines Hwy.

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.

HERITAGE ROUTE – M-134 Heritage Route Corridor Management Plan. Work continues on the mapping products that will be included in the plan, estimate the CMP draft to be completed by September.

RPC Staff continues to provide technical assistance to the Tahquamenon Scenic Heritage Route committee, still awaiting re-obligation of the Scenic Byways Award of '07. Committee is also looking at developing a website, through the Scenic Byways award and has created a sub-committee to work on this project.

SCENIC BYWAYS – Staff is currently putting together several applications for potential funding through the National Scenic Byways program, this is discretionary funding that comes through MDOT to existing Heritage Routes to fulfill goals, objectives and identified projects in the Corridor Management Plans. One project proposes a preliminary engineering study for a bike path from Pt. Iroquois to Brimley State Park, another proposes to build gateway signage and the 3rd and 4th are tied to the Great Waters eco-tourism marketing and promotional efforts.

ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAM – N. Fazer reported that he worked with Chippewa County in getting the Act 51 roads rated in October and also worked with the City of Sault Ste. Marie in rating all their local roads. The City seems to be very interested in using the Asset Management tool and is gathering information on the current infrastructure to add in the database. The Road Commissions and Cities are required to report their spending and projections with a new tool developed by the Center for Geographic Information (CGI). The training for this internet tool will be February 25 at the Avery Square from 9:30 to noon.

CDBG – Funding is provided through the MEDC, in the amount of \$11,640 annually. This program provides funding in the form of technical assistance to communities with eligible CDBG projects. Grant funds are tied heavily to job creation.

NON-MOTORIZED INVESTMENT STRATEGY – E. Benoit talked about the status of the Non-Motorized Investment Strategy. The chapter outlines have been developed and started. Contact has been made with stakeholders in gathering information for future road construction projects in the next five years. Recreation plans, master plans, zoning ordinances, land use plans are being reviewed and community profiles being developed. The next step is to hold Community Forums to get the local governments, stakeholders, trail groups, recreation committees together to develop plans and priorities for their area. We will then incorporate this information together and see where overlap opportunities exist to incorporate non-motorized planning grants into the future projects. The draft plan will then be sent out for review.

SOLID WASTE PLANNING GRANT – Just completed the first quarter for the Recycling education and outreach program, this grant funding, in the amount of \$40,000 is provided by USDA Rural Development. Focus is to develop an educational program in Luce and Mackinac County's and conduct school-aged presentations and community-level workshops. We will be working with Superior

Watershed Partnership to develop materials and conduct the outreach sessions this spring and into the summer.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

In Director Hagan's review of the current by-laws it has become apparent that they do not conform to EDA requirements in terms of the composition of our governing board. EDA requires that 35% of the board be private sector/chamber of commerce/secondary education.

Another item for concern within the by-laws is the stipulation on attendance. Last year we received one FOIA request for all board minutes and attendance records. The attendance requirement has not been enforced during my tenure. Director Hagan recommended the Executive Committee conduct a workshop to review the by-laws and make recommendations on changes for consideration by the full board at the July 22nd, 2009 meeting.

STIMULUS

Notices were sent out for requests for projects that merit stimulus funding consideration; to date we have submitted the EUP CEDS Priority projects list to the Representative Cuishingberry, and our EDA Chicago Regional Office. EDA is particularly interested in projects that could be initiated on or around July 1, 2009. These projects need to have cost estimates, preliminary engineering completed and local match commitments identified. EDA will issue partial waivers of the local share requirement, up to 90% or higher, must state your case for reduction of local share.

Stimulus is going to allow EDA to clear the current backlog of projects in their pipeline (estimated to be somewhere around 300 projects), this will greatly free up their annual allocation of funding, there is good potential for projects to be funded in the region, but we must get organized and obtain accurate project information.

\$41 billion for energy upgrades to existing government buildings
\$31 billion for building upgrades
\$1 billion to HUD
\$250 million to EDA
\$35 billion to Dept. of Energy – energy planning/efficiency projects
\$30 billion to FHWA
\$6 billion for transit projects
\$1 billion for wireless/broadband development
\$1 billion for the WIRED program
\$6 billion for weatherization

30-60 days to get contracts signed (with State offices)

30-120 days to obligate funds (from State to local entities)

Waived local share on almost all programs – States can still institute match requirements.

A spreadsheet is currently being circulated by the Michigan Association of Counties and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, if you have projects that are "ready-to-go" in your area, Director Hagan encouraged the board to fill this inventory sheet out and either email, fax or mail it to us prior to February 2nd, or email to inventory@michigan.gov. The state is trying to systematically identify potential projects for stimulus funding, outside of what is outlined above for specific programs, agencies.

WEBSITE REDESIGN – Our website was recently completely overhauled by Velvet Green Creations in Newberry, Director Hagan encouraged everyone if they have not done so already, to take a look at the

new site, it is truly amazing and contains a wealth of good information on the various programs, projects and services offered by EUP.

MAR POLICY REPRESENTATIVES:

At the Michigan Association of Regions Policy Workshop in Mt. Pleasant last week, it was requested of each Region to appoint one primary and one alternate member of our board to serve as the Policy Representative to MAR. The State Association is taking very serious steps to become a more relevant and viable entity. Typically MAR meets about 6-8 times per year, it was suggested at this past workshop that the policy people could meet 3-4 times annually, in conjunction with regular MAR meetings. Right now, the MAR meetings consist of the Executive Directors. The meetings are normally held in Lansing but there has been talk of rotating them around, perhaps having a portion of them in Lansing, some in Mt. Pleasant, and possibly even farther north. Director Hagan tries to attend at least every other meeting as his schedule permits. It is the hope that by re-engaging the policy/board members of our organizations we can make better in-roads to other statewide organizations such as MAC, MTA and MML, since these organizations are representative of our board membership. Chairman Richards asked for any volunteers to serve on this committee, Commissioner Reid expressed an interest and was nominated for this representation.

Regarding authorized signatories for check signing: former Board member Bernie LaJoie indicated that he could remain as an authorized signer on the checking account, in the case that primary signers are not available, historically we have had four signers, three of which live in Sault Ste. Marie, in order to expedite signing checks for payroll bi-weekly. The Board agreed to leave Mr. LaJoie on the account until the April meeting, at which time we will re-visit the signatories and make any necessary changes.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

REDAC Orientation Session – 2/11/09, 1pm-3:30pm, LSSU, Cisler Center, Anchor Room
MAC Legislative Conference - February 8-10, Holiday Inn South Lansing
MEDA Capitol Day – February 17th, Lansing Center, Lansing
DNR Recreation Grant workshop – February 23, Gaylord, MI and February 24, Munising, 10am-1pm
MML 2009 Capitol Conference – March 3-4, Lansing

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A motion was made by Commissioner Hermanson to elect Dawn Nelson as the Chairperson for FY 09. Commissioner Timmer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Commission Patrick to elect Richard Timmer for Vice Chairman and was seconded by D. Nelson. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Reid made a motion to elect Billie Jo Hermanson as Treasurer, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Richards and passed unanimously.

Commission Timmer made a motion to elect Dean Reid as Secretary with a second from Commissioner Patrick. The motion passed unanimously.

It was agreed that Michelle Hank would continue to provide representation as a minority representative.

OTHER BUSINESS –

Meeting dates for the year were set for April 29, July 22 and October 28, 2009. Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Patrick supported by Commissioner Timmer. The meeting was adjourned at 9 P.M.