

**Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission**  
**Board Meeting**  
**Wednesday, April 29, 2009**  
**6:00 p.m. Maple Ridge Restaurant, Eckerman, MI**

Present: William Ferguson, Richard Timmer, Mike Patrick, Dawn Nelson, Billie Jo Hermanson, Rodney Richards, Dean Reid, Jim Moore, Don McLean, Jim Hendricks

Staff: Jeff Hagan, Ellen Benoit

Meeting called to order by Chairman Nelson at 6:04 p.m.

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

Chairman Nelson asked if there was any discussion on the Minutes from the January 28, 2009 EUPRPDC Board meeting that was sent along in the packet. Being no additions or deletions, a motion was made by Commissioner Patrick to approve the minutes as presented, and was supported by Commissioner Richards. The motion was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Reid wondered if at this time in the agenda we should include a time for any requests for additions or changes to the agenda. Chairman Nelson suggested that in the future if a member wanted any items discussed on the agenda they notify staff prior to the meeting if possible which would help keep the length of the meeting to a reasonable time frame to allow members time to drive back, but would entertain such a motion. A motion to make an agenda item change to include a time after Public Comments for changes to the agenda was made by M. Patrick and seconded by J. Hendricks. The motion was passed unanimously.

**FINANCIAL REPORT -**

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.

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

**OLD BUSINESS - PROGRAM REPORTS/COUNTY REPORTS**

Chairman Nelson 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:

EDA – During the past quarter (January-March '09) staff successfully created the Regional Economic Development Advisory Committee, which is composed of both public and private sector representatives from across the Region. The first meeting of this Committee was held on February 11<sup>th</sup> at LSSU wherein the committee learned in more detail about the project we are working on with the MSU Center for Community and Econ. Dev., to overhaul the current CEDS report and incorporate datasets related to the Knowledge Economy for the Eastern U.P. The PowerPoint presentations from this session are available for download on our website at [www.eup-planning.org](http://www.eup-planning.org)

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 (now known as Frontier Renewable Resources), 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.

Staff was also involved in a conference call with the Lake Superior Community Partnership regarding a renewable energy strategic plan they are currently developing with ATC. This white paper will be forwarded to the Michigan Wind Energy Zone Board. This group meets in Marquette twice a month, and we have been invited to either sit in or call in to these meetings as needed. Staff continues to work with communities in assistance with making EDA grants/loan applications.

TRANSPORTATION – continue working with and providing technical assistance to local and state regarding transportation issues and determining potential stimulus projects. RPC Staff attending the Rural Task force meeting in Sault Ste. Marie, along with the Chippewa County Road Commission, Sault Tribe, MDOT and the City of Sault Ste. Marie to discuss priority projects for 2009 and 2010, as well as potential stimulus projects. It was determined from this meeting that Oak Street in Sault Ste. Marie and Baker Side Road (from Six Mile to Three Mile) would be the priority projects for regular Rural Task force funding consideration. In terms of potential Stimulus, the City identified Seymour from Marquette to 3 Mile as a priority and the CCRC identified Shunk Road from 3 Mile to 5 mile as being a priority.

RPC staff continues to provide technical assistance to the Superior Shores Trail Development committee in Brimley regarding the potential for a non-motorized trail along 6 Mile/Lakeshore Drive from the Brimley State Park to Point Iroquois Lighthouse.

RPC staff attended a day-long Safe Routes to School training workshop in the Sault during February, and continues to sit on the SR2S committee for JKL school. We received one call of interest from the Whitefish Township School, it appears that there is interest from school districts region wide for this program. It would be ideal if there could be a coordinating agency to help the districts (i.e. the ISD) in completing the grant requirements/application process, as it is lengthy.

HERITAGE ROUTES – continue working with M-134 group on a M-134 Heritage Route Corridor Management Plan. Continue with M-123 Heritage Route group in trying to get a Scenic Byways grant that was awarded in '07 but was told it had to be turned back so they could re-obligate it in '08. Issues have arisen regarding the amount and what could be included as in-kind match. The amount of the grant is considerably reduced from the original amount that was awarded.

We continue to proceed with the development of the M-134 Heritage Route Corridor Management Plan (CMP). Inventory maps are nearly completed, we anticipate meeting with the Committee in May to review a draft of the first few sections of the Plan.

During the past quarter RPC staff submitted two grant applications on behalf of the M-123 Scenic Heritage Route Committee for funding consideration through the FHWA National Scenic Byways program, one for a preliminary engineering study for the Superior Shores Trail (proposed from Brimley State Park to Pt. Iroquois Lighthouse) and the other along the Tahquamenon Scenic Heritage Route (M-123) to further promote, market and interpret the Native American history along the route. This would include maps, website enhancements, audio tours, and access to learning lodges.

NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION PLANNING – staff continues in the development of this investment strategy plan – including research of existing recreation/master/transportation plans, inventory of existing facilities and preparation for community input session that were held in the beginning of April.

ASSET MANAGEMENT – staff works with local road commissions and cities/villages in preparation for the up-coming road rating. We continue to encourage the use of this tool in managing the transportation network and more townships in the region seem to be taking an interest.

CDBG – Through the CDBG program we are currently providing technical assistance on several projects, including the Mascoma/FRR project, and smaller projects at the Chippewa County Industrial Park. This program provides funding in the form of technical assistance to communities with eligible CDBG projects. Staff attended a meeting with Kevin Bonds, the new CDBG program coordinator and Lansing MEDC staff in early April to discuss the Technical Assistance program, it appears as though this funding will continue on for 2010 and we are looking forward to working with Mr. Bonds and his staff moving forward.

SOLID WASTE PLANNING GRANT – this program, although off to a slow start has made progress on tasks items to be accomplished. A committee was set up, a partnership established with Superior Watershed Partnership, and materials and presentations have been and are currently being developed. RPC staff had a booth with promotional items and information on this recycling at the HOME Show in St. Ignace April 17-18<sup>th</sup>. Promotional items related to recycling will also be available at the aforementioned events. Future presentations will be made in several schools in Luce and Mackinac Counties as well as to local groups and communities.

WHITEFISH BAY SCENIC CORRIDOR PLAN – Staff continued to develop this Corridor Management Plan for the US Forest Service for the Curly Lewis Highway, similar to the Heritage Route Corridor plan. The first draft of this plan was submitted to USFS and revisions are currently being made and we hope to have the plan completed by the end of May '09. The plan will then be integrated into the Tahquamenon Scenic Heritage Route plan to update amenities and attractions found along the Curley Lewis Highway.

PICKFORD TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN – Staff completed the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of a community input survey for Pickford Township and received over 60 responses, this information will be combined with a previous survey effort, and its' results analyzed with the Township's Planning Commission. We are also working on updating the Land Use and Future Land Use maps for the Township, which will be reviewed at a meeting in mid-April with the Planning Commission. Developing these mapping products has proven to be time consuming as all of the current land use maps had had to be digitized into Arcview, our GIS software because they were developed in the early to mid 1970's. We are still anticipating a May/early June 1<sup>st</sup> draft completion, wherein the plan will enter a 63 day review and comment period.

MCACA – staff continues to administer the '09 re-granting program. Funding was cut for 2010 and we will not know the future of this program until the legislature has the budget set.

STIMULUS – staff continues to assist communities in getting their projects on the list for stimulus money.

Commissioner Hermanson asked Director Hagan if he knew anything regarding hi-speed internet and if the rural areas in the region had any opportunities to get it. Director Hagan talked about a webinar that attended regarding broadband access in rural areas and one of the new technologies discussed was Broadband Over Power Lines, it appears that this technology is such that broadband can be run over existing power lines and working with rural electric co-operatives will be happening and will be the best opportunity for our region. President Obama is also pledging staggering amounts of funding through the ARRA for investments in Broadband accessibility and capacity.

## **COUNTY REPORTS –**

Mackinac County – projects include Mackinac Straits Hospital, continuing efforts to revive County EDC, and possible private towers being erected in Naubinway/Engadine/Gould City for cell phone.

Chippewa County – LSSU and War Memorial Hospital has shown an interest in using municipal waste and/or wood chips as fuel for a cogeneration steam heat system.

Luce County - Dry Kiln Plant has closed down, LP has laid off 8 workers and has went down to a 5 day 1-shift week. A new pellet plant is considering moving into the industrial park.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

EDA/Knowledge Economy/REDAC

We held our first ever REDAC meeting in February at LSSU, over 25 people attended, including rep's from Senator Levin and Stabenow's offices. This group will serve as the advisory committee for future economic development strategies, i.e. the CEDS.

Director Hagan discussed the presentation he gave on the Knowledge Economy and its implications here in the EUP at the Rural and Small Towns Conference in Thompsonville last week. Approximately 25-30 attended each of the two sessions.

Co-Learning Plans are currently being developed and we are working with MSU CCED staff to identify how we tackle each one. From the orientation session we identified seven major items we need technical assistance/capacity building/training on:

Broadband accessibility/availability

Training – specific to the health care industry

Green Jobs

Talent Capacity

Social Networking – the ability to inform the population outside of the room you're sitting in.

Exporting/Globalization

Venture Capital – what currently exists?

## **Stimulus Update:**

Federal programs and agencies are continuing to provide details on the emerging allocation of stimulus funds they are receiving. The FED has reported that on or around May 20 agencies will begin reporting their competitive grants and contracts. It's believed that organizations will be between 60-120 days to respond to these announcements and apply for funding. EDA: Received \$150 million, \$100 for public works and \$50 for economic adjustment which provides a wide range of technical, planning and infrastructure assistance in regions experiencing adverse economic changes that may occur suddenly or over time.

USDA: No word yet on an actual dollar amount, but my conversation with Duane Reid he indicated that the funds will be split 50/50% between 2009 and 2010 and go into EXISTING programs.

MDOT:

M-48 from M-129 to M-134 guardrail replacement - \$172,000

M-28 from Luce CL to M-123 restore/rehab - \$3.5 million

M-28 from Borgstrom Rd. to Luce CL – restore/rehab - \$2.1 million

M-134 from I-75 to Hessel – resurface - \$3.7 million

M-129 from M-80 to 10 Mile – crush/reshape - \$4.2 million

## **Update on Board Directives:**

### **Office space**

Detailed update was provided on available properties, cost structures and available amenities at each location.

**Dept. of Energy Grant** – not pursued due to the stringent nature of the “Primary Investigative entity”.

**By-Laws** –would like to potentially set up an executive committee meeting just prior to our July board meeting to discuss recommended changes, any additional changes in the by-laws and board membership.

**Legislative Updates:**

House Bill 4677/4678 and Senate Bills 388/389 deal with the Parks Passport option, which would allow individuals to also purchase a Permit to enter state parks for \$10. The DNR is proposing this measure to provide funding to sustain the State Parks which are currently running at a deficit. The Tahquamenon Scenic Heritage Route offered a letter in support of these pieces of legislation in early April. However, it has come to our attention that the legislation has come under fire from the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the County Road Association of Michigan (CRAM). CRAM is calling this measure the equivalent of a tax and is threatening to sue citing the State constitution’s direction that taxes imposed on vehicle registration must go to road funds.

Discussions continue in Lansing on the future shape of DNR and DEQ. Both are facing shortfalls and do not expect to see any new funds coming any time soon. Rumor has it that there is some talk of re-consolidating the departments, but has been met with resistance from both departments.

**OTHER BUSINESS –**

Commissioner Reid talked about the Prosperity Conference he attended in early April in Lansing.

Commissioner McLean talked about USDA meat inspection location being in Escanaba and what an inconvenience it is for meat cutting businesses in the EUP to have to travel there for inspections. RPC staff will look into this matter and see if there is any possibility of working with USDA to set something up in the EUP Region.

Commissioner Timmer talked about web-site link to Corp of Engineers site, to somehow make it easier for local contractors to be included in any potential RFP’s.

D. Hagan requested the July meeting set for the 22<sup>nd</sup> be changed as he had a conflict on that date. A July 15<sup>th</sup> date was set for the next meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Patrick supported by Commissioner Timmer. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 P.M.