

**Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission
Board Meeting
Wednesday, July 15, 2009
6:00 p.m. McGowan's Restaurant, Trout Lake, MI**

Present: Richard Timmer, Mike Patrick, Dawn Nelson, Billie Jo Hermanson, Rita Lemanek, Dean Reid, Don McLean, Michelle Hank, William Ferguson

Staff: Jeff Hagan, Ellen Benoit

Meeting called to order by Chairman Nelson at 6:07 p.m.

Chairman Nelson asked if anyone would like to make any changes to the agenda. Being none, Commissioner Patrick made a motion to approve the agenda. It was supported by Commissioner McLean and the motion passed.

Chairman Nelson asked if there was any discussion on the Minutes from the April 29, 2009 EUPRPDC Board meeting that was sent along in the packet. Commissioner Reid asked if the Pickford Township Master Plan had been sent to neighboring Mackinac County for review yet. Director Hagan replied that once the governing body approves the plan it will be available for public review which should happen this month. Being no additions or deletions to the minutes, a motion was made by Commissioner McLean to approve the minutes as presented, and was supported by Commissioner Timmer. The motion was unanimously approved.

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; as some programs have different start dates and timeframes. The second report details the expenses from the start of the new fiscal year October 1, 2008 to date and project the income necessary for the remainder of the fiscal year.

A motion to approve the financial report as given was made by Commissioner Patrick, and supported by Commissioner Timmer, who commented that the financial information was presented in a clear and easy to understand format. 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:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The EDA project with MSU is moving ahead, we are nearly complete with identifying the Co-Learning Plans of action and how we proceed on each of these, included in your handouts is some information on the Broadband development and deployment funds available in the ARRA, MSU is working with a company called ACD.net which will help communities with grant-writing, technical assistance, etc in applying for these funds, if you know of any communities that are interested please me know. We are now transitioning into the portion of the project to completely overhaul our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies, to be in alignment with the Knowledge Economy. This will include KE datasets; focus on broadband etc., with MSU CCED assistance.

In June of 2010 the EUP will submit to EDA a 3-year CEDS report in this new format.

Other economic activities the agency is currently involved with includes liaison activities between EDA representatives and representatives for the SmartZone partnership with the City of SSM and LSSU;

grant research assistance to Chippewa County EDC with the Mascoma Project; involvement with Lake Superior Community Partnership and ATC on a renewable energy integration plan; assisting SSM with review of census numbers for grant application.

Canadian Economic Development Conference

During late May, Director Hagan, rep's from MSU and Commissioner Hendricks attended a very informative session with the Sault Ste. Marie Ontario Economic Development Corporation, FEDNor, SSM Innovation Centre, Development SSM, Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and the SSM Airport. Also attending were delegations from the Central and Western UP, we all gave presentations on our organizations and work programs. This is a first step in a hopefully growing relationship and collaborative internationally. We are working on a follow-up event to host the Canadian delegation in the U.S. this fall.

RIG – To update on another economic development project underway across the UP, the Regional Innovation Grant Draft #1 has been published by NorthStar Economic Development, I attended a meeting to review this draft which contains several structural flaws in terms of both content and missing information. Director Hagan is scheduled to be interviewed on 7-16-09 to provide the consultant with more detailed information on the EUP.

MASCOMA – General update on the Mascoma FRR project, much of their work is still being conducted in the background in terms of preliminary engineering, siting, etc. A big concern right now is the rail spur and potential price tag there. I talked with Kevin Corpi and Steven Hicks at a luncheon in the Sault in late June and both indicated a willingness to meet with RPC staff/board members to provide an update and discuss more how the Region can assist them in locating/applying for funding for the infrastructure for their project. Perhaps Commissioner Reid can fill in some more detail here on the recent UPEDA meeting in Iron Mountain that focused on alternative energy. I downloaded the presentation that Ray Miller gave on forest biomass and what he describes as the plentiful availability of the resource (Michigan grows 30 million cubic meters of wood annually).

TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

Staff continues to work with State and local agencies as needed regarding issues in transportation.

Heritage Route Program

The agency continues working with local multi-jurisdictional group in developing an M-134 Recreational Heritage Route Collaborative Management Plan. This plan will be submitted to MDOT for review and to receive a Heritage Route designation. Agency continues to work with the M-123 Tahquamenon Scenic Heritage group in accomplishing goals and activities set for their road segment. Staff is also continuing to work on the 2007 Scenic Byways grant, which was originally awarded during December 2007.

Asset Management Program

Staff continues to work with local road commissions in rating the road segments necessary this year. Two counties and the City of Sault Ste. Marie have been completed, leaving only one (1) county to finish the rating. Information is then produced in maps and report format and submitted to the state.

Non-Motorized Transportation Investment Strategy Plan

Staff continues in the development of this plan. The draft has been completed and staff will now meet with central and western regions to merge the data together for a U.P.-wide plan.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

Staff continues to provide technical assistance to units of government and eligible agencies for projects regarding job creation and retention.

SOLID WASTE PLANNING GRANT

Staff is working with Superior Watershed Partnership in developing and presenting information on recycling in Mackinac and Luce Counties. A more educational aspect of recycling is presented to the younger citizens in the school systems. A presentation entitled "The Benefits and Feasibility of Recycling in the EUP" has been developed for the community/governmental groups. Presentations are scheduled for Curtis and Newberry on July 21, 2009, other sessions with community groups and governmental units in Luce and Mackinac County's will continue in August and September. We hope to get feedback on public opinion for possibly starting County-wide programs in these two counties.

USFS WHITEFISH BAY SCENIC BYWAY PLAN

Staff has completed this plan for the US Federal Forest Service and is in the final process of creating digital and hard copies for distribution.

PICKFORD TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Staff continue to work with Pickford Township on the development of their Master Plan and will be having a public input session at the community Hay Days held in August.

REGIONAL GIS

Staff is working with Chippewa County and the City of Sault Ste. Marie on a departmental GIS needs assessment survey as well as partnering with LSSU and No Boundaries Maps and Graphics in providing training session on the GIS mapping software.

Commissioner McLean asked about the meat inspection issue that had been touched on at the last meeting. Director Hagan had made some inquiries but had not received any call backs from the Escanaba office. Commissioner McLean informed Director Hagan of a private citizen who may be starting up a slaughterhouse business in Rudyard and suggested he may be a good person to talk to. Director Hagan will follow-up on this for the next meeting.

COUNTY REPORTS –

Mackinac County – progress in continuing on the Mackinac Straits Hospital which will provide a big boost for the County as residents will not necessarily have to travel for their medical needs. Commissioner Reid talked about a UP EDA meeting he attended in June where they learned that the U.P. utility transmissions have a greater tie to Wisconsin than to the Lower Peninsula and that the U.P. will be left out of the renewable energy programs because the inadequate capability of the current transmission lines. Making it even more difficult is the multitude of companies downstate owning different segments of transmission lines. Discussion ensued on this topic concluding with the agreement that improvements to the U.P. utility infrastructure are needed in order to capitalize in this industry.

Chippewa County – Commissioner Ferguson expressed a need to see more county focus on the tourism industry as that is the economic mainstay for Whitefish Township as well as it for many of the communities in the region. Commissioner Patrick informed us of a 5-county promotional campaign that Linda Hoath, SSM Area Visitor and Convention Bureau is working on through the Pure Michigan campaign, communities that entered into this program are generally seeing good increases in tourism traffic.

Commissioner McLean updated the board on efforts being made between Edison Sault Electric and Lake Superior State University to upgrade the aquatics lab into a first rate facility.

The Mascoma project is seeking additional grant and loan funds for infrastructure improvements that will be needed.

Luce County - Commissioner Hermanson informed the Commission of the lumber store closing in Newberry and how the economy is not improving, although the Curtis area has been very

successful this year so far with the tourism economy. Super Wal-Mart will probably have a detrimental affect for other stores in that area as many residents will drive to the Sault for their shopping needs. Commissioner Lemanek commented on the LMAS Health Department cutbacks in service due to reimbursement funds not covering the expenses. Commissioner Lemanek also informed the board that the Luce County Animal Shelter is preparing to open.

Michelle Hank with the Sault Tribe will be conducting a community needs assessment through grant funds recently received; they are also looking at doing a holistic master plan.

Commissioner Reid updated the board on a recent UPEDA meeting he attended in Iron Mountain regarding renewable energy. There is a big push for wind energy potential; this will put increased capacity on the lines. Ray Miller presentation on biomass was very interesting, the concept of tree plantations for use at large operations, such as Mascoma. Federal funds are available to start these plantations.

Commissioner McLean informed the board that Soo Co-Op has a new food distributor, Allied Foods out of Iowa.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Hagan touched on the EDA-MSU project of identifying Co-learning plans and which areas to focus on.

Information was passed out regarding grant opportunities for Broadband development and deployment in rural areas. The Luce Co. EDC is submitting a grant application. The difficulty with broadband is with the license holders. D. McLean suggested Director Hagan talk to Jesse Knoll as he is very informed on this subject.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Nelson asked if there were any public comments at this time. There were none.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Wednesday October 28th. This meeting, which will serve as our "annual meeting" will feature Brett French from American Transmission company, he will be presenting the Renewable Energy Integration Plan for the U.P. to the board.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Timmer supported by Commissioner Patrick. The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 P.M.