

# Keweenaw County Economic Development Committee

Keweenaw County Courthouse

Eagle River, MI, USA

Wednesday, March 6, 2019 Meeting Minutes

(approved April 3, 2019)

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm by Chair Todd Holmstrom, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

- Members present: Tess Ahlborn, Harvey Desnick, Todd Holmstrom, Ned Huwatschek, Peg Kauppi, Joe Miller, Sam Raymond, Kass Simila
- Contributing Members: John Sturos
- Members excused: Matt Kero, Tom Bryant
- BOC Representative: Don Piche, Jim Vivian
- Guests: Jeff Radcliffe (KEDA), Jean Hardy (UofM), Don Kauppi

## 2. Approval of Agenda

*Motion* to approve the agenda by Joe Miller, second by Ned Huwatschek. All in favor, *motion carried*.

## 3. Approval of Minutes

*Motion* to approve the February 6, 2019 meeting minutes; by Kass Simila, second by Peg Kauppi. All in favor, *motion carried*.

## 4. Unfinished Business

### 4a. Priority check-in:

1. broadband development and communications
2. establish a small business revolving loan fund
3. 100 good paying jobs
4. land use issues including zoning and permanent easements
5. workforce development

#### *1. Broadband development and communications*

Tess Ahlborn and Todd Holmstrom met with PFN representatives last month to review the status of the upcoming proposal opportunity for a fiber network in the county. Representatives from PFN will attend the April 3, 2019 EDC to present the proposal and seek input. Depending on many factors, the project, if funded, could be under construction by the summer 2020 with an estimated installation period of 2-3 years.

Todd Holmstrom has been communicating with Eric Smith from NMU's EAN regarding additional broadband development. The EAN will provide a proposal to the EDC and the Keweenaw Co. BOC with configurations for broad coverage from Mt. Horace Greeley, possibly to include Gay, Eagle River and Eagle Harbor. Tower options are needed for Copper Harbor. Implementation could begin as early as summer 2019.

#### *2. Establish a small business revolving loan fund*

No report.

Renamed priority to Website Communications.

### 3. *100 good paying jobs*

Todd Holmstrom provided an update on the MTEC SmartZone concept paper that we reviewed at the February 2019 meeting. He represented the EDC's support of further development of the concept paper to the Keweenaw Co. BOC. Recognizing that Mt. Horace Greeley is both a county asset and a hot spot for environmental concerns, future planning concepts are welcomed and encouraged. Brownfield redevelopment committee members present at the BOC meeting indicated no barriers to moving forward with a concept paper for planning purposes. The concept paper spans a 6-month time frame, and we've completed the first month so we should expect a full proposal within 6-months. Information forthcoming from the Air Force to the County and Brownfield Committee will help with moving forward.

### 4. *Land use issues including zoning and permanent easements*

Joe Miller will provide an email update this month for review at the next meeting.

### 5. *Workforce development*

Kass Simila has been communicating with Michigan Works regarding workforce development opportunities. An update will be provided in future meetings as a new MW employee is working on getting up to speed.

### 4b. EDC Liaison for county website

Todd Holmstrom reported that Rob Tarvis has stepped back from the EDC due to other commitments. A volunteer is needed to coordinate with the county regarding the new website. Harvey Desnick volunteered. Thank you Harvey!

The EDC will have a page on the county website and we will be able to continuously improve content. Discussion proceeded on how do we drive people to the EDC page, how do we get content to excite a broad range of people, how do we connect to the people of the community, how do we communicate effectively? Jean Hardy is currently studying this topic and volunteered to meet with Harvey and others to discuss further. It was suggested to have the page link to the economic outlook document, and other reference pdfs.

It was proposed that the EDC consider someone (possibly a contributing member) that is more linked to the youth of our community. This could be a wonderful opportunity to mentor a student into local government, getting the youth perspective. Could reach out to guidance counselors, or possibly an interested party from the Horizons School. Kass Simila volunteered to follow up with counselors.

## **5. New business**

### a. Guest: Land Swaps in Keweenaw County – Don Kauppi

Don Kauppi, former chair of the Keweenaw County Trails and Recreation Committee, provided a brief history of the previously active committee, and the slow down due to county funding used to support other efforts, namely the KML. The original idea was to create a committee to manage recreational opportunities and funds because Rural Development funding was available to create year-round jobs, although not available for recreation purposes. With private and county support, cross-country ski trails were developed and a terrain park was built. However, once the demise of the KML caused county funding to evaporate, the committee became dormant.

Recent discussions of land swaps between private landholders (TRG) and the State of Michigan have presented an opportunity to reestablish the Trails and Recreation Committee. We have talent in the county to build and manage many types of trails, including ATV and back county skiing. ATV club and the Copper Harbor Trails Club have been working for years to develop trails for four-season use. Kauppi provided maps to describe the 2002 land swap including the acquisition of 7800 acres, and a current land swap concept for the State of Michigan to take possession of 15,000 acres in the county. A revitalized Trails and Recreation Committee would manage these lands for trail access, signage, and development with the goal of making Keweenaw County four-season accessible. Additional activities beyond

managing snowmobile and skiing trails include development of trails for birders, antique sleds, electric sleds and fat tire bikes; development of camping sites and county shelters; and development of other recreational infrastructure improvements that attract economic growth to the county.

Keweenaw County is part of the largest trail system in Michigan, from Copper Harbor to Toivola, which is locally managed and state-owned. It is a big business to take care of washouts, trees down, etc. but it is bringing people from AZ and CT. The State appropriated funds several years ago to purchase easements, and these funds are used with the “save a trail” program. There is currently no state funding for management of trails. Yet managing our trails is a big job. The committee would need to explore funding mechanisms.

Discussion on whether we reconstitute the Houghton Keweenaw Recreation Alliance or a county committee. Recognizing Houghton County is very different from Keweenaw County with different needs, it is recommended to establish a separate county committee to focus on trails and recreation in the Keweenaw. Discussion regarding options to pursue the land if the state land swap concept does not get formalized included ideas such as the MI Land Trust Funds. It was pointed out that having a county committee established will show the county’s commitment to responsible recreational land management for many opportunities in the future.

Kauppi reiterated the terrain is our product. Keweenaw County has talent plus terrain. If we can manage the terrain, we can attract more talent, providing economic growth in the county.

*Motion to support the following statement, by Tess Ahlborn, seconded by Peg Kauppi. All in favor, motion passed.* Todd Holmstrom will follow-up with providing this statement to the Kew Co BOC.

*The EDC supports the establishment of the Keweenaw County Trails and Recreation Committee as presented to the EDC by Don Kauppi on 3/6/19 with the goals of supporting potential DNR land acquisitions and developing funding mechanisms for maintaining the proposed trail systems.*

b. WUPPDR request for inventory of projects – see email 2/23/19. There is a request to join their commission as an ex-officio member. Todd will resend for discussion via email.

c. GIS data availability – We may invite Ann to join an EDC meeting to layout the availability of the data. There may be different data levels that would still require a purchase, but some may be available publicly. This helps to bring transparency into the county. Todd will follow up with Brad Barnett at WUPPDR regarding types and levels of data for public use.

d. Vision Statement – development for future meeting  
The EDC currently has a mission statement and priorities. Todd Holmstrom suggested that we focus on a vision statement. Members agreed to discuss this at a future meeting.

e. Other – none.

## **6. Public Comment**

None.

## **7. Adjourn**

*Motion to adjourn at 7:34 pm by Peg Kauppi, second by Joe Miller. All in favor, motion carried.*

Next meeting Wednesday, April 3, 2019 – 6:00 pm, Eagle River, MI