

Keweenaw County Economic Development Committee

Keweenaw County Courthouse

Eagle River, MI, USA

Wednesday, May 1, 2019 Meeting Minutes

(approved August 7, 2019)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chair Todd Holmstrom, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

- Members present: Tess Ahlborn, Harvey Desnick, Todd Holmstrom, Ned Huwatschek, Peg Kauppi, Sam Raymond, Joe Miller, Kass Simila
- Contributing Members: Tom Bryant, John Sturos
- Members excused: Matt Kero
- BOC Representative: Don Piche
- Guests: Jeff Radcliffe (KEDA), Jean Hardy (UM), Patrick Visser (MTEC), Dan Jamison (MTEC), Bill Griffin (KewCo Brownfield)

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda with the addition of old business item: GIS Data Sharing and new business item: Shorewaves Contract; by Tom Bryant, second by John Sturos. All in favor, *motion carried*.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the April 3, 2019 meeting minutes; minor edits as noted; by Ned Huwatschek, second by John Sturos. All in favor, *motion carried*.

4. Unfinished Business

4a. Priority check-in:

1. *Broadband Development and Communications*
2. *Website Communications*
3. *100 Good Paying Jobs*
4. *Land Use Issues including Zoning and Permanent Easements*
5. *Workforce Development*

1. *Broadband Development and Communications*

Peninsula Fiber Network is continuing to work on a proposal for a fiber network in Keweenaw County. Todd Holmstrom has been assisting with identifying farms. Todd will also share information with townships. Tess will follow up with PFN. Jeff Radcliffe shared a business list with Todd, Todd will develop further.

Also, see item below added to new business regarding Shorewaves, a local internet provider.

2. *Website Communications*

Harvey Desnick summarized last week's meeting of a small task group. They are reviewing website links that could point to our county EDC webpage, and will develop the committee's webpage to present an image that businesses want to buy into. See presentation below in new business.

Harvey has also communicated with Keith Meyers from Chassell, who has received a grant for supporting remote access workers. Harvey will follow up with Keith regarding what the funding is used for, including marketing opportunities. Keith has been successful on getting input from local residents because it would be helpful to know if our priorities match the local residents.

3. *100 Good Paying Jobs*

Todd Holmstrom reported that Patrick Visser, MTEC, will provide an update on the Mt. Horace Greeley concept paper “*Technology and Research Energy Park*”, see item below in new business.

Todd Holmstrom has been invited to participate Team Peninsula. Next meeting is May 7, Todd will continue to keep the EDC updated as the EDC supports these efforts.

Further discussion included how we communicate to the community when we find out about businesses (e.g. sawmills, some believe there are none, but there may be several, or small farms). How do we find them? Promote them? Reach out to them? Please forward ideas to Todd. Harvey suggested a *downtown development director* for the county. Jeff Radcliffe, KEDA, offered to follow up with some of these businesses on behalf of the committee.

4. *Land Use Issues including Zoning and Permanent Easements*

Joe Miller has started a white paper that lends towards the earlier discussion related to website development and the need to better understand zoning for new businesses and multi-family housing. This white paper will be shared as it is developed.

Todd Holmstrom attended the Houghton-Keweenaw Conservation District annual meeting April 10, in Hancock. The HKCD highlighted their annual tree sale and annual beach clean-up programs, and appointed two new members. The discussion was more focused on preservation than conservation.

5. *Workforce Development*

At our last meeting, we had general agreement we should do more to link students with jobs by possibly coordinating a group of employers to present at local high schools. Kass Simila confirmed that schools would be open to this idea. Kass will draft a letter to businesses (how to get a job, keep a job, etc.) to get this idea further developed. It will help students see what careers exist in the Keweenaw (e.g. golf course – how to become a manager). Companies including the Mariner North and Firetower Engineering Inc. would be interested. The MTEC SmartZone would also be happy to help out.

4b. GIS Data Sharing availability

For economic development, it is important to have GIS data available for public use. Tess will share information with the EDC for future discussion including a presentation drafted by Jeff Radcliffe for possible presentation to the BOC and a presentation shared by Brad Barnett (formerly with WUPPDR) to put in place a web-accessible GIS database.

The county has invested about \$25,000 to develop the database, with a \$4k/yr maintenance cost, and may be hesitant to move forward. Testimonials would be helpful to show counties that have benefited from data sharing. Lack of data sharing could be costing the county. Expansion of broadband, healthcare, education, and more are affected by lack of information. Let’s try to discuss at our June meeting, with the goal of addressing this topic at the June 19, 2019 BOC meeting.

5. New business

a. Guests: Patrick Visser and Dan Jamison, MTEC SmartZone

Presented some ideas for revitalizing Mt Horace Greeley as it is a large opportunity with a beautiful view and basic infrastructure. However, contamination issues remain from past Air Force use related to organic chemicals used and disposed of at the site. Contamination is in the groundwater and certain limited areas in the soil.

Visser shared the concept paper regarding a technology and research energy park with MTU researchers in the renewable energies area and others. There appears to be interest at many levels including Next Energy, who receives grant funding for similar research downstate. While Next Energy is more focused on metro areas, we need to focus on our different environment such that we can provide a platform for other types of research. Next Energy will assist MTEC in further development of the concept paper.

MTEC brings partners together, but does not the lead effort. Therefore, there is a need to identify a consultant, supported by MTEC, to take a lead on moving the project forward and working with multiple businesses. Thermo-analytics and Neuvokas are both interested in being involved, possibly using renewable energy generated there. This project needs buy-in from UPPCO; MTEC to follow up with them as this could be a back-up power site for them, among other benefits.

Easements are currently being investigated by the county prosecutor office to identify boundaries of ownership and other issues of easements. MTEC will also need to work with the county's Brownfield Authority as there will be several challenges to overcome.

This project will help to address our high cost of electricity, which is a limiting issue with many businesses. It is anticipated that it will take 6-12 months to develop a more solid plan. Additional interest can be generated from other parties once a business plan is in place.

b. Guest: Jean Hardy, UM, on EDC webpage development

A task group recently met to outline a path for webpage development. Jean Hardy reported that land use and workforce development are the two areas that lend themselves best to a web page, i.e. a passive communication tool. Sharing local events related to land use, developing local success stories (similar to the MTEC SmartZone page), and highlighting on-the-job-training type jobs. The task group will continue to update the EDC as progress is made.

c. Notetaker needed for next EDC meeting, June 5, 2019. Jean Hardy agreed to take notes at the next meeting as Tess Ahlborn will not able to attend.

d. Opportunity Zones – Upcoming workshops

Several *Opportunity Zone* workshops will be available for interested communities to attend. Escanaba will host a workshop on 5/8/19. **An on-line version will be held on June 12. More information is available in the flyer forwarded to EDC members on April 30.** Todd suggested that Team Peninsula might be a group that can help pull together information regarding Opportunity Zones in the area. Information in needed by the end of the year to get full benefit, benefits are reduced by registering in later years.

e. Shorewaves contract concerns

Tess Ahlborn expressed concerns regarding the County's inability to date to negotiate a contract with Shorewaves, a local internet provider seeking to expand broadband services in Keweenaw County. Don Piche stated several issues with previous contracts negotiations, including terms related to a termination clause. While the EDC respects the right of the county to negotiate contracts without detailed input from the EDC, the EDC strongly encourages the county to seek a positive solution to this issue. Broadband expansion is a top priority for economic development in the county and it will likely take years to establish relationships with other point-to-point providers willing to serve the county.

6. Public Comment

None.

7. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 7:36 pm by Tom Bryant, second by Harvey Desnick. All in favor, *motion carried*.

Next meeting Wednesday, June 5, 2019 – 6:00 pm, Eagle River, MI