



**MINUTES**  
**REGION 3: RPI COLLABORATIVE**

**Wednesday, September 26, 2018**

- I. Call to Order AT 12:15PM
- II. Members Present, Determination of Quorum  
Maureen Castern-French, Mary Hebert, Jamie Huber, Donna LaCourt, Hannah Sanderson, Tom Stephenson, Mary Ellen Jones, Becky Bean, Marisa Tear, Meredith Murley, Scott Herceg, Chuck Hayes, Doug Baum, L, Erich Podjaske, Patty O'Donnell, Steve Schnell, Janie McNabb, Lisa McComb, Bruno Wojcik, David Emmel, Molly Stepanski, Sherry Nelson
- III. Minutes of the Previous Meeting  
Motion Huber, Second Wojcik to approve minutes, motion carried
- IV. Financial Review  
Motion Podjaske, Second Wojcik to accept the financial report, motion carried
- V. Presentation/Discussion
  - A. Review and approval of 2019 RPI Application  
Schnell described the grant application as presented. The application will include an optional application for Infrastructure Management funds of \$70,000 to assist the region in documenting infrastructure as it exists and the future needs. The RPI application will continue to include a goal of moving to the council level.  
  
Infrastructure: Broadband is a high priority with other priorities being talent attraction. The talent committee has recommended development of a talent attraction hub, using online and place-based activities to attract and keep talent. For business support, the region will continue to build a network of entrepreneurial support with special emphasis on regional agriculture. Trails and economic development will be studied with recommendations to take full advantage of the recreational assets already available to many communities and businesses in the region.  
  
Motion Beatty, second Wojcik to approve NEMOG's 2019 Region 3 RPI grant application for Prosperity Region 3. Motion carried unanimously.
  - B. A presentation was provided about the history of the Carnegie Building of Cheboygan and the future plans for the building as an arts and cultural center with future endeavors to include small business support. The building is currently serving as a community center with many special events being held on the property. Sherry Nelson of Bring It Cheboygan also shared the efforts of a local volunteer effort to build interest in doing business in downtown.
- VI. Talent Update  
Janie McNabb showed the Manufacturing Day video. The video will be uploaded to the RPI website. Collin Hoffmeyer shared a story of an employee of a business who had grown up in the area and been exposed to a good-paying job in local business in manufacturing and was in a leadership position, sharing his story with the students who weren't much younger. Collin emphasized how marketable the kids are but they don't realize it.

The manufacturing days are a tool to help build interest in local youth in manufacturing and other local businesses with living wage jobs. Collin handed out a flyer announcing the May 28, 2018, MiCareerQuest event in Onaway which will expose many high school students in northeast Michigan to a variety of careers through hands-on exploratory experiences with actual employers. This is a first event of its kind and modeled from a successful program.

## VII. Community/Economic Development Updates

### A. Regional Ag/Local Foods – Taste the Local Difference

Molly Stepanski gave an update on the success of their magazine, expanding their messages to chambers of commerce, and the current state of the Northern Market project was provided by Doug Paulus. A request for a letter of support for the Northern Market was made. Motion by McComb, second by Wojcik to approve a letter of support from the RPI, motion carried.

### B. Broadband update – Tom Stephenson

Tom Stephenson said that a survey has been distributed to determine barriers in local regulations to building more broadband infrastructure. A collector application is being used to determine more vertical assets which would be used for broadband deployment. Local leaders need more updates on broadband opportunities and their role in deploying broadband. A USDA grant has funded broadband projects in the area. Charter is starting to roll out 1GB service in our region. 5G wireless is beginning to roll out in other parts of the country and more to come which will provide high speed access when available.

### C. Regional Entrepreneurial Network

Schnell updated the group on efforts to build an entrepreneurial network in northern Michigan. An effort to build a network in the region that could be deployed to many audiences of entrepreneurs both face to face and online. The team is exploring use of a website similar to Up North Trails to map resources and allow for feedback and quick updates and virtual connections which eventually lead to business to business and business/entrepreneurial support relationships.

Schnell also mentioned the AdviseMI program and its availability to assist in bringing a couple of peer to peer advisors to 2 local schools to assist students with their FAFSA applications and education choices. The grant through RPI can provide half of the funding for these advisors for the first year.

## VIII. Participant Updates

- MDARD has a grant application that is due in early November which can fund many different types of rural community and economic development projects.
- Mary Ellen Jones announced a new documentary that will be shown soon.
- Erika Comerford expressed challenges with the rising demand for employers and rising demand for higher wages. How can the RPI assist in retaining employees as the demand for these employees to move from job to job increases?
- Collin Hoffmeyer announced a new position to assist employees of business get assistance in addition to their current employer's HR department.
- Scott Hecceg of the Cheboygan Chamber mentioned that 1 new business has opened on average every month. They have a pitch night again this year and have expanded it to a county-wide event. 16 businesses applied for the event last year and 9 are operating today.

## IX. Public Comment

- X. Adjournment – Next meeting date: 10:00am, October 24<sup>th</sup> at the Kirtland Community College Campus in Grayling. This will be a joint meeting with the Workforce Development Board