



# Northeast Michigan

## Regional Prosperity Initiative

PO Box 457  
Gaylord, MI 49734  
989-705-3730

### **REGION 3: RPI COLLABORATIVE MEETING MINUTES April 24, 2019**

**Meeting was called to order at 10:30am**

**A quorum was determined**

#### **Minutes of the November 28, 2018 Meeting**

Motion by Bethany, support Sanderson to approve the minutes. Motion passed.

**Financial Review** – Schnell summarized the financial report. Motion Wojcik, second Stepanski to accept the financial report. Motion passed.

#### **Presentation/Discussion**

##### **Regional Ag/Local Foods – Discussion of Farm to Table business opportunities in Northeast MI**

Molly Stepanski updated the board on the efforts of Taste the Local Difference. They are modifying their website and their model they use to assist farmers in the region to connect them with the regional demand. She has been working a lot in Mio, where they are finishing up a creamery. They create the connections. Kristine Ranger introduced herself and discussed the specialty crop block grant application to study market demands and transportation needs to move product. She mentioned a food policy council effort that is underway in the northeast region. She mentioned that “10 cents a meal” program effort to link food producers with school lunch programs. Farming could become a destination for talent tours. Maureen Castern-French provided an update on Farm to Fork Alcona, part of Inspiration Alcona to support local foods for local economic and educational benefit. They will become their own 501c3 and separate from Inspiration Alcona. They will be doing a documentary on the history of agriculture in the Alcona area. They indicated a plan to do a farm trail website and newsletter. Northern Market has chosen the contractor and will go to bid possibly in July.

#### **Broadband**

Tom Stephenson provided a quick update on broadband efforts. They did a survey of community officials and has provided some recommendations on how to remove barriers to broadband implementation. He presented on the current status of broadband in our region and the extreme need to our local economy. There are a lot of grants that are available to local ISP's and this area has not taken advantage of those grants historically. 5G is being



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launched and they're starting to install these special antennae in the region. There are special programs for low-income families with students but the local schools and local governments are not promoting it as well as they could.

## **Talent**

Collin updated the board on the talent initiatives including the MiCareerQuest event on the day after Memorial Day. This is essentially like getting 40 talent tours in one day for the students attending. Had 4 regional job fairs in the last year with over 200 local employers.

## **RPI 10-year Plan**

Steve mentioned that the RPI is not currently in the proposed budget for 2020 and it is important to let your legislator know if you believe this is an important program.

## **Regional Entrepreneurial Network update**

Schnell mentioned that the network is refining a draft website to serve entrepreneurs 24/7 as well as provide a support system for economic development professionals and those who support entrepreneurs.

## **Community Development Updates**

Schnell mentioned that there will be 11 videos produced for each county in northeast Michigan to be used for talent and business attraction. They will be filmed this summer and production is expected to be complete this fall.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56am.