



Northeast Michigan Council of Governments

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MINUTES

OF THE

NORTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING

December 21, 2023

Kirtland University Center

Gaylord, MI

1. **Call to Order**

The Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) Board of Directors meeting was called to order by R. Pallarito, Board President, at 10:00 a.m. A quorum was declared.

2. **Roll Call**

Board Members

Present:

Terry Small, Burt Francisco, John Wallace, Jackie Bondar, Kyle Yohe, John Chappa, Marisue Moreau, Amanda Reed, Ted Fines, Kelli Stockwell, Travis Hewitt, Dave Post, Danny Mitchell, Scott McLennan, and Rob Pallarito

Staff Present:

Denise Cline, Theresa Huff, Chelsea Goodwin, and Nico Tucker

Guests Present:

Tyler Pischel, Harold Terry, Linday Lewandowski, and Leah Behnke

3. **Approval of Agenda**

Revisions to the agenda under VI. Add Leah Behnke/MERS and under VIII add N. Tucker/Materials Management Update. J. Chappa moved, seconded by D. Mitchell, to approve the agenda as presented and with the revisions. Yes all, motion carried.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

R. Pallarito presented the Minutes of the October 20, 2023, meeting. T. Small, seconded by D. Post, to approve the minutes as presented. Yes all, motion carried.

5. **Financial Report**

C. Goodwin briefly reviewed the financials for the period of 10/1/23-11/30/23, as presented. Have additional members from the original budget that was presented previously. A negative in insurance was due to a refund by removing Alpena Recycling from our policy. Nothing unusual. J. Wallace asked if a statement of fund balance could be provided to the board, C. Goodwin said yes and would have T. Huff send it to the board. S. McLennan moved to receive and file as presented the 10/1/23-11/30/23 financial statements, seconded by J. Bondar. Yes all, motion passed.

## 6. Special Presentation(s):

### A. *Harold Terry/Michigan State Police Assistant Post Commander, Gaylord Post*

Has been with the department for 26 years. Hometown is West Branch, MI. Served 11 years as K-9 Unit. Presented a video of "Blue Diamonds." Those that are retiring are being replaced with new recruits but never actually increasing to meet the number of troopers that are needed. There are approximately 3,000 employees in MSP currently. The majority are 21-30 years old. New troopers know where they are going when they sign up. They can choose where they'd like to go.

Emergency Support -when not out, they do training and do sex offender checks, which frees up the troopers.

Negotiators – have nine but hope to add more.

K-9 – one of the largest teams in the state.

Cyber Dogs – can find electronics such as phones, thumb drives, etc.

Arson Dogs – detect gas, accelerants.

TED (technical entry dogs) - used with SWAT team. Dog goes in first, reducing risk of death to the troopers.

Marine Service Unit – when not diving, they're doing traffic control. SAFE Boats used by the coast guard.

Bomb squad – 1 in Grayling, team of nine people.

MSP Lab includes polygraph.

The MSP is the quickest and largest response team of 100+ troopers from the district. Can respond as quickly as the drive time. Gaylord tornado is a great example.

Contact Info.: Lt. Harold Terry, cell number is 989-324-1379, email is [terryh@michigan.gov](mailto:terryh@michigan.gov).

### B. *Leah Behnke/MERS*

Provided general information regarding the services and benefits they provide. Recognized a few faces on the board. They're familiar with MERS. MERS offers private company retirement plans. Operate as a not-for-profit. NEMCOG is looking at MERS due to the way we operate. No charge for employer to open a plan.

She looks forward to continuing discussion once D. Baum is back in the office. If anyone would like to contact her to discuss services, her phone number is 517-703-1203, email is [lbehnke@mersofmich.com](mailto:lbehnke@mersofmich.com). All costs are wrapped in the investment. The average fee is currently .42%. The Industry is around 1-2%. MERS to MERS (Act 38) – allows MERS employees to work, if they leave, they can vest at another location. They operate as a team, pool assets, keep fees low to MERS and investors. Once a year check up to update employers and guide employees.

## 7. President's Report

A. **Regional Project Review:** R. Pallarito stated there are (1) Federal Grant projects; (0) State projects, (0) other projects and (0) public notice projects for regional review.

B. **Other:** None.

## 8. Director's/Staff Report

A. D. Baum was out sick, so no Directors report was given. However, D. Cline introduced new staff member Linda Damer, Regional Economic and Communications Specialist, who replaced Heather Runyan. Heather moved into planning and Linda took over Economic Development. L. Damer provided a brief background of her work history. Have fifty-nine open projects currently. Some are just beginning, several that are ending. Have 7 Recreation Plans ending in January. Have 12 Master Plans. Currently have five planners. E. Szymanski is no longer working at NEMCOG.

N. Tucker provided a brief update on Materials Management. Yesterday he received an email from EGLE. Notice of Intents are due around July 10, 2024. Each county will be hearing from him a lot after the first of the year. Kicking off on January 8, 2024.

B. Solar Update: The State of Michigan passed new legislation to have the State be body to take control of solar and wind battery storage. Doesn't go into effect until November 2024. Still have a lot of questions. What do the communities have control over? More information to come. Will be in contact with communities. Training coming up, will have T. Huff send out to board. Still working on ordinances, folks know they may have to be updated later on. It will be a battle next year until things get sorted out.

## 9. Committee Reports

A. Finance Committee: D. Post said the committee met on 12/12/23 in Hillman. Gave a brief review of what was discussed. The committee reviewed the check register and voucher report. Reviewed and approved Expenditure report for October-November 2023. Reviewed and approved the FY24 statement of revenues

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and expenditures report, for period of October-November 2023. C. Goodwin answered some line items that were questioned. FY23 final budget adjustments – none, no changes. FY24 budget adjustments – no one. All items stayed within the original budget. FY23 Audit has begun and is in the initial stages. The main part of the audit is scheduled to begin the week of 1/22/2024. Auditors will come in person on Wednesday, 1/24/2024. We hope to complete it on time this year. Had a discussion regarding opening a bank account with Highpoint Bank. NEMCOG received a new MEDC Sight Selector Grant (SSRP), and it requires us to set up a bank account with Highpoint Bank, located in Marshall. We were provided with three options, and this is the best option for NEMCOG. They will deposit the grant funds into this account and will monitor them. The Finance Committee recommends to the board to approve NEMCOG to set up a new account using the same signors as the current bank accounts (D. Baum, N. Tucker, and C. Goodwin). J. Chappa moved to permit NEMCOG to open a bank account with Highpoint Bank as required by grant, seconded by D. Mitchell. 14 ayes, 1 opposed, motion carried.

There will soon be a vacancy on the Finance Committee. M. Moreau will be retiring and leave a vacancy.

- B. Executive Committee: The meeting for today, 12/21/23 was canceled due to D. Baum being out sick this week. The meeting will be rescheduled for next month, on 1/18/24, at 9:00 a.m. prior to the board meeting.
- C. Other: None.

#### 10. Previous Business: None.

#### 11. New Business:

- A. FY24 Budget Adjustments: discussed under Finance Committee report.
- B. FY23 Audit: discussed under Finance Committee report.
- C. Highpoint Bank: discussed under Finance Committee report.
- D. Other: None.

#### 12. County/Member Updates

- **Alcona Co.:** Have three building projects going on and are progressing, including the Senior Citizens Center.
- **Alpena Co.:** The County Administrator, Mary Catherine Hannah, is going to Saginaw. Recommended to the board to hire a new Administrator.
- **Cheboygan Co.:** Conservancy owning land; are tax exempt, meaning the taxpayers have to carry the burden. Someone needs to take to the state to be addressed.
- **City of Alpena:** Losing Mayor at the end of the month. Fun begins to temporarily hold position for interim. Cindy Johnson, the Mayor Pro Tem is a possible candidate, and there is another, could open up seat on the City Board. Was recently put on Alpena County Land Bank Authority.
- **City of Gaylord:** The Planning Commission, 9 years ago, approved Menards to come to Gaylord. Now it's near completion. Received Spark Grant for Elk Viewing Park to include a pavilion, tables, etc. Will also make it more accessible. City completed a sale of \$250,000 in real estate in the new Industrial Park for a "last mile" business to deliver packages (Amazon), Ambrose Group.
- **City of Onaway:** Saying farewell to the Mayor Chuck Abshagen. He will be retiring at the end of the year. The new Mayor will be Mike Benson, who has been the deputy for 6 years. The official state Christmas tree for 2023 was selected from Onaway. Vic Ruppert and his family from Onaway donated the tree.
- **City of Rogers City:** Newest Board Member of Michigan Municipal League. Can feed information for region to S. McLennan. They meet on a quarterly basis.
- **Habitat for Humanity of NE MI:** They serve five counties. Closing on two houses next week. One in Harrisville and one in Alpena. Purchased nineteen acres in Hillman for single family homes and a few in Alpena. Low to middle income families. Did receive grant money to purchase the nineteen acres in Hillman.

- **MI State Senate:** They are not on vacation; it's a misconception out there. The last day ends everything didn't pass. Not preventing anyone from working. They're still doing events, meetings, conventions, etc. January 9, 2024, legislature has to go back and hold session and may adjourn until April. It's unprecedented. Feels like poor management. Will soon start working on the budget. Not sure how money will be allocated and what programs will remain.
  - **MI Works!:** Have some classroom training. Have a lot of staff out sick, they have eleven staff, five are out sick.
  - **Montmorency Co.:** None.
  - **Oscoda Co.:** Building a new Sheriff's Department. Hiring a new EMS Director. The current Director is resigning effective 12/31/23. Working with N. Tucker and NEMCOG with Spark Grant.
  - **Otsego Co.:** Moving the Building and Zoning to Courthouse. Vacating the Alpine Center.
  - **Presque Isle Co.:** Approved the first solar farm for 2024. \$20 million taxing entities estimated by DTE. Two hundred acres are being built; eight hundred acres owned.
  - **Region 7 Healthcare Coalition:** Are in the middle of their fiscal year, mid-year reporting window. July 1<sup>st</sup> grant cycle. Working on budget. Platforms and equipment seeing higher usage. 2/22 MRSE exercise tabletop training. Additional training coming up on Behavioral Health and Pediatrics. Also, will have training on how hospitals can serve the surge of patients. This will be all discussion only, no moving equipment. Check out their website for details.
  - **Village of Hillman:** Received a new grant for park equipment. Working on Blight grant. They're three-quarters through the budget year. Have a possible solar project in the works.
13. **Public Comment:** None.
14. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be on Thursday, January 18, 2024, at the Kirtland University Center in Gaylord. D. Post moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by J. Wallace. Yes all, motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.