

Keweenaw County Economic Development Committee

Keweenaw County Courthouse

Eagle River, MI, USA

Wednesday, September 4, 2019 Meeting Minutes

(approved October 2, 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, Joe Miller, Matt Kero, Sam Raymond, Kass Simila
- Contributing Members: John Sturos
- Members excused: Tom Bryant, Peg Kauppi
- BOC Representative: Don Piche, Jim Vivian
- Guests: Jeff Radcliffe (KEDA)

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda; by Ned Huwatschek, second by John Sturos. All in favor, *motion carried*.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the August 7, 2019 meeting minutes; with the change to add Kass Simila to the attendance list; by Harvey Desnick, second by Joe Miller. 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*

Tess Ahlborn reported Peninsula Fiber Network/Baraga Telephone successfully submitted a *Connecting MI Communities* grant application (due 8/31/19) to compliment the first proposal submitted in May. This application covers the remaining portion of the county including Lake Medora, Lac La Belle, and Gay. PFN/ Baraga Telephone is grateful to the EDC for input and support received during the grant development phase.

A suggested next step for this priority is to work on improving cell coverage throughout the county. Also, Todd will follow-up with NMU EAN.

2. *Website Communications*

Harvey is waiting to hear from the county so we can provide further input on the EDC webpage within the county's new layout. He will provide an update when it becomes available.

3. *100 Good Paying Jobs*

Todd reported that Team Peninsula has formed their 10 top priorities. All five EDC priority list topics are identified. The number one priority is improving service at the Houghton County airport. TP is asking for SkyWest to consider having service from other hubs (Detroit and Minneapolis). SkyWest generates around

\$12M/yr from the airport, but does not appear to be willing to discuss other service hubs. Tess noted that KEDA is also working on this issue. Limited air transportation is a serious concern within the area.

Todd reported that Don Kauppi is progressing with the trails proposal and has identified a group to assist him. We look forward to an update.

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

Joe Miller reported that Jeff Radcliffe reviewed Joe's white paper on zoning and easements. Tess will also review and send comments to Joe Miller. There is a need to better understand zoning for new businesses and multi-family housing. Joe's white paper will be shared as it is developed. This topic could be combined with GIS Data Availability. Being able to overlay the zoning in GIS format would be a great asset to the county. (see item 4c)

5. *Workforce Development*

Kass Simila is working on the "KewCo Career Fair" event for high school students. Kass is also looking into present data on unemployment in Keweenaw County. Recently, there were 66 county individuals seeking employment. The challenge is the economics of a low-paying job and having travel costs, housing costs, etc.

MDOT may have a van available for transportation. Jeff Radcliffe will update the EDC at our next meeting on MDOT van availability. Businesses such as Mt. Bohemia and those in Copper Harbor might benefit from ride-sharing for employees.

4b. Public Survey

Todd spoke with WUPPDR about a surveymonkey tool for distributing a general survey to Keweenaw County residents. This survey will assess the public's input regarding our top priorities. Eagle Harbor is willing to send the survey in tax bills but summer taxes have gone out.

Todd will follow up and get the survey ready. It was suggested to provide hard copies at locations where people frequent, Mohawk PO, stores, courthouse, etc. We will still send it out in tax bill but it will be helpful to start getting input soon. Once the survey is ready, it can be distributed electronically through several sources including email lists, Keweenaw Report, the county webpage. It was agreed to wait until the end of October for announcing the survey, which will align with tax bills. It will be important to tally the responses.

4c. GIS Data Availability

There is EDC agreement that having some GIS data for Keweenaw County publicly available would be a benefit to economic development. If we are to seek BOC approval for public access, it will important for the EDC to understand the different levels that could be available, and the concerns from the county staff and sheriff's office.

Joe Miller reported on his use of GIS data with his engineering consulting business and the benefit of having data publicly available. Costs can range from free to \$1500 depending on the information desired. WUPPDR has combined layers for other counties and is willing to help with development and land use issues, readily accessible. In Michigan some counties have data readily available. Many other states are making it available to encourage community growth as they recognize how the data can assist with planning and land use decisions.

Joe agreed to present more information at our next meeting.

5. New business

5a. EDC Budget

Todd asked for requests related to our priority areas to show tangible progress. A healthy discussion included general items such as our attendance costs and mileage, printing surveys, printing agendas/minutes;

however, the EDC is in the development stage of budget-necessary items. For example, a full-time director would be helpful to be an ambassador for the county's economic growth, or a funded study to help focus on housing issues and needs in the county. EDC efforts could also support the current recreation plan or other county plans. It was agreed that the EDC needs to study at these plans to determine where to focus energy and funds, thereby allowing for an appropriate budget to be developed.

Ned questioned if the county's allotment for the EDC of \$10k per year goes away each year or whether it rolls over. Don Piche will clarify at the next meeting.

5b. RFI: Michigan Aerospace Manufacturers Association

Don Piche reported that he had responded to an interested party notification of this program in April, and Keweenaw County has now been selected for further consider. Don suggested this will be a very political issue, and will likely go to a referendum if it gets that far. However, having the aerospace industry interested in Keweenaw County would be a big boost to the region. Don pointed out that we may not be a preferred site based on a lack of a port and the full acreage needed. The EDC raised many unanswered questions regarding expectations, protected air space, land use zoning and more. Jeff Radcliffe agreed to help with the application process to allow us to learn more about expectations.

Motion to provide the following statement to the KewCo BOC:

The EDC recommends that the Keweenaw County BOC answer the RFI received by the Michigan Aerospace Manufacturers Association. Motion by Harvey Desnick, second by John Sturos.

All in Favor, motion carried.

6. Public Comment

Commissioner Jim Vivian reported that the Eagle Harbor Marina is interested in future development for storing county boats. You can voice interest in having a first responder boat facility on the site by leaving comments with Mr. Cadeau, planning group at the DNR in Baraga, 906-353-6651.

Don Piche reported the new toilet station at Gratiot Park has been completed.

7. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 7:24 pm by Joe Miller, second by Matt Kero. All in favor, motion carried.

Next meeting Wednesday, October 2, 2019 – 6:00 pm, Eagle River, MI