

# Southwest Michigan Regional Prosperity Initiative

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October 1, 2015 Meeting Minutes

**Committee Members Present:** Dennis Berkebile, Ben Damerow, Michael Evans, Pat Karr, Jason Latham, Kim Bell (delegate of Juanita Miller), Ron Reid, Richard Remus, Mike Hofner (delegate of Becky Rocho), Jon Start

**Committee Members Absent:** Jill Bland, Corey Carolla, Barbara Craig, Jan Franz, Todd Gustafson, Luann Harden, Jan Karazan, Lynn Johnson, Juanita Miller, Becky Rocho

**Also Present:** Lee Adams, Peter Dams, John Egelhaaf, Rebecca Harvey

## Welcome and Introductions

Introductions of Committee members and guests were made.

## Action Item - Adoption of Minutes:

In consideration of the September 3, 2015 Committee meeting minutes, it was noted that the delegate present for Juanita Miller was 'Kim' Bell . . not 'Karen' Bell. Motion by Richard Remus, supported by Jon Start, to approve the minutes as corrected. The motion carried unanimously.

## Introduction of New Committee Members

John Egelhaaf noted that the new membership process will be completed this month and new members will be invited to attend the November meeting.

## Discussion Item - Update on State Projects w/ RPI Requirements:

Dennis Berkebile: public transit regional meetings being held; purpose is to identify gaps in service connectivity and user timelines; involves all partners; consultant to develop 'First Steps' report.

John Egelhaaf: introduction of 'Rising Tide' Initiative implemented by Talent and Economic Development (TED); goal is to supply at risk communities with necessary tools to design and

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build a successful economic framework to attract business investment and talent; Village of Paw Paw selected within Region 8.

Ben Damerow: Michigan Works! has reduced number of agencies from 25 to 16 serving the 10 regions; reductions have been accomplished through mergers; concentration on acting regionally.

## **Action Item** – *Election of Officers for Fiscal Year 2016*

Pursuant to the Committee Bylaws, the Committee proceeded with the election of a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary for Fiscal Year 2016.

**Chairperson:** Two (2) nominations were received:

Dennis Berkebile – Kalamazoo County Road Commission  
(Transportation)

Michael Evans – Kalamazoo Literacy Council (Adult Education)

A vote was held on the slate of nominees for Chairperson, with Dennis Berkebile receiving 5 votes and Michael Evans receiving 4 votes. **Dennis Berkebile was elected to serve as Chairperson of the Southwest Michigan Prosperity Committee for 2016.**

**Vice Chairperson:** Two (2) nominations were received:

Jon Start – Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (MPO)

Corey Carolla – Kinexus (Workforce Development)

A vote was held on the slate of nominees for Vice Chairperson, with Jon Start receiving 5 votes and Corey Carolla receiving 3 votes. **Jon Start was elected to serve as Vice Chairperson of the Southwest Michigan Prosperity Committee for 2016.**

**Secretary:** Two (2) nominations were received:

Michael Evans – Kalamazoo Literacy Council (Adult Education)

Barbara Craig – Lake Michigan College (Higher Education)

# Southwest Michigan Regional Prosperity Initiative

---

October 1, 2015 Meeting Minutes

A vote was held on the slate of nominees for Secretary with Michael Evans receiving unanimous support. **Michael Evans was elected to serve as Secretary of the Southwest Michigan Prosperity Committee for 2016.**

The Committee requested that Former Chairperson Ben Damerow continue chairing the October 1, 2015 Committee meeting.

## **Action Item** – *Infrastructure Project Selection/Funding:*

Lee Adams provided an overview of the recommendations submitted by the Infrastructure Subcommittee for project selection and funding. He noted that the links to the complete project descriptions were provided in the meeting material available on the web page.

A summary was provided of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail Extension project recommended for funding. It was noted that the project proposes the construction of 8 miles of non-motorized trail in Kalamazoo County which will connect 35<sup>th</sup> Street in Galesburg to Battle Creek and complete the 30 mile long KRV trail. It was further noted that the completed KRV Trail will connect Battle Creek to South Haven and link together 5 counties with 134 miles of regional trail.

A review of the St. Joseph County Water Trails System project recommended for funding was then presented. Improvement of access to the network of water trails in St. Joseph County is proposed to increase the use of the County's water trails system. It was further noted that the county-wide initiative can be used as a model to facilitate water trail connections region-wide.

In response to Committee questions, general discussion ensued regarding the relationship of the project proposals to the adopted RPI Infrastructure and Community Development goals and the value of regional recreational assets in the attraction and retention of the talent workforce within the Region.

Motion by Michael Evans, supported by Dennis Berkebile, to accept the recommendation of the Infrastructure Subcommittee and award \$25,000 for the proposed project: Kalamazoo River Valley Trail Extension. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Ron Reid, supported by Dennis Berkebile to accept the recommendation of the Infrastructure Subcommittee and award \$15,000 for the proposed project: St. Joseph County Water Trails System. The motion carried unanimously.

# Southwest Michigan Regional Prosperity Initiative

---

October 1, 2015 Meeting Minutes

## **Action Item** – *Adopt RPI Prosperity Plan, Volume II:*

Rebecca Harvey presented the RPI Prosperity Plan – Volume II, reviewing the modifications made per the Committee’s review of the document in September. She noted that the Infrastructure projects that were just selected by the Committee and the conclusions of the Committee’s scheduled discussion of the Year 3 Agenda for the Collaborative have yet to be added to Plan.

Committee feedback was provided on the elements of the revised draft Plan. Lengthy discussion then ensued regarding the Year 3 goals of the Collaborative. The following priorities were noted:

- Improvement of project selection and funding process
- Selection of 2016 projects
- Building cross-sector knowledge base of the Committee
- Identification of where RPI is going . . . aspirations; role in the Region
- Identification of how to use the Plan

It was agreed that Rebecca Harvey would draft text for Year 3 (‘Next Steps’ – Pages 31/32) in similar format to the Year 1 and Year 2 text and incorporate the priorities noted by the Committee. The new draft text would be submitted for Committee review/comment prior to inclusion in the final edition of the Plan.

Motion by Michael Evans, supported by Jon Start, to adopt the proposed Southwest Michigan Prosperity Region – 5-Year Prosperity Plan, Volume II with the noted revisions set forth in the Committee discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

## **Next Steps**

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for November 5, 2015. The Committee agreed that the November meeting should be used to discuss the 2016 grant application for the Collaborative. John Egelhaaf provided an overview of the grant application topics. It was noted that the Year 3 outline provided in the Plan would serve as an ideal platform for the November discussion and provide the necessary direction for completion of the grant application and a Year 3 action plan.

## **Adjournment**