

# Southwest Michigan RPI Collaborative Committee

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November 3, 2016 Meeting Minutes

**Committee Members Present:** Kim Bell, Jill Bland (phone), Vince Carahaly, Ben Damerow, Michael Evans, Bridgette Jones, Ken Jones (phone), Pat Karr (phone), Jason Latham (phone), Deb Miller (phone), Dan Peat, Richard Remus, Jon Start

**Committee Members Absent:** Dennis Berkebile, Therese Cody, Barbara Craig, Grant Fletcher, Luann Harden, Kenneth High, Lynn Johnson, Jan Karazim, David Reid, Barbara Rose, Sandy Standish, Rachel Wade

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

## Call to Order

Chair Evans called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

## Introduction of Members

Introductions of Committee members and guests were made.

## Approval of Agenda

**Motion** by K. Jones, **supported** by Remus, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion **carried unanimously**.

## Approval of Minutes – *October 6, 2016*

**Motion** by Carahaly, **supported** by Remus, to approve the October 6, 2016 minutes as presented. The motion **carried unanimously**.

## Citizen Comments

No citizen comments were offered.

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## **Monthly Financial Report**

Egelhaaf provided an overview of the 2016 Financial Report. He reminded that the report is issued prior to the month-ending financials so does not include October activity. He highlighted the October expenses, specifically noting resulting changes to SWMPC staffing expenses, meeting expenses and 'Infrastructure' project payments.

In response to questions, Egelhaaf provided updates to the 2015/2016 project payments. He confirmed that all 2015 grants will be paid out in full by November, 2016. He added that the 2016 project grant will extend into 2017 but that the awarded money is available to complete the project.

Committee members agreed that the budget should be amended to show increases in 2016 budget amounts where the Year to Date expenses exceed the budgeted amounts.

## **RPI Strategic Planning**

Chair Evans introduced the Southwest Michigan Prosperity Region (8) Strategic Plan developed from the strategic planning efforts of the Committee in May, June and July, 2016. He provided an overview of the section 'Action Items Moving Forward' and noted that the Plan should help to define the 2017 RPI project.

Lengthy Committee discussion ensued around the idea of moving from 'aspiration' to 'action' and the need to identify and focus on priorities. The following approaches were suggested for moving forward:

1 – create a subcommittee for each of the three (3) 'action items' categories – Develop RPI Identify; Cultivate Project Opportunities; Develop Communication Platform

2 – use existing subcommittees (Community Development; Education; Infrastructure) to address the relevant 'action items' in each category

The following thoughts/concerns were noted:

- How does the RPI execute the objectives . . . or 'require' participation/cooperation?
- The RPI cannot force . . . but can inspire cooperation through demonstrated assistance and success.

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- The RPI does not desire to do different work but can become effective in sharing the work that is being done.
- The RPI may under realize its ability to help through letters of support in grant requests .  
. this could provide the incentive to want our help.

Remus expressed support for the strategic plan and its goals but questioned who will do the work. It was agreed that staff-related tasks can be supported through RPI funding . . and that the rest is being done by other organizations. The RPI instead needs to become proficient at identifying who is doing what and get behind/accelerate the work.

Damerow suggested that RPI meetings would be more meaningful and may be better attended if there was an increased focus on action-related items, such as funding projects and cultivating opportunities, and less effort on governance.

There was general agreement with the sentiment expressed . . but also a recognition that we (the RPI) are still engaged in figuring out what we want to do; what we can do; and how it can be done. It is envisioned that 2017 will look much different for the RPI than 2016. Chair Evans stressed that it is important to finish the ‘how’ element so that we can ensure that RPI funds and efforts are focused on priorities.

Peat suggested that the emphasis of future agendas should be on the current agenda item #9 – Regional Initiatives. He noted that the strength of the RPI is our membership of well-connected organizations.

Adams/Egelhaaf summarized that the nuts and bolts work of the RPI can begin to filter through the subcommittees with top action issues being brought to the Committee and the dashboard can begin to serve as the lens through which the RPI can view these initiatives/actions/opportunities.

### **2017 Grant Application and Tier Two**

Chair Evans referenced the discussion of the Committee held in September and October on the application by Region 8 for Tier 2 status in 2017. He noted that the application had been pending a November decision from the SWMPC and SMPC boards on the method/form for moving forward as a Tier 2 region.

Egelhaaf/Adams stated that the 2017 application will again be for Tier 1 status. They explained that Tier 2 status requires a ‘shared service’ organizational format and that the State did not accept the approach developed and proposed by SWMPC/SMPC. Egelhaaf noted that the State

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does not provide specific direction on what is a ‘shared service’ but rather leaves it up to the individual region to develop its own approach. He indicated that the State liked our proposal for a ‘shared service’ approach to delivery of product . . . but determined that it did not qualify for Tier 2 status (which requires a consolidation of ‘back office operations’ - - ie, accounting, human resources, etc).

He added that staff has reached out to other regions for direction on a Tier 2 organizational approach and has learned that many have also failed to meet the Tier 2 requirements and have resolved to continue operating as Tier 1 regions.

Egelhaaf reported that the DTMB has just issued the applications for 2017 funding. He stated that the strategic planning work done by the Committee this year will be used extensively in preparing the grant application. He further noted that the application will stress the following program elements: a focus on subcommittee work; funding of a single project; and rapid responses to economic development opportunities. Egelhaaf confirmed that the application is due the first of December. In response to questions, he noted that the Tier 1 application will be for \$250,000 in funding.

## **Project Updates**

### ***2015 Projects***

Egelhaaf reported that the St Joseph County Water Trail project has substantively ‘moved the needle’ on three Prosperity Plan goals/objectives. He presented slides on before/after water resource access improvements.

Egelhaaf also reported on the success of a regional literacy program (Reading Now Network) formed by MIASA that forwards the educational goals/objectives of the RPI. He noted that these successes have been used to train other districts.

Chair Evans stated that RPI support and sponsorship of the 2016 Adult Literacy and Research Symposium to be held at WMU on Friday, December 2, 2016 is being requested. (program flyer distributed) Committee members acknowledged that continued support is in order but generally agreed that selection criteria should be established (ie. a regional reach, furthers a goal/objective of the Prosperity Plan, etc.) and that expectations should be attached when financial assistance is involved. Chair Evans offered to develop criteria for the Committee to adopt for use in future requests for support.

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**Motion** by Start, **supported** by Carahaly, to authorize the expenditure of \$1700 toward sponsorship of the 2016 Adult Literacy and Research Symposium. The motion **carried unanimously**.

## Regional Initiatives

Egelhaaf shared a video appearance by Governor Snyder thanking the Regions for their work in the Regional Prosperity Initiative.

## Committee Member Comments

Remus noted several economic development opportunities observed in southwest Michigan.

## Adjournment

There being no further items for consideration, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

*Next Meeting:* December 1, 2016 at 2:30 p.m. – SWMPC, Benton Harbor