

Southwest Michigan RPI Collaborative Committee

November 5, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Dennis Berkebile, Jill Bland, Corey Carolla, Ben Damerow, Michael Evans, Grant Fletcher, Luann Harden, Bridgette Jones, Ken Jones, Pat Karr, Deb Miller, Juanita Miller, Ron Reid, Richard Remus, Jon Start

Committee Members Absent: Therese Cody, Barbara Craig, Kenneth High, Lynn Johnson, Jan Karazim, Jason Latham, David Reid, Barbara Rose, Greg Vaughn, Rachel Wade

Also Present: Lee Adams, John Egelhaaf, Rebecca Harvey

Call to Order

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

Introduction of New Members

Introductions of Committee members and guests were made.

It was noted that the new membership process was completed and the Committee membership expanded from 17 members to 25 members. The following new members were welcomed: Grant Fletcher (Bronson Healthcare), Bridgette Jones (Battle Creek Unlimited) – replacing Jan Frantz, Ken Jones (WMU), and Deb Miller (KRESA).

Approval of Minutes

In consideration of the October 1, 2015 Committee meeting minutes, it was noted that Mike Hofner, delegate for Becky Rocho, was present in place of Becky Rocho. **Motion** by Ron Reid, **supported** by Ken Jones, to approve the minutes as corrected. The motion **carried unanimously**.

Citizen Comments

No citizen comment was offered.

Southwest Michigan RPI Collaborative Committee

November 5, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Financial Report

Egelhaaf referenced the RPI Income/Expense report dated January 1, 2015 – October 31, 2015 and provided an overview of the income received and the direct/indirect expenses of the RPI.

Start inquired as to expenditures made to date regarding the RPI dashboard. Egelhaaf stated that the expenses related to the development of the dashboard are in progress and are not reflected in the report. He explained that monies budgeted for the dashboard development have been applied to the work done by Purdue. He noted that the funds budgeted in 2014 and 2015 are adequate to cover costs incurred to date. Egelhaaf agreed to detail past costs and develop future cost estimates related to the RPI dashboard for Committee review.

Report/Updates on RPI Funded Projects

Egelhaaf stated that agreements for all six (6) funded projects have been developed and executed. He noted that all of the agreements were dated November 1, 2015 so the awarded funds will likely be distributed in November. Egelhaaf explained that three (3) contract types were developed that differed in reporting output in an effort to work with different partners/projects.

Berkebile expressed concern with the ability of the RPI to confirm that awarded funds are used as approved, especially with front-loaded projects. Egelhaaf noted that all agreements require an annual report and a confirmation that benchmarks have been met.

Lengthy Committee discussion ensued wherein the following questions/opinions were expressed:

- Should the Committee be involved in the approval of contracts? . . . or
- Is the Committee's approval of a project adequate to allow for administrative contract development/execution?
- The SWMPC is the RPI fiduciary for Committee approved expenditures; execution of contracts for approved projects is a standard administrative function.
- Project benchmarks are set forth in project applications which are vetted by the Subcommittee and then approved by the Committee . . . before included in a project contract.
- The Committee is a 'policy board' and is responsible for project selection and the determination of the contract process . . . not in the administration of that process.
- The Committee should be updated regularly on project fund balances.

Southwest Michigan RPI Collaborative Committee

November 5, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Karr suggested a summary document be prepared that sets forth the timeline and deliverables for each funded project. It was further suggested that reporting periods be established to allow the Board to track project progress and fund balances.

There was general consensus that the Committee should participate in the contract process and that a policy for same should be developed for application to future projects. It was agreed that the agreements for the six (6) projects funded in 2015 will be considered acceptable given the current lack of policy on the subject.

Motion by Evans, **supported** by Start, to direct staff (Adams/Egelhaaf) to draft policy on the RPI contract process applicable to funded projects for Committee review and discussion in December. The motion **carried unanimously**.

Berkebile stressed that the contract process should not be too onerous or it will discourage project applications.

Reid stressed his discomfort with the lack of Committee oversight regarding the contracts for the six (6) projects recently funded and wished that the process would not have moved forward without the Committee's approval.

Adams suggested that the policy to be developed and approved by the Committee in December be applied to all future projects . . . and that the six (6) contracts already executed for the 2015 projects be reviewed by the Executive Subcommittee of the Committee. **Motion** by Reid, **supported** by Harden, to accept the suggestion put forward from staff. The motion **carried unanimously**.

Regional Initiatives

Carolla: update provided on the status of the 'Rising Tide' Initiative implemented by Talent and Economic Development (TED) in the Village of Paw Paw (selected community in Region 8).

Bland: review of efforts in Cass and VanBuren Counties that are focused on ~~identifying internship opportunities~~ **developing an economic development strategy plan for each county; update on a Southwest Michigan focused internship website called MIINTERNISHIP.com that SMF has launched** - - a *Priority Project Area* in the Prosperity Plan - Volume 2.

Southwest Michigan RPI Collaborative Committee

November 5, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Karr: MDOT transitioning to new regional boundaries.

K. Jones: WMU and KRESA working together in supply chain logistics; planning to partner with community colleges (ie. connecting assets to resources).

Berkebile: Midwest Energy is working to provide high speed internet to rural customers, including connection with villages.

Priorities and Work Plan for Year 3

Egelhaaf reviewed the 2016 RPI grant application evaluation criteria. In response to Committee questions, he provided an overview of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 requirements of the Initiative. He explained that one-time transitional dollars are available to regions who want to explore moving into a Tier 2 status.

Lengthy Committee discussion ensued regarding the merit of continuing as a Tier 1 region in 2016 while exploring a Tier 2 approach compared to moving forward in 2016 with a Tier 2 grant application. The following was noted:

- Evans: supports a deputization approach within the region instead of a collapse or merger approach.
- K. Jones: Region 8 needs to take advantage of the advances already made within the region; supports a review of work done in the Traverse City area to identify next steps for movement toward a Tier 2 status.
- Evans: the Committee should explore what a ‘shared government’ approach in this region would look like.
- Bland/Damerow: Region 8 should be transformational and step up to the next level; staying in Tier 1 status does not force us to move forward.
- Berkebile: supports application for Tier 2 status with a goal to meet all Tier 2 requirements by the end of 2016.
- Start: the Committee should first explore the Tier 2 requirements and determine the necessary steps to move through the process; it is too late in the process to consider a Tier 2 grant application for 2016.
- Evans: we are at a ‘good spot’ . . . at a ‘next step’ level; we should be deliberate and move through the steps/answer questions.

Southwest Michigan RPI Collaborative Committee

November 5, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Motion by Evans, **supported** by Reid, to authorize SWMPC to develop a 2016 grant application requesting financial support to continue as a Tier 1 region in 2016, with a request for transitional dollars to support the investigation of moving toward a Tier 2 region in 2017. The motion **failed (2 to 13)**.

Motion was then made by Bland, **supported** by Reid, to move forward with a 2016 grant application for Tier 2 status, with a request for transitional dollars to support the additional work involved in moving forward. Motion **carried unanimously**.

Egelhaaf and Adams advised that letters of support from regional partners will be needed to accompany the application and will be needed prior to the December 1, 2015 application deadline.

They further noted they will proceed with the development of a solid draft of the application within the next two (2) weeks and submit same to Committee members for review/comment.

Committee Member Comments

No Committee member comments were offered.

Adjournment

There being no further items for consideration, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Next Meeting: December 3, 2015 at 2:30 p.m. in Benton Harbor