



# Southcentral Michigan Planning Council

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## Board Meeting Minutes

**MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, April 6, 2021  
**MEETING TIME:** 11:30 am  
**MEETING LOCATION:** Virtual Meeting  
<https://www.gotomeet.me/Upjohn>

1. Call to Order
  - a. The Chair called the meeting to order at 11:36am.
  - b. The Chair noted the Kalamazoo and Calhoun County states of emergency that applies through December 2021, which allows for SMPC to meet virtually.
2. Representative Attendance
  - a. Representatives in attendance: Bomba, Drost, Carahaly, Grieve, Gisler, Kale, Frisbie, Hazelbaker
  - b. Others in attendance: Fred Nagler (KATS), Lee Adams (staff), Molly Trueblood (staff)
  - c. Board openings for Branch, and St. Joseph Counties. Kalamazoo County position was recently filled.
3. Approval of the Agenda
  - a. Drost moved to approve the agenda. By unanimous consent, the agenda was approved at 11:38am.
4. Approval of the Minutes from January 12, 2021
  - a. Bomba moved to approve the minutes. By unanimous consent, the minutes were approved at 11:40am.
5. Public Comment
  - a. None were offered.
6. Acceptance of the Financial Report
  - a. The financial report was presented by staff. Adams reviewed the internal project codes that define the SMPC budget and activities in terms of general management, planning services, transportation work, and staff support for Kalamazoo Charter Township. LA said that general management had some funds remaining, and that the work on planning services, transportation work and Kalamazoo Township will be made up by billable time. The Chair noted that SMPC is halfway through its fiscal year, and he pointed out that the SMPC fund balance was received as part of a previous settlement and those funds are available to support regional projects. Adams said that there is going to be a lot of money available to SMPC communities in the next few years, thanks to the federal recovery funding and EDA grant, and that SMPC is reviewing the possibility of adding additional staff, so he recommended using the fund balance to support ongoing work once the federal funding subsides.
7. Transportation
  - a. Fred Nagler gave the KATS report. He stated that most of KATS' time in the last month was spent trying to understand and implement the new stimulus Highway Infrastructure Program. He said the money has gone to the state, who has reallocated the funding to local organizations. They have been trying to schedule meetings with eligible entities so that the money can be programmed and spent as quickly as possible, and they would like to demonstrate that the agencies can use the funds effectively. He said that there would be a Rural Task Force meeting on April 7, and is trying to connect with other agencies. Nagler has also been working on scheduling PASER ratings, since KATS must rate 100% of the federal aid system this year, and funds must be spent by end of June. They will concentrate on finishing what did not get done last year, and he mentioned that SMPC will likely see the fund balance decreasing as their work increases. Adams asked what expenses were eligible for the Highway Infrastructure program, and Nagler said that anything that was eligible for Surface Transportation program projects would qualify, several special items, expenses paid for folks laid off, or for maintenance. Nagler said at least some of the

counties are looking to use funds to offset operational costs. Adams asked if Nagler knew what governments might apply for, and he said some folks will be looking for preventative investments and other projects, but it's not clear yet what will be approved. Carahaly reminded board representatives to check the SMPC and KATS websites for information on task force meetings, reports, and other resources, and also stated that Berry County is still part of the Rural Task Force for Region 3. Carahaly asked about changes to the small urban task force funding in Sturgis. Nagler said the Rural Task Force is intended for smaller municipalities, but the funding for Small Urban areas is separately allocated for places of 5,000-50,000 people. This program has worked so that every other year eligible communities receive allocations of \$375k, but Nagler explained that the funding has been lopsided based on which year funding is allocated. He explained that MDOT offered and Sturgis and the City of Albion requested to switch their allocations to even-numbered years. Nagler said operationally this wouldn't cause too many challenges.

#### 8. Capacity Building Grant / EDA

- a. Adams gave an update on the EDA capacity building grant application. He said that SMPC is clear to start working on the grant activities, which include broadband planning, recovery and resiliency planning, supply chain analysis, and technical assistance to local units of government. He said that the bulk of staff's work so far has centered on broadband.
- b. Adams discussed the work plan for the EDA Capacity Building Grant
  - i. Broadband: Adams stated that broadband will be the staff's primary focus for some time. Adams said that few counties have reached out to ask for help, and SMPC held a meeting with each county administrator to understand their needs and process. Adams said Branch County has already released their RFP for private sector providers to address the need, but if the private sector cannot provide, then the County will consider implementing broadband themselves. Branch County is working with Aspen Wireless to create a feasibility model. Calhoun County is the next furthest along, and their commission voted to create a task force and send out an RFP to look for consultants to advance broadband. Calhoun County is working with Merit to identify where internet access is not available, so that they could develop a plan for how to bring access to those places. He said they will likely start with the densest places and build out from there. Adams said that St. Joseph County is also interested, but are yet to work with a consultant, so SMPC is helping them gather bids. Adams said that some Census tracts in St. Joseph County did receive RDOF funding, so they will already be getting attention through this reverse auction and the County may have less areas to affect, but they still want to evaluate access. Adams said that although Kalamazoo County has broad access, they still want to gather data, and SMPC is also brainstorming with other municipalities how to move forward if the County chooses not to lead the effort. Adams said there is a lot of funding for broadband available through the American Rescue Plan, and he encouraged folks to get a plan together in preparation.
  - ii. Recovery and Resiliency Planning: Adams said that some preliminary work has started, but that SMPC will not focus on this work for a few months. He said staff are working with an MSU group to gather ideas for how to develop regional resiliency plan.
  - iii. Supply Chain Analysis: Adams said that this work will not start until next year, as staff wants to see what will change during the near term recovery.
  - iv. Technical Assistance: Adams said that staff has been providing some technical assistance already and will continue through the entire grant period. He said staff are responding to needs as they arise, such as economic development or demographic analysis questions, and data analysis.
  - v. Drost asked about Kalamazoo County's hesitation to roll out broadband countywide, or whether Adams thinks it would be better implemented by municipalities. Adams said that since there is a lot of coverage already, the County is considering putting resources into other needs. However, he thinks broadband is best addressed at county level since it will be more efficient and address a broader perspective. Drost said that from an economic development and growth perspective, it looks better to have countywide umbrella. Gisler said that Adams is on-target for Kalamazoo County, since \$92M in justice center finances still need settled, and thus they are pushing things down the road. If no one else will, he said he would champion the project, especially since folks in south county call him regularly to remind him of the issue. He thought that Kalamazoo would

get funding from state Senators, but in terms of lacking households, they discovered only 9,000 households were underserved. Adams thanked Gisler, and said that there is a lot of work in Kalamazoo County organizing the housing millage as well. Grieve asked about the progress being made county-wide versus coordinating regionally. Adams agreed that overall regional coordination could be valuable, but he said currently SMPC is working to help other counties catch up. He said an regional plan would likely be a composite of County plans, but SMPC will look to increase efficiency at a regional scale wherever possible. Adams said that some EDA funding is set aside for a consultant, and SMPC anticipates using that to provide feasibility analyses for each county since it is more technical work. Carahaly asked for an update on the CEDS, Adams said that everything is completed by SMPC and submitted to EDA, but that SMPC is unsure when to expect action on that. He said that administrative and routine functions are being pushed back at EDA since they are flush with funding. Carahaly said that the Capacity building grant is intended to be tied to CEDS implementation, and Adams said that SMPC is putting work into this aspect first since broadband was a focus of the CEDS committee.

#### 9. Local Government Assistance and Planning Activities

- a. Adams provided an update on the regional Housing Toolkit and other housing work. He said that the toolkit website ([plan4housing.org](http://plan4housing.org)) is live and being promoted to partners who may want to build housing plan for local communities.
- b. Trueblood gave an update on the St. Joseph County housing plan. She said she gave a training to organizers on how to gather data, and also attended a Human Services Commission meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup> where the plan was officially adopted. She said that a community event is being planned, but is not yet ready to move forward.
- c. Adams said that Kalamazoo County passed a millage in November but are still figuring out how to spend the money appropriately. SMPC submitted a proposal to help them figure out how to spend the money.
- d. Adams gave updates on various other projects, which are primarily helping communities with planning projects. He said SMPC is helping Sherman Township with an update to their zoning ordinance, as well as zoning language to deal with unlicensed dog breeding operations in the Township. Adams said that staff is working on a master plan for Nottawa Township, a joint master plan for Mendon Twp. and Village, and that he anticipates helping Mendon with zoning after completing the master plan. Adams said SMPC also helped update Flowerfield Township's zoning ordinance, and that he expects to help Fabius Twp. with their zoning. Adams said that staff is helping Branch County update their master plan, and will likely help St. Joseph County with theirs in a few months. Adams said the Kalamazoo Charter Township staffing contract will close out at end of May, and SMPC staffer Hudson will likely retire.

#### 10. Staff Report/Other:

- a. Adams reviewed the Monthly Correspondence, including a Kalamazoo County resolution for broadband, but he said the main correspondence is an informative update from City of Three Rivers for wastewater expansion and improvements to their existing system. He explained that any group that applies to certain types of federal funding must send these notices, and he acknowledged receipt of the notice, but that he does not respond to the notice unless they need a support letter.

#### 11. Representative Comments

- a. Bomba: no comment
- b. Drost: SMF continues to get requests from MEDC and noticed about 70% of RFPs are related to batteries for electronic vehicles, and autonomous vehicles. In St. Joseph and Kalamazoo Counties, she said they struggle to find available land for suitable for new buildings, and developers would need to spend lots of money to make open fields site ready. SMF has heard that business is picking up and optimism is increasing, but that hospitality and healthcare industries, as well as entry-level manufacturing firms are struggling to find people, perhaps due to lack of transportation and childcare. Carahaly suggested land in Ft. Custer training area might be an opportunity for additional development.
- c. Gisler reported that he would attend SMPC board meetings whenever Commissioner Rey cannot attend. He said he looks forward to getting more familiar with SMPC and its work. He said he runs Kalamazoo Citizens for Responsible Government, and invited folks to attend regular meetings on the Second

Mondays of each month at The Crew restaurant. This month, they will have a spokesperson from Enbridge to update on the world of energy.

- d. Grieve: no comment
- e. Hazelbaker: no comment
- f. Kale: The Village of Homer is wrapping up a major sewer lagoon project in the next month or so, then they will start on main replacements for their water system. He said half of their water lines are 4-inch mains and need upgrades. Otherwise, he is waiting to see how ARPA programs will impact the community and how much money will be allocated.
- g. Carahaly: no comment
- h. Kale asked why SMPC meetings continue to be virtual, and Adams said that Upjohn is discouraging in-person meetings whenever possible so it would be hard to attend.

12. Adjournment

- a. Kale moved to adjourn. By unanimous consent, the meeting was adjourned at 12:38pm.

***Next Meeting: May 4, 2021***