

# Keweenaw County Economic Development Committee

Keweenaw County Courthouse

Eagle River, MI, USA

Wednesday, August 7, 2019 Meeting Minutes

(approved September 4, 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, Joe Miller, Matt Kero, Kass Simila
- Contributing Members: John Sturos
- Members excused: Tom Bryant, Ned Huwatschek, Peg Kauppi, Sam Raymond
- BOC Representative: Don Piche, Jim Vivian
- Guests: Jeff Radcliffe (KEDA), Jon French (Baraga Telephone), Chuck Bennetts and Steve Karpiak (KewCo Brownfield Redevelopment Authority)

## 2. Approval of Agenda

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

## 3. Approval of Minutes

*Motion* to approve the May 1, 2019 meeting minutes; with the change to add Kass Simila to the attendance list; by Kass Simila, second by Harvey Desnick. All in favor, *motion carried*.

## 4. KewCo Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and Mt. Horace Greeley discussion

Chuck Bennetts and Steve Karpiak spoke on behalf of the KewCo Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and discussed the group site visit of Mt. Horace Greeley in May 2019. Some clear take-aways from the site visit include

1. there is potential for research at the site,
2. MTEC Smartzone is interested in moving progress forward,
3. the site is in shameful condition, and has more potential that it shows.

Steve suggested the EDC invite Chuck Miller to address the EDC regarding an update on the Mt. Horace Greeley site. There is a need to get the Air Force to come up, and to insist on clean-up so that developers will be interested to get senators, BOC, TV6, etc. involved.

Todd Holmstrom previously sent a 1996 study to the EDC members on what could be done with the site. Most beneficial to county was multi-use activities, similar to activities noted by the MTEC Smartzone proposal (TREK). He noted the previous retention center at the site worked well, but there was not a multi-use plan and when Keweenaw Academy left, the site was left empty.

There was significant discussion on when is a good time to get input from county residents on what should be done with the site. There continues to be efforts by the Brownfield Authority to work with the Air Force and EPA, and they are also working on a report regarding water and ground water contamination. Jeff Radcliffe pointed out from KEDA's perspective once the site is ready to bring in new businesses, the county needs to have a vision so the right grants can be applied for, i.e. to spark this incubator, the county needs to be proactive. This vision starts with people wanting/knowing how to use the Mt. Horace Greeley site. Joe Miller suggested we wait until the attorney meets with the EDC before we spend much time on this topic.

*Motion* to provide the following statement to the KewCo BOC:

***The EDC recommendations the Keweenaw County BOC endorse a public forum on the current state and future of Mt. Horace Greeley to solicit input from county residents and other interested parties.*** Motion by John Sturos, second by Kass Simila.

Y= 5, N=1, motion carried.

A suggested format for a public forum would include presentations from the EDC, MTEC Smartzone, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, and Chuck Miller, county attorney. Time would be available for questions and comments, allowing the people to decide. A post-forum survey could be developed for more feedback. Todd Holmstrom will have this topic added to the BOC agenda for next month.

## **5. Unfinished Business**

### **5a. 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 USDA Connect grant application at the end of May for a fiber network in Keweenaw County. The grant would provide resources to build a fiber network line from the western end of the county along the northwest-north shoreline and the Gratiot Lake area. Baraga Telephone is currently working on a *Connecting MI Communities* grant application (due 8/31/19) to compliment the first proposal. 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.

Jon French reported that Baraga Telephone is leading the effort, and looking to staff a part time office in Keweenaw County, allowing customers to pay bills, purchase modems, etc. Waiting to hear about any challenges coming out.

Todd Holmstrom indicated one “challenge” to the USDA Connect grant has been brought up regarding a county issued letter to pasty net that included some of the figures which could possibly refute the grant application. It was suggested that representatives from PFN/Baraga Telephone be invited to the next BOC meeting to address any concerns.

#### *2. Website Communications*

Harvey has spoken with Jean Hardy regarding the issue of information overload which needs to be boiled down to a few key buttons with key info. Jean recommends we start with the basics and develop a migration plan. Harvey pointed out it would be helpful to see a page mock-up so we can see where the placeholders are located and how it will be laid out (with titles), defining the menu, etc. Many keys will be links to something else, such as KEDA links, GIS links, etc.

Harvey to ask Ann to migrate the current EDC information so the EDC to see a draft at an upcoming meeting.

#### *3. 100 Good Paying Jobs*

See item 4: Kew Co Brownfield Authority guests and discussion.

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

There is a need to better understand zoning for new businesses and multi-family housing. Joe Miller’s white paper will be shared as it is developed. This topic could be combined with GIS Data Availability.

## 5. *Workforce Development*

Kass Simila reported that she and Peg Kauppi met with Dan Jamison, MTEC Smartzone, who was excited about a “KewCo career fair” event for high school students. Kass has contacted the counselor at Calumet High School who will likely host it, and the MTEC Smartzone will help coordinate. The event is intended to be something like a job fair where students are introduced to things you can do in the county. A list of apprenticeships and internships will be developed.

## 6. **New business**

a. EDC Budget – The County starts its budgeting process in late September. Between now and our next EDC meeting, think about where we can add value through budget items that link to our priorities. Consider opportunity costs (short-term) and matching grants (long-term). All ideas are welcome for next month’s discussion.

b. Chassell Twp. Overview – Harvey reported the Chassell Twp has been very successful in using a little money, leveraging it, and transforming areas throughout the township, including removal of blight, expanded trail networks, the addition of a dog-park, and other beach improvements. In particular, Keith Myers has been successful in developing a market for remote workers, which often includes dual career couples. Todd Holmstrom pointed out that for every one (mid-level technical) remote worker in our area, three service jobs are created. There was strong encouragement from the EDC to continue to develop a relationship with Keith. Joe Miller reiterated the need for Keweenaw County to stand out as we develop a program.

Harvey will invite Keith Myers to **our October** meeting.

c. EDC quorum and membership – Harvey expressed concern about not meeting in June due to a lack of quorum. It was decided that even if there is not a quorum, the EDC should still meet. There can still be healthy discussions and progress made without voting. Kass noted she will be gone in the winter months. Tess will check with Julie Carlson about a speaker phone and call-in number available for future meetings.

d. Obtaining public input on economic development in the county – Todd Holmstrom pointed out that just like in the case of Mt. Horace Greeley, if the EDC is going to have priorities, we need to make sure to include public input; ask the residents what they think is most important in their community. Harvey noted this is something Keith Myers puts a full-time effort towards in Chassell Twp. Todd’s draft survey was circulated for EDC comment. Regarding distribution of a survey, it was suggested to contact WUPPDR about hosting a survey-monkey link. Other option may include door-to-door contact and having the townships include the survey with the next tax bill. Todd will follow-up.

## 6. **Public Comment**

Jon French, Baraga Telephone, stated that letters of support for the CMIC grant application will be needed, similar to the USDA Reconnect Grant support letters. They are currently trying to identify proposed industrial areas and manufacturing zones. It was suggested to review the county’s “Blueprint for Tomorrow” document as maps are included in the back of the report. Jon also reported that Tim Frick, part-time Agate Harbor resident and CEO of MightyBytes in Chicago, saw the recent TV6 spotlight on the submitted grant application for Keweenaw County and has contacted Baraga Telephone to offer his support of expanding broadband communications throughout the Keweenaw.

Commissioner Jim Vivian reported that buffalo reef needs to dispose of bottom refuse/sand. He suggested adding a question about this type of landfill to the questionnaire.

## 7. **Adjourn**

*Motion to adjourn* at 7:36 pm by Harvey Desnick, second by Joe Miller. All in favor, *motion carried*.

Next meeting Wednesday, Sept 4, 2019 – 6:00 pm, Eagle River, MI