

Keweenaw County Economic Development Committee

Keweenaw County Courthouse

Eagle River, MI, USA

Wednesday, August 1, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Approved September 5, 2018

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chair Peg Kauppi, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The committee welcomes new committee members: Tom Bryant, Harvey Desnick, Matt Kero, Joe Miller, Kass Simila, and Rob Tarvis

- Members present: Peg Kauppi, Tess Ahlborn, Harvey Desnick, Todd Holmstrom, Ned Huwatschek, Matt Kero, Joe Miller, Sam Raymond, Kass Simila
- Contributing Members: John Sturos, Rob Tarvis
- Guests: Jeff Radcliffe (KEDA), Charlie Hopper (Pasty.net)

2. Approval of Agenda

Changes to the agenda previously sent: add website development to new business and add a public comment section.

Motion to approve the agenda with changes by Todd Holmstrom, second by John Sturos. All in favor, *motion carried*.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the June 6, 2018 meeting minutes by Ned Huwatschek, second by Todd Holmstrom. All in favor, *motion carried*.

4. Membership Update

With the recent appointments, the committee stands as follows:

- Term ending 12/31/18: Matt Kero, Joe Miller, Kass Simila
- Term ending 12/31/19: Harvey Desnick, Todd Holmstrom, Sam Raymond
- Term ending 12/31/20: Tess Ahlborn, Ned Huwatschek, Peg Kauppi
- Contributing Members (no term limit): Tom Bryant, John Sturos, Rob Tarvis

5. Old Business

5a. Update – NMU EAN

Todd Holmstrom reported on the NMU Educational Access Network, including a four-phase plan in which Keweenaw County will be included in the final phase. The EAN is intended for educational purposes. It will be important for the EDC to work with the EAN in phase four to ensure the network system can reach all parts of the county.

5b. Update – communications: broadband expansion, AT&T upgrades

Tess Ahlborn reported that AT&T is seeking to upgrade equipment at Mt Horace Greeley. The County proceeded to have a tower inspection and review of the structural analysis through a private consultant. The upgrades, when completed, are expected to reach many underserved areas in the county. Ahlborn also reported she continues to work with a local telecommunications provider to provide a fiber network throughout the county. Additional information will be provided at a future meeting.

5c. Update – water pumps/wells at Mt. Horace Greeley

At the last County BOC meeting, the BOC agreed to repair the buildings, maintain the wells and to preserve the easement for future use of the site.

6. Guests

6a. Jeff Radcliffe, KEDA Executive Director, provided an overview of the Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance which serves Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw Counties. In 2015, with input from Keweenaw County, KEDA developed a strategic plan with 5 goals that the EDC may want to consider as we develop our priorities:

Foster Business Growth

Improve Infrastructure

Revitalize Our Communities

Develop and Attract Talent

Enhance Cultural and Recreation Opportunities

The EDC can learn from the successes of the MTSmartZone and the SBDC. Several EDC members shared positive experiences with business development and growth when working with the SBDC.

6b. Charlie Hopper, General Manager, Pasty.net offered an overview of Pasty's history since 1996, including being the first to provide broadband access in Keweenaw County beginning in 2001. Pasty.net continues to provide service throughout the county, noting Pasty has more members in the county than registered voters. Charlie kindly offered his assistance as a resource for the EDC as the EDC prioritizes efforts in the communications area.

7. EDC Mission and Goals – Brainstorming

As a starting point for this newly formed committee, a general brainstorming session allowed all attendees to offer input on any topics, goals, and thoughts (general or detailed) without judgement. Sam Raymond distributed copies of the Keweenaw Economic Development Strategic Plan developed by KEDA in 2015. Tess Ahlborn distributed Keweenaw County maps to all attendees. The following is a list of topics, in no particular order, that were brought up during brainstorming.

- Consider a small-business revolving loan fund to help with business growth
- There is a housing shortage (employees and non-residential) north of Mohawk. Condo? Other?
- Building stock for businesses is missing
- Zoning may be hurting us, e.g. can't have a business in Eagle River, a new business will be discouraged from developing in areas where a first step is applying for a variance.
- Create 100 good paying jobs, capable of supporting of a family
- Creating 100 professional jobs will require infrastructure planning
- Need to put GIS system on the web
- Electricity cost is highest in US. Wind farm at Mt. Horace Greeley?
- Opportunities to retain talent here? May require changing generations of attitudes.
- Incubator in the Keweenaw? Smartzone link?
- Need a slogan/campaign? If you want to move back here, come start a business and we can help you...
- Getting people to apply is difficult, e.g. some companies have several openings and no applications, so starting to work with high school students from Houghton County (note: KewCo does not have a high school)
- How to connect talent? Old methods of advertising aren't working well for hiring (i.e. local newspapers).
- New trucking laws are a challenge for business growth.
- Key is to be ready when programs change. Need to be proactive.
- Land Use/Land Access – important for us to understand zoning; State of MI/GMO/Conservancy are 3 top landholders.
- Education opportunities – county public library in Copper Harbor could be enhanced and promoted, making sure internet service provides everyone with on-line education access; other locations for public internet access?
- Communications – improving speeds and access to broadband throughout the county, fiber network throughout county should be a priority to attract businesses.

- No medical clinic, eye doctor, or dentist is located in Keweenaw County. Work to bring these in, even if a shared facility is needed.
- Copper Harbor Streetscape project, Grant Twp parks/trails in Lac La Belle area.
- Brockway Mountain Drive needs road repair and could cost over \$1M.
- Cliff Drive is also in need of repair – need to understand how these are prioritized, what type of funding is available
- Diversity is key to improving the county’s economy, tourism and recreation are important.
- Secure permanent easements.
- Winter is a diminishing resource – we should take advantage of this.

Discussion of next steps: the EDC will seek a facilitator to assist us in aligning goals and priorities. Consider using the 5 KEDA goals as a starting point as it is recent and includes county input. Todd Holmstrom will contact WUPPDR and MSU Extension to discuss possible facilitators that can help us at our next meeting.

8. New business

8a. Flood relief support and KewCo economic impacts

Serious damage to the ATV trail system in Houghton County as a result of the 2018 Father’s Day flood will affect Keweenaw County’s economy. With 40+ washouts, the loss of Trail No.3 will discourage users from traveling to and enjoying the Keweenaw. We need to monitor the progress of repair and encourage/support efforts to reestablish the trail system.

8b. Future meeting schedule

The committee agreed that a monthly meeting schedule would be best for the immediate future as we define our goals and priorities. Therefore, the EDC will meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 6pm at the Courthouse in Eagle River until further notice.

8c. Website development

Todd Holmstrom suggested changes to the EDC website similar to those of Bayfield, WI which highlights business success stories. Ahlborn reported that the county is working to update the county’s web presence. Holmstrom will follow up with Ann Gasperich.

9. Public Comment

None

10. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 7:59pm by Ned Huwatschek, second by Todd Holmstrom. All in favor, *motion carried*.

Next meeting Wednesday, Sept. 5, 2018 – 6:00 pm, Eagle River, MI