

Minutes

West Michigan Prosperity Alliance
Executive Committee
September 30, 2015
1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

MDOT Offices
1420 Front Ave
Grand Rapids, MI

1. CALL TO ORDER:

John Weiss called the meeting to order at Noon

Present: John Weiss - GVMC
 Dennis Kent - MDOT
 Bob Chapla - Community Foundation for Muskegon
 Rich Chapla - The Right Place
 Valerie Byrnes – Barry County Economic Development Alliance
 Simone Jonaitis – Grand Valley State University
 Jacob Maas – West Michigan Works!
 Mike O’Connor – Zeeland Adult Education
 Bill Pink – Grand Rapids Community College
 Bill Raymond - Ottawa County Michigan Works
 Jim Sandy – Mecosta County Development Corp
 Kevin Stotts – Talent 2025
 Jim Fisher – Padnos, Inc.
 Crystal Young – West Shore Community College
 Dave Bee – West Michigan Regional Planning Commission
 Erin Kuhn – WMSRDC
 Steve Bulthuis – MACC
 Paul Griffith – Michigan Works West Central
 Dan Rinsema-Sybenga – Muskegon Community College
 Spence Riggs – Mason County Growth

2. Public Comment – None

3. Minutes – MOTION – To Approve the Minutes. MOVE – Bulthuis. SUPPORT – Kuhn. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Update – John Weiss

John Weiss reviewed the progress to date on the RPI initiative. The group has put a lot of money in the hands of projects deemed to be of regional significance and meeting the RPI criteria. The application for RPI 2016 should be posted soon. The deadline for submitting applications to the State of Michigan has been moved to December 1. We have approximately \$159,000 in carryover money.

5. Review of Projects

- a. Steve Bulthuis gave an update on the clean water initiative. A consultant is being hired to do a study on sustainable funding.
- b. Paul Griffith reviewed the Connect Michigan project. A full update will be forwarded to John Weiss for distribution to all.
- c. Erin Kuhn updated the group on the Muskegon Port. The project received an additional \$62,500 grant from the EDA.
- d. Kevin Stotts reported on Work Ready. A communications program is being developed to promote the program to employers.
- e. Emerge spent the past year putting a public/private partnership together.

6. What's Next for RPI

MOTION – To Affirm GVMC as the Lead Agency for the 2016 RPI Grant Process. MOVE – Fisher. SUPPORT – Maas. MOTION CARRIED.

Steve Bulthuis suggested using 2016 RPI grant funding to contribute to another round of project funding. We could stay the course and contribute to those projects that need additional funding as well as open up the process for submission of additional projects.

John Weiss updated the group on the MSU review of Region 4's Prosperity Plan. Most of the objectives that they rated the plan by were not even on the grant application criteria. Many of the criteria on which they evaluated the plan went back to MSU's work with Granholm administration, and were not relevant to Gov. Snyder's RPI grant specifications. There were also obvious errors in interpretation such as what sectors were represented and the type and scope of some projects.

Jim Fisher stated the group should proceed on two tracks. First have a small group refine the vision to make it compelling and create a dashboard to reflect that.

Rick Chapla asked if the group wanted to move on to a higher grant application level which would require a change of structure. Do we want to stay the course or move on to another level? Ad Hoc vs. Institutional.

It was agreed to stay at the current funding and structure level and work on vision, mission and goals. This would allow flexibility and avoid political problems that could arise at the next level when a new administration takes leadership of the Governor's office making funding uncertain.

Discussion ensued regarding gaps in education and talent migration, and how things such as transportation and childcare affect employment.

Erin Kuhn suggested defining what prosperity means to our region. Then be bold with metrics and try to move the needle forward. How can groups already working in this area prosper with our seed money?

Rick Chapla endorsed creating defining metrics. To create the legs of stability we need to be much more sophisticated.

John Weiss reviewed the suggestions of spending money to update the plan, with bold metrics.

Jacob Maas reported there are some solutions already out there through the RAPID. Alignment between transit lines and daycare is critical.

Lisa Stich reported in many instances, underemployment is a result of culture and self-esteem. The key is helping people move to the next stage.

Simone Jonaitis agreed that culture is key in moving up in socio-economic status.

Bill Raymond discussed the benefits of workplace daycare as well as cultural and transition difficulties faced by the underemployed. Holistic employment education is crucial.

John Weiss stated the group has talked about being a voice for these issues. This body could become an amplifier for these groups, organizing groups and committees to focus around issues such as education, transportation, and workforce.

Kevin Stotts added transportation and childcare issues as well as the gap of social benefits vs improving oneself are difficult to address. Institutional changes in programs need to take place to allow upward mobility. Character skills are a huge barrier. A transportation study on interagency gaps could be helpful. We could coordinate marketing and communications that could be the voice that drives place, infrastructure, education, etc.

Dave Bee added we could talk to each other's Boards.

Jim Fisher – We could work towards creating regional cultures; revisit internal structures; communication and messaging strategies.

7. WMRPC & WMSRDC – Collaboration

Dave Bee explained the collaboration and memorandum of understanding between WMRPC and WMSRDC.

MOTION – To Approve Payment of Invoice for Costs Incurred for the Collaboration Between WMRPC and WMSRDC. MOVE – Bulthuis. SUPPORT – O'Connor. MOTION CARRIED.

8. Other

Erin Kuhn reported on MAR's suggestion of 5% or \$10,000 from each region to go towards a statewide prosperity plan.

Discussion ensued around MEDC's ability to do this without asking for money from the RPI Regions; whether or not all regions would participate; and what the final product would look like, possibly just cut and paste from each region's plan.

9. Adjourn – 3:10 p.m.