

GRAND VALLEY METRO COUNCIL

Board Meeting

March 1, 2012

8:30 a.m.

Kent County Commission Chambers

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Chairman Jim Buck.

Members Present:

Jerry Alkema	Allendale Township
Alex Arends	Alpine Township
Jim Buck	City of Grandville
Chris Burns	City of Cedar Springs
Tom Butcher	Grand Valley State University
Dan Carlton	Georgetown Township
Daryl Delabbio	Kent County
Mike DeVries	Grand Rapids Township
Brian Donovan	City of East Grand Rapids
Jason Epler	City of Ionia
Steve Grimm	Cannon Township
George Heartwell	City of Grand Rapids
Carol Hennessey	Kent County
Don Hilton, Sr.	Gaines Township
Jim Holtrop	Ottawa County
John Hoppough	City of Greenville
Mark Howe	City of Lowell
Cindy Janes	Cascade Township
Robert May	City of Hastings
Mick McGraw	At-large Member
George Meek	Plainfield Township
Jim Miedema	Jamestown Township
Cy Moore	Treasurer
Audrey Nevins-Weiss	Byron Township
Jack Poll	City of Wyoming
Chuck Porter	Courtland Township
Jim Saalfeld	Kent County
Al Vanderberg	Ottawa County
Bill VerHulst	City of Wyoming
Michael Young	City of Rockford

Members Absent:

Dale Bergman	Sparta Township
Tom Fehsenfeld	At-Large Member
Rebecca Fluery	Village of Middleville

Brian Harrison	Caledonia Township
Doyle Hayes	At-Large Member
John Helmholdt	At-Large
Denny Hoemke	Algoma Township
Elias Lumpkins, Jr.	City of Grand Rapids
Steven Patrick	City of Coopersville
Milt Rohwer	City of Grand Rapids
Rick Root	City of Kentwood
Martin Super	Village of Sparta
Toby VanEss	Tallmadge Township
Rob VerHeulen	City of Walker
Patrick Waterman	City of Hudsonville
Roger Wills	City of Belding
Chris Yonker	City of Wayland

Others Present:

Andy Bowman	Grand Valley Metro Council
Leon Branderhorst	Grand Valley Metro Council
Ron DeCook	MDOT
Andrea Dewey	Grand Valley Metro Council
Tim Hoeffner	MDOT
Abed Itani	Grand Valley Metro Council
Dennis Kent	Grand Valley Metro Council
Dal McBurrows	MDOT
Gayle McCrath	Grand Valley Metro Council
Peter Varga	The RAPID/ITP
John Weiss	Grand Valley Metro Council

2. Approval of Minutes

**MOTION – To Approve the Minutes of the February 2012 GVMC Board Meeting.
MOVE – Meek. SUPPORT – Hilton. MOTION CARRIED.**

3. Public Comment

Tyler Nickerson of Disability Advocates told the group that he supported GVMC’s Strategic Initiatives, particularly sustainable communities and asked that regional planning be added to the goals.

4. Oath of Office

Kent County Clerk Sonja Dean administered the Oath of Office to John Hoppough, Mayor of the City of Greenville.

John said he looked forward to serving on the Board and learning more about its activities.

5. Finance

a. MDOT Audit

John Weiss reported on the MDOT audit. The last remaining issue with the audit is the \$165,500 owed by REGIS. MDOT has previously rejected GVMC’s request for forgiveness on the entire amount. GVMC asked for a second consideration of the amount. Dal McBurrows of MDOT (MDOT’s new designate to GVMC) reported MDART met for a second time with GVMC on 2/15. The outcome was a decision by MDOT to forgive the \$165,500. In the future GVMC/REGIS needs to be in compliance with sub-agreements. There needs to be agreement with MDOT before any sub-agreements are signed.

George Heartwell thanked Mr. McBurrows for his willingness to work with GVMC.

b. GVMC & LGROW Budget Amendments

Leon Branderhorst reviewed the proposed budget amendments which include increases to revenue for:

PL	\$50,000
SPR	\$75,000
Contrib. Survey	\$2,000
LGROW	\$3,252
Data Collection	\$7,670

Proposed amendments to expenses included:

Administration

Salaries	\$19,390
Social Sec. Tax	\$1,203
Medicare Tax	\$282
Health & Dental Ins	\$125
Pension Plan	\$1,750
Legal	\$1,000
Contractual Serv	\$4,035
Meeting Exp	\$1,000
Mileage	\$1,330
Repair & Maint	\$185

Transportation

Health & Dental Ins	\$335
Contract Serv	\$50,100
Repairs & Maint	\$495

Regional Planning Services

Health & Dental Ins	\$110
Contract Serv	\$150
Repairs & Maint	\$120

The proposed LGROW amendment includes an increase in revenue of \$44,200 due to a grant from the Wege & Frey Foundations (including an anticipated GRCF \$16,000 grant). Increases in expenses include \$3,240 in GVMC Staff Services; \$13,860 in Contracting for Communications & Business Plan; and \$755 in Printing.

MOTION – To Approve the Proposed GVMC and LGROW FY2011/2012 Budget Amendments. MOVE – Hilton. SUPPORT – Nevins-Weiss. MOTION CARRIED.

John Weiss reported GVMC Financial Director, Leon Branderhorst, was retiring after 15 years with the Council. He thanked Leon for his service and presented him with a plaque of appreciation.

Leon Branderhorst said it has been a pleasure working for GVMC & wished everyone the best.

6. MDOT / Amtrak Resolution

The Pere Marquette is the passenger rail service, supported by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and operated by Amtrak that serves the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council MPO. This train operates seven days a week on track owned by CSX in Michigan and has several stops along the lakeshore including Holland, Bangor, and St. Joe/Benton Harbor, on its way to Chicago Illinois Union Station.

The GVMC MPO is not currently linked to the high-speed rail network by the Pere Marquette. The high-speed corridor runs between Kalamazoo and Porter Indiana on Amtrak owned railroad track. Michigan’s other two passenger rail lines, the Blue Water and the Wolverine, currently operate on the high-speed corridor, from Port Huron and Detroit.

Recently, the City of New Buffalo, with support from Amtrak and MDOT, has created an application for a federal TIGER 4 grant of approximately \$56 million. This TIGER grant, if awarded, would go towards track improvements including extending rail siding from Dowagiac to Niles Michigan and about \$800,000 for the design phase for track improvements that would join CSX and Amtrak track in New Buffalo. The joining of CSX and Amtrak track would mean that all three of Michigan’s passenger rail routes would use the same rail lines from New Buffalo and into Chicago.

GVMC staff recognizes the benefits of a project to join the tracks in New Buffalo for Pere Marquette riders, passenger rail in southern Michigan, and particularly the communities in the New Buffalo area, including:

- High-speed corridor access for the Pere Marquette (albeit an very small segment)
- Connection to the other two passenger rail lines, opening destinations to the east in addition to the regular terminus in Chicago

- Fewer delays for the Pere Marquette because the Amtrak trains would not be competing with freight traffic by operating on Amtrak owned track between New Buffalo and Porter Indiana
- Restoration of a New Buffalo stop for the Pere Marquette
- Passenger boarding in New Buffalo could arrive in Chicago 1.5 hours earlier by taking the Pere Marquette instead of the Blue Water or Wolverine lines

Ron DeCook & Tim Hoeffner explained the request for GVMC’s resolution of support and answered questions. The proposed improvements would add frequencies and improve reliability for Amtrak travelers.

MOTION – To Approve the Resolution in Support of the City of New Buffalo’s Amtrak/USDOT Tiger Grant Application to Improve Intercity Passenger Rail Service on the Pere Marquette Rail Corridor. MOVE – Heartwell. SUPPORT – Nevins-Weiss. MOTION CARRIED.

7. Outsourcing Update

John Weiss reported he was researching various options to outsource and collaborate to fill the duties of the outgoing Director of Finance and reduce salaries and overhead. Due to use of Federal Highway funds, an RFP process must be followed which will result in a longer timeframe to complete the process. He hopes to have the situation resolved by the next Board meeting.

8. Communications

John Weiss reviewed improvements to GVMC communications including a revamped website (which is a work in progress) and the distribution of the Weekly Update. Included in the Weekly Update will be a “Spotlight on Collaboration” section. Any member who has a collaborative project in the works is encouraged to contact John so that it can be featured. He also discussed the 2012 proposed construction maps and encouraged everyone to take one back to their offices and post them in a public area.

9. Legislative

John Weiss accompanied the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce to Lansing for its Legislative Day. He met with nine legislators and has follow-up visits scheduled. Lawmakers are well aware of the significance of the elimination of the PPT. Currently, there are no PPT bills in the House, with eight in the Senate. Under consideration is the elimination of the PPT for industrial and commercial, while preserving it PPT on utilities. Proposals include replacing a portion of the revenue through tax credits coming off line and battery credits. Additionally, communities are developing other suggestions.

George Heartwell stated the PPT affects schools, colleges, libraries and transit also. Peter Varga is organizing lobbying around transit. It would be good to have the others on-board with our efforts.

Daryl Delabbio reminded the Council of the very effective revenue sharing rally during the Engler administration. We need to speak with one voice. Current lawmakers haven't seen that kind of lobbying event before.

10. What I Would Like GVMC to Accomplish – To Be Addressed at Next Board Meeting

11. Other

John Weiss reminded members of the April 9 Quarterly Luncheon with Mark Murray and encouraged everyone to RSVP as soon as possible. Mr. Murray will also be participating in the GVMC Board meeting (which will be held at 10:30 a.m. in the Board room at the Prince Center preceding the luncheon). He will engage members in a casual conversation on how local government and business can work cooperatively.

12. Adjournment – 9:30 a.m.

MOTION – To Adjourn. MOVE – Delabbio. SUPPORT – Hilton. MOTION CARRIED.