



**Grand Valley Metro Council  
Legislative Committee**

**Agenda**

**Wednesday April 9, 2008  
8:30 a.m.**

**GVMC Offices 40 Pearl St., Suite 410 Grand Rapids, MI**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Approval of Minutes from February 6, 2008 meeting**
- 3. GVMC Legislative Breakfast - Review**
- 4. Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's Proposed Environmental Bond for 2008 Statewide Election Ballot**
- 5. Issues Update**
  - a. Comcast's Proposal to Move PEG Programming to the Digital Channel Tier**
  - b. State Budget Update**
- 6. Other Issues**



**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council**

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** GVMC Legislative Committee  
**From:** Donald J. Stypula, Executive Director  
**RE:** April 9, 2008 GVMC Legislative Committee  
**Date:** April 7, 2008

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Attached are the agenda and support documents for the next meeting of our **GVMC Legislative Committee** – scheduled for **8:30 AM, Wednesday April 9, 2008 at the GVMC Offices in downtown Grand Rapids.**

This month, I'd like to start with a post-mortem on our February 8 Legislative Breakfast to get your thoughts on what worked and what we should change in the future. Then, I want to brief you and get your thoughts on a proposal by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to place an environmental bond on this fall's election ballot to finance Brownfields cleanup and redevelopment, watershed management initiatives and other projects. I also want to bring you the latest on Comcast's attempt to move PEG programming to the digital channel tier and provide a quick update on budget negotiations in Lansing.

We'll start our meeting by reviewing and accepting the attached minutes from our February 6, 2008 meeting.

**GVMC LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST**

Our GVMC Legislative Breakfast on Friday February 8 at the Pen Club appears to have been very successful. In attendance were Senators Patty Birkholz and Bill Hardiman, together with Representatives Dave Hildenbrand, Arlan Meekhof, Glenn Steil, Jr., Fulton Sheen, Bill Huizenga, Kevin Green, Robert Dean, and Dave Agema.

Both legislators and local officials were complimentary of the format, under which Rick Root, Mike DeVries, and Al Vanderberg offered thoughts and comments on topics ranging from revenue sharing to unfunded state mandates, and then engaged legislators on those topics. While we didn't break any new ground, we succeeded in conveying our collective viewpoint on these topics and reinforcing in the minds of those legislators in attendance that when we speak, we speak with one regional voice.

At our meeting on Wednesday, I would like to go around the table to get your thoughts on the format and look ahead to our next Legislative Breakfast – with the candidates for the various legislative districts – that I would like to schedule for mid-September.

### **DEQ'S PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL BOND FOR THE FALL 2008 BALLOT**

Last week I met with Steve Chester, the Director of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, regarding DEQ's desire to place on the November 2008 election ballot a proposal to sell up to \$1 billion in state general obligation bonds to finance a number of environmental-related projects and programs. Steve was set to meet with the Governor later today (Monday) to discuss his "fact-finding" tour around the state and to recommend that the state seek voter approval of a plan to sell up to \$1 billion in general obligation bonds over 10 years to fund brownfields cleanup and redevelopment projects, Great Lakes and watershed improvement projects and other environmental and natural resource management initiatives.

Placing such a bonding proposal on the ballot would require a 2/3 vote of both the House and Senate. Assuming that is accomplished before the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and voters approve a new bond at the November election, the State Department of Treasury would begin selling general obligation bonds (pledging the state's full faith and credit via the general fund) in \$100 million increments each year for 10 years. While there are no specifics available at this time, Director Chester says they are looking at using a portion of the bond proceeds to continue the state's contaminated site cleanup program and Michigan's best-in-the-nation brownfields redevelopment efforts (including the current system of grants and low-interest loans to municipalities to encourage brownfields reuse). Other potential uses for the bond funds include state matching funds for federal Great Lakes restoration and preservation activities and funding for watershed restoration activities involving agricultural runoff.

This is the same type of bonding and payback mechanism used by the state for the 1988 "Quality of Life" environmental bond, and the 1998 "Clean Michigan Initiative" bond. In fact earlier this year, GVMC received a grant from the last round of CMI funding to help us build the Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW). As with those other two bond proposals, there will likely be a recreation grants component for county and municipal governments included in the proposed 2008 bond.

Please give this concept some thought. Since there is nothing on paper to endorse at this time, we will limit our discussions on Wednesday to your thoughts and ideas about what should be in and what should be out of this potential bonding proposal.

### **ISSUES UPDATE: COMAST PEG CHANNEL MOVE**

Efforts by Comcast Cable to move Public, Educational and Government (PEG) programming to the upper reaches of the digital channel tier remain stalled as the company and several

municipalities negotiate the issue under the watchful eye (and temporary restraining order) of the federal District Court in Detroit. Meanwhile, bills in the Michigan Legislature to restrict Comcast's channel move and to support fees for PEG programming remain stalled, awaiting committee hearings in both the State Senate and House of Representatives. No action has been forthcoming on two different bills introduced to block Comcast's relocation of PEG channels to its digital tier. Legislators are reportedly seeking agreement from the Michigan Cable Television Association before moving forward on the legislation.

The municipalities which filed state and federal litigation and obtained temporary injunctive orders – Warren, Dearborn and Meridian Township – are trying to reach an out-of-court settlement, while also lobbying the U.S. Congress to step into the dispute with federal legislation.

The Charter Township of Meridian is seeking financial support from other municipalities with limited success. Meanwhile, Rogers City joined Detroit, Romulus and Adrian in state uniform franchise disputes over franchise and PEG support fees pending before the Michigan Public Service Commission ("MPSC"), which so far has refused to take up these cases. MPSC Commissioners are apparently awaiting needed action by the State Legislature to adopt dispute resolution requirements and procedures before moving forward.

While Meridian Township, Dearborn, Warren, Bloomfield Twp., and many other communities and organizations supporting them are not presently seeking federal legislation so much as the general support of Congress on this and broader PEG issues, it appears highly likely that there will be significant federal legislation presented in 2009 aimed at restoring uniformity to the cable/video/telecom world. The more we can draw attention to the harmful effects of the providers' actions with regard to PEG and other issues under the recently-passed state legislation, the better chance we have of being successful with a Congressional 'fix' next year.

I'll have some additional thoughts and information to share on these topics at our meeting on Wednesday morning. I hope you can attend and add your voice to the discussion.

I'm looking forward to seeing you and having a productive meeting on Wednesday. As always, if you have any questions, or if we can be of further assistance, please call me directly at 776-7604, on my cell at 450-4217, at home at 257-3372 or via email at [stypulad@gvmc.org](mailto:stypulad@gvmc.org).

**GRAND VALLEY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL  
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**February 6, 2008**

**8:30 a.m.**

GVMC Offices  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

**MINUTES**

**1. Call To Order**

**2. ROLL CALL**

Present:

Haris Alibasic	City of Grand Rapids
Chuck Bloom	Cannon Township
Jim Buck	City of Grandville
Mike DeVries	Grand Rapids Township
Don Hilton	Gaines Township
Gayle McCrath	Grand Valley Metro Council
Rick Root	City of Kentwood
Erika Rosebrook	Ottawa County
Don Stypula	Grand Valley Metro Council
Michael Young	City of Rockford

**3. Call to Order**

Chair Rick Root called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

**4. Approval of Minutes from December, 2007**

**The minutes of the GVMC December, 2007, Legislative Committee were accepted into record.**

**5. Legislative Breakfast**

Don Stypula reported there were 12 legislators who had confirmed their attendance.

Topics and speakers include:

Unfunded Mandates – Mike DeVries, Grand Rapids Township  
Revenue Sharing – Denny Swartout, Ottawa County

Governmental Cooperation (Act 312 etc) – Rick Root, City of Kentwood

Speakers should be provided background information in advance. The presentations should each be approximately 7 min., and Don Stypula will try to engage each legislator in the discussion.

#### **6. Tax Incentives for Industrial and Commercial Development**

Don Stypula discussed the possibility of inviting GVMC members to a meeting hosted by the Right Place to discuss tax incentives and commercial development.

It was decided that a meeting might be beneficial, but it should not be hosted by the Right Place as it would basically be a forum or commercial for their position.

Rick Root stated legislators and others need to be included also.

#### **7. Other**

Mike DeVries stated he would like to have another legislative breakfast before the election.

#### **8. Adjourn – 10:05.**