

MACKINAC ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Director's Report

November 10, 2016

A Letter to the Editor of the Newberry News sent by Dean Reid on behalf of MEA was published on October 1, 2016. Titled "MEA Troubled by Misstatement of Facts" it laid out the inaccuracies of a previously reported article regarding the role of MEA in Graymont Fund decision-making and set the record straight.

An MEA Progress Report was given at the Board of Commissioners meeting on October 18, 2016. MEA Board members Amy Polk, Cheryl Schlehuber and John Kling were present at this meeting during which Commissioners were updated about MEA projects and activities. On October 24, 2016 MEA submitted a letter to the Mackinac County Board Of Commissioners requesting 2017 funding in the same amount of the County's 2016 contribution of \$85,000. Letters of support for MEA were requested of and submitted by Cloverland Electric, Mackinac Straits Health System, First National Bank of St. Ignace and UP State Credit Union.

MEA's first newsletter was sent electronically to MEA's database of over 300 businesses and organizations. Kudos and praise to Caroline Crecelius for creating a professional and inspiring newsletter. Intended as a quarterly piece we look forward to hearing ideas from MEA Board members for topics to include in future editions.

Caroline Crecelius has returned to her home state of Missouri until February 2017. She will be working remotely on the MEA Newsletter and various grant applications during this time. Taking over the day-to-day responsibilities of administering various MEA projects is Heather Perkins of Cedarville. As a former Loan Officer at the Soo Co-op Credit Union she brings a wealth of business experience to this position and will be a tremendous asset in developing MEA's business assistance activities.

MEA has now completed its first year administering the Graymont Community and Economic Development Fund. After a thorough evaluation of staff time required for the multitude of tasks associated with MEA's role in the administration of this Fund, a

decision was reached to resign our position. Graymont has been notified of this decision in writing. MEA has promised its full cooperation in assisting the organization selected to succeed in administering the Graymont Fund so that the transition is as smooth as possible.

As part of its ongoing dialogue with ITC MEA was recently made aware of developments regarding anticipated energy legislation that holds enormous significance for the UP. ITC Manager of Government Affairs, Randy Gross and Dean Reid developed the attached Call to Action. It lays out steps that MEA Board members can take to encourage support of comprehensive energy legislation. MI House of Representatives in northern Michigan need to hear from their constituents about the importance of standing firm in their support of the legislation (HB 4575) already passed by the House Energy Committee. MEA is also communicating with Cloverland CEO and President, Dan Dasho to coordinate efforts on this critical legislation.

On October 21, 2016 MEA was invited to Gaylord by the Otsego County Economic Alliance (OCEA) to have a deep dive discussion about best economic development practices for a public private alliance, and to identify steps in developing a comprehensive program for offering assistance to small businesses in Mackinac County. OCEA Executive Director, Lisa McComb was generous with a multitude of recommendations regarding fundraising (including events), grant opportunities and the cultivation of a robust base of partners/investors.

MEA continues its outreach efforts in Portage Brevort and Clark Townships to reach our Broadband survey goals. In anticipation of the various next steps required in the Bridge the Tech Divide Project, MEA has received guidance and direction from the ISD (Jason Kronemeyer). Once the surveys are mapped and the need for broadband upgrades clearly demonstrated, engineering studies will be conducted to determine the degree of infrastructure improvements needed and the costs associated with those improvements. In an effort to defray these costs for EUP communities the ISD has developed a strategic plan for creating a consortium of non-profit organizations that together can make application for appropriate grants. One is a USDA telemedicine grant. MEA is now coordinating an effort to include Mackinac Straits Health System and Munson Healthcare in this collaborative endeavor.