

**MACKINAC ECONOMIC ALLIANCE**  
**Director's Report**  
**JUNE 15, 2015**

The Department of Natural Resources has completed their review of MEA's proposal to administer the Graymont Community/Economic Development Fund established under the terms of the Land Transaction Agreement between Graymont and the DNR. Before being submitted to Graymont the proposal was reviewed and approved by MEA's legal counsel. At the request of the DNR MEA has made some minor edits to the proposal and returned it to Graymont for attachment to the final Land Transaction Agreement expected to be signed sometime before June 30, 2015.

Based on recommendations from community members, school leaders and local businesses MEA has carefully reviewed potential members of the Graymont Fund Committee. A slate of nominees will be considered by the MEA Board at their meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup>. Once the committee has been assembled it will meet to begin the process of defining the specifics of how the Graymont Fund will be managed including developing definitions, guidelines, procedures, grant application, evaluation criteria etc.

With the signing of the Land Transaction Agreement the first Tract of land will be conveyed to Graymont. The company will contribute \$100K to the MEA Graymont Fund within 30 days after this conveyance. MEA is in the process of communicating with local banks in Mackinac County to determine where funds should be deposited for the best return on this investment.

Pursuant to its stated objectives for 2015 MEA is working to create an up to date inventory of brownfield properties across Mackinac County. MEA started this process with the support of Lake Superior Community Partnership. Their Zoom Prospector program took information from individual real estate listing and uploaded it into a template designed to highlight brownfields in MI. There is no longer funding from the State to support this activity. MEA has now developed its own template. Rebecca has identified active MLS and other commercial realtors in the county and is reaching out to each of them to request their brownfield listings. Once received information about these properties will be uploaded on an appropriate brownfield listing form and linked to MEA and other relevant websites.

As soon as MEDC gives final approval to the Beacon Project construction can commence on Mackinac County's first brownfield redevelopment. MEA sees this as an opportune learning moment to more fully understand the benefits of brownfields and is planning a "Brownfield Basics" Presentation for Mackinac County realtors, Township Supervisors, Brownfield Redevelopment Board members as well as various county government officials. Using the Beacon Project as the "Case Study" Jeff Hukill of the DEQ and Jen Tucker of MEDC will describe specific features that distinguish a brownfield development. Two presentations will be delivered on Wednesday, August 12<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, August 13<sup>th</sup>.

Last year EUP Regional Planning received a grant from the Department of Technology, Management and Budget to establish high definition videoconferencing sites in Chippewa, Luce and Mackinac counties. They were successful in installing this technology in Luce and Chippewa Counties. MEA was asked for assistance in identifying appropriate sites in Mackinac County to house this technology. MEA met with resistance to establishing a videoconference center at the Mackinac County Airport. The St. Ignace Library was also unwilling to consider offering this service. At this time the Mackinac County Road Commission has indicated its agreement to installing videoconferencing capabilities at their offices in St. Ignace. The Mackinac County Commissioners room is also a possibility for further investigation. Jeff Hagan has been asked to present a proposal to the Commissioners at their next meeting.

A meeting of all members of the Curtis Task Force is scheduled for Tuesday, June 16<sup>th</sup>. MEA will be presenting results of their research into those recreational grants that Portage Township is eligible to apply. Feedback from the Task Force will assist the Township in defining their next steps in reaching some of their recreational goals. MEA will also use this opportunity to discuss efforts to raise awareness of brownfield redevelopment opportunities in Curtis and to identify specific properties that qualify as brownfields. Curtis Task Force members will be encouraged to attend one of the August Brownfield Basics presentations.

In its effort to build a coalition of support for the mobile learning lab and other advancements to career and technical vocation opportunities, MEA continues to meet with high profile businesses and educational leaders in the Eastern and Central UP. Once a broad based group of UP stakeholders is assembled MEA will organize their first meeting. At that time Northern Lakes Economic Alliance has agreed to present a complete report of the Fab Lab's progress in the Lower Peninsula, together with recommendations for launching a similar learning lab in the UP.