

MACKINAC ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
Directors Report
March 9, 2015

Pursuant to the agreement between Mackinac Economic Alliance and Mackinac County MEA prepared its report listing specific objectives to be pursued in 2015. This report was filed on February 15, 2015. A copy is attached hereto.

MEA completed the application for a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant and filed it on February 28, 2015. Shortly before the filing deadline MEA received notice that USDA planned to extend the deadline for this grant. MEA elected to file it in its entirety. The extension is advantageous in obtaining outstanding commitment letters from several donors contributing matching funds. MEA has received \$5K each from Mackinac Island and Les Cheneaux Community Foundations, \$10K from Graymont at Gulliver, \$5K from First National Bank, \$2.5K from Central Savings Bank. MEA expects to receive matching funds in the amount of \$5K each from M Bank and Old Mission Bank. MEA is requesting \$40K from USDA for a Revolving Micro Loan Fund to be matched with \$40K from businesses and organizations in the community. Should the grant be awarded MEA has assembled a noteworthy committee of trained lenders to evaluate micro loan applications. The MEA Loan Committee includes: Coleen Duflo of Northern Initiatives, Bob Richardson of First National Bank, Josh Billington from SBDC, Dave Thomas from M Bank, Luke Jaroche of Maples Sawmills and a representative from the Mackinac Island business community.

In an effort to expand MEA outreach efforts Rebecca Bolen will spearhead MEA Connect. Working through the various Mackinac County Township offices she plans to make regular visits to develop and support economic development initiatives. MEA is already underway with Curtis and Portage Township to advance some of their economic development priorities. Through MEA Connect we are hoping to uncover other opportunities to identify and support business development across the county.

Rebecca Bolen is updating the MEA Facebook page. She is also looking at ideas to keep the MEA website fresh and current. We rely on Board members to supply information, ideas and photos. For now, as a way to highlight brownfield redevelopment opportunities, MEA will feature a specific building or property on the website each month. In addition to property suggestions from realtors on the Board, MEA hopes to receive information about non-listed brownfield properties from Board members.

Working closely with Graymont MEA continues its efforts to support the approval process through the DNR. What may be a final DNR meeting in this process has been scheduled on March 18, 2015 in Roscommon. It is very important that supporters of Graymont attend this meeting. MEA is reaching out to township officials, planning commissions, educators, local officials, businesses and other organization to make the trip to Roscommon on March 18th. Bus transportation will be provided and supporters will be treated to a dinner following the meeting.

This month MEA has begun the process of assembling stakeholders in creating new initiatives promoting career and vocational education opportunities in the UP. Based on research and recommendations from the academic community MEA is reaching out to a broad swath of high school, college and university educators, businesses, economic development organizations SBDC, and MI Works. After conducting initial meetings MEA

will be in a position to identify the consensus surrounding strategies to advance the development of vocational education. Building on that consensus MEA can then start to facilitate the steps needed to define and achieve specific goals.