

MACKINAC ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
Director's Report
JANUARY 18, 2016

MEA was asked to facilitate an ITC presentation on November 9, 2015 at the Village Inn in St. Ignace. Representatives from EUP local government and economic development organizations convened for a dinner meeting to hear from ITC Local Government and Community Affairs Area Managers about the "Michigan Electric Infrastructure Act" as set forth in MI House Bill 4575 and Senate Bill 282. Those attending the meeting were asked to sign letters of support addressed to Senator Nofs. MEA coordinated efforts to distribute and collect signed letters more broadly in the EUP. MEA also drafted a pro forma Resolution of Support and sent it to local units of government and other regional organizations. MEA continues to work closely with Cloverland Electric in communicating developments about the legislation. Please see the most recent issue of *Michigan Country Lines* for mention of MEA's partnership with Cloverland.

On November 10, 2015 MEA Director Ottaway and Assistant Crecelius traveled to Alpena to meet with SBDC Senior Business Consultant, Carl Bourdelais, and Alpena Economic Development Director, Jim Klarich. MEA has received enormous guidance and direction from Jim Klarich in pursuing a USDA grant to establish a Revolving Micro Loan Fund in Mackinac County. When the grant was awarded, MEA was invited to come to Alpena to understand the process for administering the micro loan program Alpena EDC has managed for over 14 years. Discussed were the roles and responsibilities of SBDC, the Revolving Loan Committee, the loan servicing company and EDC staff. In order to heighten awareness of the availability of micro loans, it was strongly recommended that MEA join the EUP SBDC in reaching out to loan officers at banks in Mackinac County. This engagement is now underway.

MEA Board members attended a Mackinac County Commissioners meeting on December 22, 2016 to request a reconsideration of the County's contribution to MEA's 2016 operating budget. Previously, at a special Commissioners meeting held on September 30, 2015, MEA gave a summary of its yearly accomplishments together with a budget for 2016. An increase of the County's annual contribution was requested in order to cover 60% of its expenses, or \$85K. Following that presentation Commissioners voted to increase their contribution to \$60K. At the December meeting letters from Graymont, Novi Energy and Beacon Specialized Services were read in support of MEA's request. Board members and representatives from the business community presented strong arguments for increased support from the county. In a 4-1 vote the increase was approved. MEA fundraising efforts continue in earnest among the Mackinac County business community where asks have been placed to cover the remaining 40% of MEA's 2016 budgeted expenses.

On January 14, 2016 Caroline attended a DNR Grant Workshop in St. Ignace to learn about various DNR grants available to cities and townships in Mackinac County. Shortly before this workshop MEA circled back with Portage Township Clerk, Pat MacLachlan

to discuss the status of the township's recreational goals and efforts to advance them. Taking their priorities into account MEA will prepare a written report describing those DNR grants it recommends for application by Portage Township.

The deadline for grant applicants to the Graymont Community and Economic Development Fund is March 1, 2016. As grant applications are received they will be forwarded to Committee members, together with a scorecard for each. The Committee will be asked to evaluate applications before it convenes (in the period between March 1, and May 1, 2016) to vote on grant awards. Graymont has recently asked that MEA reach out to eligible applicants in those communities surrounding the Rexton project to make sure they are aware of the Fund and its timeline.

On December 2, 2015 EUP Regional Planning conducted a meeting to explore the need for better broadband in the EUP. Caroline and Amy attended this meeting. Caroline's report on the meeting's proceedings, together with subsequent input from the MEA Board, is the springboard for development of an action plan to identify constraints and delineate steps to address broadband deficiencies in MC. MEA Board members will be asked to consider this effort among other 2016 goals and objectives.