

Antrim County

Economic Development Corporation

Mission Statement: Retain, expand, and promote County-wide economic growth and stability.

February 21, 2023
Minutes

Members present: Sherry Comben, Leslie Elrod, Cherie Hogan, Rachel Krino, Kathleen Peterson, Bonnie Robbins, and Tim Timmer
Members Absent: Pete Garwood, Dawn LaVanway
Others Present: Chis Bauer, Sam Bailey and Jessica Lovay from NLEA; Janet Koch

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. by EDC President Rachel Krino.

2. Public Comment

Ms. Krino introduced Janet Koch, Deputy County Administrator, to the EDC.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Tim Timmer, seconded by Sherry Comben, to approve January 17, 2023 organizational meeting minutes as presented.

The EDC's January discussion of a Boyne City short-term rental study was mentioned by Cherie Hogan, who indicated that she would send a copy to Ms. Koch for distribution to the EDC.

4. Discussion: Social Media Presence

Ms. Krino asked the EDC if they thought an EDC Facebook page aimed specifically at economic development would be a worthwhile addition.

Motion by Rachel Krino, seconded by Sherry Comben, that the Antrim County Administrator's Office look into developing an EDC FB page, with oversight by the Administrator's Office.

5. Letters of Support: ROBIN Grant

Ms. Koch gave a broad overview of the grant and the two applications for which the EDC was considering letters of support; an application by Peninsula Fiber Network for middle mile service, and an application by Great Lakes Energy Trustream for last mile service.

Motion by Tim Timmons, seconded by Sherry Comben, to authorize the Economic Development Corporation President to sign letters of support for Peninsula Fiber Network and Trustream for their grant application to the ROBIN grant as presented.

6. Discussion: Business Connector Series

Ms. Krino said the intent of the series has been to create recorded presentations of connecting services. Two recordings have been completed; housing and small business, which are posted on the county's YouTube site. A presentation regarding grants was suggested. Ms. Krino indicated

that the discussion of future business connector presentations should be part of the strategic plan discussion. Ms. Peterson said keeping in contact with the area chambers is critical.

7. Discussion: Strategic Planning

Jessica Lovay, NLEA's Community Development and Grants Director, described Antrim County's current economic development plan from the master plan. Ms. Hogan noted that many buildings remain empty due to extensive and expensive requirements for rehabilitation and renovation of both commercial and residential buildings. Ms. Lovay added that the State of Michigan is aware of these issues, and of the need for additional funding for housing repairs and rehabilitation. She noted that housing development and business development and the availability of jobs go hand in hand.

Ms. Lovay described the 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) created by Networks Northwest with input from NLEA and Mike Allison, then of the EDC. The CEDS, different from previous CEDS documents, notes broader needs. There are 14 prioritized goals for NWNW's 10 county region. Five common themes between all counties are:

- Business friendly/assist entrepreneurs
- Promote relationships between public and private sectors
- Encourage/development housing
- Broadband
- Provide educational and skills training opportunities that prepare individuals to successfully contribute to a diverse regional economy.

Mr. Timmer asked about strategic planning for other EDCs. Ms. Lovay said in NLEA's 4-county region there are three EDC's: Mackinaw City, Antrim County, and Cheboygan County, although the Cheboygan EDC doesn't meet regularly. She also noted the role of NLEA's Buck Love, Director of Business Retention and Growth.

Sam Bailey, Strategic Initiatives Manager for NLEA, described the progress of an entrepreneurial mapping project that had 50 participants from Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, and Emmet Counties. Spearheaded by North Central Michigan College, NLEA is assisting to help with the project's intent to note strengths and weaknesses of communities regarding an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Mr. Bailey said a preliminary report is complete; additional information is being compiled. Expectation is to have a report complete in Spring 2023.

Ms. Lovay noted that in the past, NLEA has hosted lender events to introduce themselves to area commercial lenders. She said those types of events are returning, post-COVID, and are a priority for NLEA.

Mr. Bailey described the US EDA Economic Capacity Index. He said the index provides a snapshot of current conditions in Antrim County compared to all other counties in the country. The index measures human capital, finances, industry, infrastructure, and institutions and partnerships. 53 metrics from publicly available data sources were used to create these macro level views. 2022 data for Antrim County is available online by searching for "EDC Economic Development Capacity Index." Mr. Bailey encouraged the EDC to play with the data.

Ms. Lovay asked the EDC to look at their mission statement, Chapter 5 of the proposed master plan, the EDC's 2022 strategic plan, and the CEDS. She requested that each EDC member note what they consider top goals from all three documents and send to Ms. Koch. In March, Ms.

Lovay said she would return to help the EDC review the compiled list and to take the next steps in developing a 2024 strategic plan.

Ms. Lovay mentioned Team Boyne, an entrepreneurially-oriented group of Boyne City stakeholders who met regularly to explore ways to encourage economic growth.

8. Various Matters / Public/Member Comment

Ms. Krino asked Ms. Lovay about brownfields and any possible grant funding.

Ms. Koch passed on the information that the County is now a member of the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, adding that if there are any relevant training sessions or webinars, the EDC would have access to free or inexpensive trainings. Ms. Koch said as training information became available, she would pass it on.

A question was asked about the EDC's current memberships with individual chambers. Ms. Koch said she will look into current memberships, previous memberships, and the EDC's current budget and report back at the March meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

DRAFT