

Antrim County  
**Economic Development Corporation**

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

**May 16, 2023**  
**Minutes**

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

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Rachel Krino.

EDC President Rachel Krino said that Bonnie Robbins resigned her seat on the EDC. It was noted that a vacancy notice will appear in local papers, has been posted to social media, and is on the website. Notices have also been sent to area chambers and local units of government. The expectation is that the Chair will make an appointment at the June 15th BOC meeting. If the EDC wants to provide a recommendation, that appointment can be pushed to the July 6 meeting.

**2. Public Comment**

None.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Motion by Pete Garwood, second by Sherry Comben, to approve the April 18, 2023 meeting minutes as presented.**

**Motion - approved.**

**4. Discussion: Strategic Planning**

Jessica Lovay, Community Development & Grants Director and Chris Bauer, Community & Economic Development Manager with Northern Lakes Economic Alliance assisted. Four categories of organizational objectives, each of which had a number of action items, were discussed: Communication, Access to Resources, EDC Evaluation, and Collaboration

**Communication**

Item #1: EDC appointed member attend County Board of Commissioner Meeting Bi-Annually to report on economic development in the county along with ongoing activities by the EDC Board.

The EDC agreed that the EDC Chair should present EDC activities to the Board of Commissioners twice a year. Mr. Garwood recommended that as many EDC members as possible also attend those presentations.

Item #2: Develop an elevator speech to be used by members while in the community and establish guidelines regarding representation of the EDC at outside community meetings.

This item was noted as important. Ms. Lovay said the EDC's mission statement was the start of an elevator speech.

Item #3: Inventory EDC members memberships to other organizations including nongovernmental organizations. Provide opportunity during regular EDC meetings for related updates.

Creating an inventory of EDC relationships to other organizations was discussed, along with adding a “Roundtable” item to every agenda. Nametags for EDC members were discussed as a way to add legitimacy to the organization. Ms. Krino mentioned a matrix.

Item #4: Put together and post newsletters and bulletins possibly quarterly.

Item #6: Request the County Administrator dedicate some space in his monthly newsletter 2 to 4 times per year for the inclusion of EDC progress and economic development related issues that affect the County.

Item #7: Request the townships, villages and/or chambers dedicate some space in their regular newsletters (if they have one) 2 to 4 times per year for the inclusion of EDC progress and economic development related issues that affect the County.

Janet Koch, Deputy County Administrator, said small items of importance from the EDC could be included in the county’s monthly *Bulletin*. Mr. Timmer said presentations could be announced in the *Bulletin*; it was noted that business owners and other organizations could be invited to speak.

Item #5: Develop a comprehensive list for information distribution.

This was noted as being the conduit for a *Bulletin* that includes a mention of the EDC. It was noted that businesses were a target audience for the EDC’s information. Ms. Koch noted that she hoped next year’s budget would include funds for an online newsletter program that could also be used by the EDC.

Item #8: Request the townships, villages and/or chambers include an EDC link on their website.

It was noted that a link to the EDC was already on the Elk Rapids and Mancelona websites, which ties into #3.

Ms. Lovay asked if showing up at the meeting of other organizations was a priority for the EDC, that such attendance could be an action step. She said a metric could be the number of visits to local units had been made by the EDC.

#### Access to Resources

Item #1: Conduct an EDC work session to identify resources and information key to economic development and develop a dissemination list. Create a system for EDC specific members to monitor and report on the specific resource.

It was noted that doing the above would be very useful.

Item #2: Review current EDC section of the website regarding missing links and information about resources.

Mr. Garwood noted that EDC-related links or notes regarding the website could be submitted to the Administration Office for review at a future EDC meeting.

Item #3: Establish a Facebook page that would share important local, regional, and statewide opportunities and updates regarding economic development opportunities. These have to potential to be shared by area Chambers.

Capacity for monitoring a Facebook page was discussed. Ms. Lovay asked if the Facebook audience was the audience the EDC was targeting.

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Item #4: Include a brief EDC update in the monthly newsletter distributed by the county.

Covered earlier.

Item #5: Develop a most frequently asked questions/ answers.

Ms. Lovay said this is a tool, e.g., “Who are the local lenders?” “How do I find information about zoning?” “Do all counties have an EDC?” Ms. Krino said much of that information was already listed in the county’s master plan and could be pulled out to be included in FAQ.

Item #6: Develop a list of resources and links available to communicate with the public.

Covered earlier.

### EDC Evaluation

Item #1: Establish a timeline for each goal based on low, medium, high priority.

The EDC’s consensus was that strategic planning items selected as high priority should be on the agenda every month. Medium priority items would be quarterly, and low priority items quarterly or less often.

The group agreed that some items, though established as a high priority, might not be on the agenda every month.

Item #2: Establish a metric evaluation on actionable items.

This was noted as being important.

Item #3: Community Survey to include area businesses, service organizations and governmental bodies, ask questions regarding EDC. How are we doing?

Previous survey was targeted to chambers and local units of government. JL: possible question – “Do you know the EDC exists?” She recommended working on a survey in the future, after some communications have been sent out. RK: send out survey after actionable items have been completed.

Item #4: Review progress two to four times per year.

The EDC agreed that reviewing the strategic plan at least annually was appropriate.

Item #5: EDC subcommittees: communication, business development, environmental, etc. based on goals of the group. (Who is responsible for what?)

Ms. Lovay said this was taking ownership of topics. She added that if business development was determined to have numerous action items, subcommittees could be developed around that. Ms. Comben said a subcommittee would and report back to the group.

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### Collaboration

Item #1: Continue to work with area chambers.

Item #2: Continue to work with businesses to understand the needs of each industry.

Item #3: Continue work with NLEA, SBDC, SCORE, Network Northwest, MEDC, MDARD, Venture North, Housing North, and more.

All the above were noted as ongoing and important.

#### Next Steps

Action items need to be developed, along with budget considerations. Ms. Koch said the County's 2024 budgeting process had just been opened; budget numbers must be presented to the Finance Director no later than July 14. If EDC members are going to additional meetings, funds for additional per diems and mileage needed to be requested.

If any EDC members had suggestions for 2024 EDC budget requests, they are requested to send them to the Administration Office.

A new portion of the strategic plan will be discussed at the next meeting; Ms. Lovay suggested the **Business & Economic Development portion**. That portion includes the following subtopics:

- Broadband
- Property Redevelopment
- Talent Attraction and Workforce Development
- Business Attraction & Economic Development
- Infrastructure

High, Medium, Low priorities with metrics will be included in the discussion.

#### **5. Various Matters / Public / Member Comment**

Ms. Krino asked each member to share an item of interest to the EDC.

Ms. LaVanway mentioned that the project near the Mancelona McDonald's was running into difficulties. Ms. Lovay said there was state funding for extending the sewer, but there were difficulties with the engineering. She added that the City of East Jordan's civic center project was on hold due to demolition costs. Ms. LaVanway also said that the Starlight Campground in Mancelona had obtained a liquor license.

Ms. Peterson mentioned the recycling event in Elk Rapids and the new hotel going up, which will be condominium-type units. The PACE program was mentioned.

Ms. Krino mentioned the kid-oriented Career Quest through Michigan Works. Over 2,000 students attended the two hour event. This was a hands-on event for exhibitors; Ms. Lovay said the DNR brought fish. Ms. Krino said schools were developing programs to have high school graduates with technical licenses in hand.

Ms. Comben gave an update on the properties that will be in tax foreclosure. Ms. Elrod mentioned that solar farm companies are contacting local property owners to rent land. Mr. Timmer noted that the last two miles of Eddy School Road would likely be paved this year. Ms. Koch updated the EDC on the progress of the county building's façade project.

**Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.**