

ECONOMIC RESOURCE ALLIANCE (ERA)

March 8, 2021 9:30 a.m.

Via Zoom

Meeting Summary

Attendees: Jeff Holt (Sault EDC), Tracey Laitinen (Sault EDC), Jason Venema (Michigan Works), Rob Landis (Central Savings Bank), Allie Brawley (Cloverland), Linda Hoath (Sault Convention & Visitors Bureau), Tony Haller (Sault Chamber), Don Gerrie (USDA and Mayor SSM), Kelly Freeman (City of SSM Community Development), Mariah Goos (EUP Regional Planning), Jennifer Bouschor (JETA Corp.), and Jake Brown (Cloverland Electric Cooperative).

1. Call to order 9:30am

Holt welcomed attendees and proceeded with introductions

2. Review of past meeting summary

Please let Laitinen know if there are any corrections.

3. Marketing Strategy Committee – Brown/Gerrie/Hoath/Haller/Schultz /Venema

Brown had included several pages of research in the packet including a SWOT analysis. Gerrie noted that each group has different goals and directions but maybe we could come up with an overall vision and individual groups could pull from it what fits their plan. Gerrie explained the CC EDC rocket project and that this is good for our region as it will have a residual effect. Hoath gave an update on the Soo Locks Patronicity project noting that they are over \$20k and with the MEDC match of \$7500. Hoath explained that the CVB isn't just focused on tourism anymore but having a focus in Lansing noting Schmidt and Damoose have been very helpful for our area. Holt asked the group if they would like to invite an elected official to speak next month. Brawley explained the importance of involving a variety of entities in promoting the Soo as we are all our best ambassadors ex: Dr. Moerke, Birdseye Outfitters, etc...What is great about the Soo that we can claim such as 'nexus of the great lakes'? Hoath added that especially during Covid the outdoor opportunities have been critical. Brawley noted that it would be good to get the impression of the Soo from folks that live here but also those that have moved here recently to get a fresh perspective. Holt added that broadband limits some parts of our area.

The group will continue discussions prior to the next meeting.

4. UP Ambassadors

The group agreed they would like to pick this back up soon.

6. Events/Training/Workforce Development/Individual Sharing

Brawley gave an update on the changes to the Power of Excellence Scholarship. Cloverland Cares is a nonprofit organization funded by members who choose to round up their bills:

- The Cloverland Cares scholarship is valid for any EUP school (LSSU, Bay Mills CC, Les Cheneaux Culinary School) or electric utility tech programs at ACC, LCC, NMU
- It is open to any Cloverland member – whether a son/daughter of a high school senior or someone returning to school or changing careers.
- Evaluation focuses more on financial need, community involvement, work experience, educational/career goals and other strengths versus academic achievement

Venema noted that two MiWorks programs were funded for internships and apprenticeships. More information will be available soon.

Holt gave an update on the Return North UP Wide virtual employment event coming May 20th in partnership with other UP Smartzones. If you are interested in signing up please let Holt know.

Hoath gave an update on a new initiative for gravel road biking. Look for more information on this UP trek coming through Sault Ste. Marie.

6. Individual Sharing

Holt welcomed EUP Regional Planning to the Smartzone.

Gerrie shared that the feedback on the carbide project was positive. Hoath noted excitement from the community input session. TV 9&10 picked up the feed and garnered more positive feedback. Gerrie added that this shows that we aren't very good at promoting ourselves locally.

Goos gave an update on efforts to put together their Resiliency & Recovery Plan and that any business that pivoted successfully during Covid is welcome to join the Champions of Change. Please email Goos if you know companies that transitioned well during this pandemic. This plan will be a teaching tool and include bios and stories about how businesses made certain changes to come out on top ex: Dana Sanderson and the Foundary will be featured.

Hoath reported that the annual travel guide will become a thing of the past and focus on more day to day updates with The Soo Today and QR codes. This new platform allows almost immediate content updates and businesses can change their content daily.

Holt noted that the LSSU CFRE project is wrapping up and encouraged the group to go online and see the live feed. The Brownfield board meets Tuesday and there are two more potential clean-up projects in the works.

Bay Mills Community College; Great Lakes Composites and Prometrics, now have their occupancy certificate after the office renovations.

Laitinen shared the information for the Roundabout Town hall this week via Zoom.

7. The next meeting will be **April 12th**. ***Please take the poll so we know which format, in-person or Zoom, you prefer.***

7. The meeting ended at approx. 10:24 a.m.

TGL