

ECONOMIC RESOURCE ALLIANCE (ERA)

February 8, 2021 9:30 a.m.

Via Zoom

Meeting Summary

Attendees: Jeff Holt (Sault EDC), Tracey Laitinen (Sault EDC), Chris Olson (Chippewa Co. EDC), Jason Venema (Michigan Works), Rob Landis (Central Savings Bank), Allie Brawley (Cloverland), Jeff Hagan (EUP Regional Planning), Linda Hoath (Sault Convention & Visitors Bureau), Tony Haller (Sault Chamber), Don Gerrie (USDA and Mayor SSM), Tony Cutler (Senator Schmidt's Office), Kevin St. Onge (MISTEM/EUPISD), Mari Schupp (Tipping Point Solutions/MiWorks), David Kronberg (Moran Ironworks), Kelly Freeman (City of SSM Community Development), Mark VanDoren (Freshwaters Real Estate), and Kayla Nicholson (Sault DDA)

1. Call to order 9:00am

Holt welcomed attendees and proceeded with introductions and thanked Cloverland for their recent coverage of Sanderson Field (KANJ).

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

In a previous ERA meeting it was discussed if there was a better way we could pool resources to address some negative comments on social media regarding our city with the main concern being inaccuracies on Sault Rants & Raves. Outlet ideas were e-newsletters, ribbon cuttings, social media, and newspapers on both sides of the river. With most meetings moving to virtual for this year there could be potential budget savings that entities could pool for 2021 to better share out our efforts. Schultz recapped their marketing campaign noting the video was approximately \$25,000, highlighting the need to understand social media platforms. Brown is working to put some ideas together and will reach out to the committee.

4. UP Ambassadors

The group agreed they would like to pick this back up soon. Hagan reported that several EDOs partnered to purchase <https://mirsnews.com/welcome.php> which is a bipartisan news source that shows legislative and event calendars and will be a resource tool for this group.

5. Quality Inn/Kmart Redevelopment

The Quality Inn real estate listing was included in the packet. The property is currently listed at \$1.1 million which has been a sticking point for investors. Freeman noted that the City is making strides but if they are successful with the condemnation process then they will be responsible for the demolition of \$400-\$500,000 which they do not have at this time. Offers have been presented but rejected by the current owner. Potential for Brownfield was discussed.

Holt shared the redevelopment plan for the Kmart site noting that he is cautiously optimistic. The new site design includes storage, housing, retail, and more.

Hagan inquired about the new stick built marijuana facility proposed near the Quality Inn. Freeman reported that it is proposed to be built near the large Quality Inn sign on the spur.

Haller reflected back on the ERA's goal setting which included 5 properties to tackle for redevelopment. Haller mentioned the new Lume shop on 3 Mile Road as a positive site. Haller reported on the Templeton property

price hike which is a deterrent to redevelopment. Freeman explained the wave of activity by Cloverland near the Templeton site noting that 1668 Winery needed additional power for their brewery expansion.

Freeman gave good reason for redevelopment of private parcels in that the sellers have unrealistic expectations of what their property is worth.

6. Events/Training/Workforce Development/Individual Sharing

Schupp announced her transition from Tipping Point Solutions to MiWorks as of Feb 24th. Schupp explained the job transition and gave kudos to TPS for their experience and work environment. Schupp's personal email during the transition is marischupp@gmail.com.

Hoath reported on a new Soo Locks fundraiser going on and challenged everyone to donate \$100. Help us transform an area near the MacArthur Lock into "Soo Locks Plaza," featuring exhibits and lock models to create a center for learning. More information can be found at: https://www.patronicity.com/project/soo_locks_plaza#!/

A total of \$7,500 is necessary to receive the MEDC match. If over \$7,500 is raised additional benches will be purchased.

Venema reported on GoingPro Talent funds and the recipient list was in the packet. Everyone was pleased to see local companies receive these training dollars.

Holt reviewed the City Manager's PowerPoint presentation attached showing over \$30 million dollars in construction this upcoming spring.

Haller announced that Senator Wayne Schmidt and Representative Damoose will be in the City Commission Chamber at 1pm today if anyone would like to stop by.

Hagan reported on the recent Economic Development Administration awards for the Chippewa County EDC and LSSU's CFRE project. Hagan explained the significance in investment for our region and that if all applied grants are awarded in the future the region will receive \$9-10 million which is 50% of the Chicago district's budget. Hagan encouraged everyone to get a prospectus together on projects that have been put on the shelf so if additional funding becomes available you are ready.

Olson thanked Hagan for the assistance with their EDA award and elaborated on the command center announcement. Key meetings are taking place this week and they expect to start up the first quarter of 2020 with 80-100 tech jobs.

Gerrie gave an update and while administration is transitioning they are able to report a \$16.9 million dollar investment in the hospital in Iron Mountain as well as 50% funding for the Bay Mills Health Center construction project. Changing hats now to the City, Mayor Gerrie reported on the \$30 million dollars in construction will bring challenges this spring along with Line 5 and the Soo Locks Project. Gerrie also noted that the Downtown Development Authority received a \$6.2 million dollar place making grant.

Hagan and Gerrie explained the bids that have been coming in 2-3x higher than anticipated due to the influx of Cares Act funding in our region.

Gerrie noted that it is City budgeting season for the next two years so if anyone has anything to discuss please reach out to City Hall and or your City Commission.

The US Army Corps held a joint town hall meeting to discuss the new temporary office space and almost 80 people were in attendance.

Brawley inquired about the Community Services Board and allocation process to which Gerrie directed her to the City Manager for further explanation in upcoming changes to the process.

The group congratulated Rob Landis on his promotion at Central Savings Bank to Executive Vice President.

St. Onge gave an update on supporting STEM through workforce development and asked those in the group to share their specific needs. St. Onge is hopeful about the rocket project tech jobs and is working with schools to develop computer science visioning, and they already have cybersecurity and mechatronics CTE programming. St. Onge encouraged the group to visit Tomorrow Talent and check out the company story maps showcasing career awareness in our region. <https://www.mtu.edu/outreach/access/tomorrows-talent-series/> St. Onge and the MISTEM Advisory Council were recently awarded \$106,000 to promote STEM in K-12.

Brawley explained the new initiative through Cloverland called Cloverland Cares. CC is a nonprofit entity that is focusing on supporting food banks. This spring a scholarship program will open up and will replace the Power of Excellence. Scholarships will be need based and focus on the trades and degree programs to fill the trade pipeline. For more information visit: <https://www.cloverland.com/community/outreach/cloverland-cares/>

Holt reported on the recently closed Survival Grant (Round #4). Awards will be made this week in partnership with elected officials. Holt thanked Olson and Hagan for their help in determining these awards.

Gerrie wrapped by thanking the EDC for their informative annual report given at the most recent City Commission meeting. The full report can be found here: https://fc71f1b5-2ea5-4502-a2c5-f75e57496377.filesusr.com/ugd/84e91d_aba4c40f3ebe40e4ba61ded6c53302b4.pdf

6. The next meeting will be **March 8, 2021 via Zoom – 9:30am start time. Meetings are able to go back to in-person as of March 31.**
7. The meeting ended at approx. 10:37 a.m.

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