

ECONOMIC RESOURCE ALLIANCE (ERA)

January 11, 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), Jake Brown (Cloverland), Vicki Schwab (MEDC), Jeff Hagan (EUP Regional Planning), Linda Hoath (Sault Convention & Visitors Bureau), Tony Haller (Sault Chamber), Brian Chapman (City Manager), Don Gerrie (USDA and Mayor SSM), Joel Schultz (Sault Tribe EDC), Tony Cutler (Senator Schmidt's Office), and Tom Durkee (MEDC Tribal Business Development)

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

3. Guest Speaker – Joel Schultz – Sault Tribe EDC

Schultz gave an update on the new online gaming initiative in partnership with Wynn that will start this month with a soft opening January 12th. Schultz explained the loss in revenues with the casinos being closed or at reduced capacity with Covid noting a 23 million dollar loss. Online gaming is projected to fill a 4 million dollar gap initially with 13% of the market share. Reopening of the casinos was discussed and Schultz noted that their Executive Taskforce has been more restrictive than State guidelines require.

Schultz then introduced a new video that was created by Sault Tribe's first for-profit subsidiary, Chippewa Government Solutions (CGS) which provides instructional media design. See video here: <https://www.facebook.com/saulttribethrive/videos/3364638660316186/>. In addition to showing Sault Tribe Thrive impact the video also displays the quality of finished product of CGS.

Schultz gave an update on the business incubator project funded by the EDA noting excessive costs for construction exceeding \$4 million (previously estimated at \$2.35). With the Cares Act deadline now extended they are looking at a rebid and may potentially reduce the size of the project. Schultz thanked Central Savings Bank and James Parker for their creative financing and support. Olson reported a recent similar situation of excessive bids. Discussion was had regarding lack of available local contractors and excessive building materials costs.

Schultz gave an update on the Sault Tribe's creation of 16 emergency housing locations across our 7 county service area. There is one unit now in Kincheloe which can be utilized if a member needs to quarantine or a visiting doctor would need to stay on a temporary basis. Sault Tribe is the largest tenant in Kincheloe with #212 units and 98.5% occupancy. The struggle to find skilled labor and retention of staff was discussed.

4. Marketing our Region

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. Venema

offered to research MiWorks capabilities. Holt offered to dovetail a recent Chippewa grant application. Hoath offered b-roll from the CVB.

5. Events/Training/Workforce Development/Individual Sharing

Olson gave an update on the MAMA Rocket Project and that the official announcement will occur January 28th. Those in competition for the site are Traverse City, Marquette, Kincheloe, and Battle Creek. Olson noted that Speaker Chatfield was supportive of the project and that John Damoose has been helpful with the project even doing voiceover for their video.

Olson gave an update on the supplemental funding package for the psychiatric unit expansion in Kincheloe in partnership with War Memorial which would bring 40 new jobs to the area. Cutler gave an update that they are working on this project and that mental health is a top priority for Senator Schmidt's office.

Schwab offered the following MEDC updates:

- With the Governor having signed additional COVID-19 relief resources into law late last year, the MEDC is hard at work with our local partners to stand up another two new programs to provide desperately needed funding and support to small businesses around the state. Like with previous programs we are working with our local partners to develop a plan for administering these grant programs and ensuring small businesses and their employees across Michigan can access this critical relief quickly, efficiently and with the greatest impact possible in the coming months, with a special Michigan Strategic Fund Board meeting taking place this Thursday, Jan. 14. We are following the legislative language and intent of the bi-partisan relief bill legislation which includes \$55 million to help small businesses impacted by COVID-19; \$3.5 million for grants to live music and entertainment venues; and \$45 million in direct payments to workers who have been laid off or furloughed as a result of the virus.
- In addition to providing pandemic resources the growth and development priorities continue to be on the Strategic Plan and focus industries. The Michigan Strategic Fund recently approved initiatives for Industry 4.0 and there is an upcoming Toolbox Training this week on this topic that all partners are encouraged to attend.
- MEDC Toolbox Training Webinar Series: Last week's webinar covered US & Foreign Direct Investment, presented by Drew Coleman, Director. Drew's presentation and other topics we've covered can be viewed from the MEDC Partner page (at the bottom) found here: <https://www.michiganbusiness.org/services/partners/>. If you have not yet registered for our free virtual webinar series running from last December – March 2021, please do so here: <https://medc.cventevents.com/ToolboxTrainings>.
 - Future Webinar Topics: Industry 4.0, Community Development & Post COVID-19 Priorities, MI Build Ready, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Capital Access, MEDC COVID-19 Response, PMBC, International Trade, Office of Future Mobility and Electrification, Business Development Incentive Tools, Project Timeline and Portal Process, Retention & Growth, and Michigan Defense Center.

Gerrie reported on the City's 2021 construction projects including the carbide dock (\$20 million), the Downtown Place making which includes 4 roads and parking lots, the reconstruction and utilities on Easterday Avenue from Portage to Ashmun, the Power Canal Trail, and lastly the LSSU CFRE project wrap up.

Haller asked that the UP Ambassadors be brought back on the agenda and that maybe a smaller group could meet. Haller also inquired about the Quality Inn and asked that Freeman/Chapman give an update at the next meeting regarding the blighted property. Holt added that the EDC still fields call to redevelop the property.

Venema will have a report soon on what companies were awarded GoingPro Talent Funds. Region 1 had \$1.4 million in requests this round.

Brown gave an update on broadband funding and Cloverland was not awarded any FCC grants in this round. He noted that the entire EUP was claimed and that they are reaching out to partner with them. Cloverland also purchased 2 drones in order to increase reliability and check lines in remote areas as well as for marketing.

Schultz will connect with Brown after this meeting regarding the FCC licensed areas that they were awarded in order to increase wireless transmission in tribal areas.

Landis noted that the SBA has opened up the Paycheck Protection funding and is rolling out 285 billion this week to businesses through community lenders. Please reach out to CSB if you have questions.

6. The next meeting will be ***February 8, 2021 via Zoom – 9:30am start time.***
7. The meeting ended at approx. 10:37 a.m.

TGL