

SUMMARY OF I-69 THUMB REGION - REGIONAL PROSPERITY STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

The I-69 Thumb Region Regional Prosperity Steering Committee met at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 9, 2017 at the Lapeer County Health Department.

Present: Chairperson Lucas, Derek Bradshaw, Brent Jones, Brian Chapman, Carl Osentoski, Craig Kirkpatrick, Dan Casey, Gene Pierce, John Hoffmann, Kimberly Prusak, Linda Burchell, Mary Ann Ketels, Paula Nas, Rachel Verschaeve, Stephen Erickson, Thomas Crampton, Tom Young, David Merot, Joe Kapper, Paul Mattern, Harmony Lloyd, Matti McCormick, Anna Pinter and Debby Compton.

Chairperson Lucas called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

- I. Introductions
Everyone introduced themselves.

- II. Ecotourism Update
 - a. Micro-Grant Recipients
Anna Pinter advised that in mid-May we awarded ten (10) \$500 micro-grants to recipients that identified a project that would bring visibility, promotion and awareness to ecotourism activities and attractors throughout the region. A couple of examples were shared. Lapeer County KIND organized a 4-day student workshop to teach plant identification along the Southern Links Trail. They held a 2 hour session one week with twenty students and adults participating. A Boy Scout will be doing the signage as his Eagle Scout project and the grant money was used to pay for staff time, water and snacks. City of Vassar hired a drone photographer to help market the Cass River as it passes through Downtown Vassar and beyond. The grant money paid for the photographer. Pictures were shared with the committee. In the fall we will explore if the committee wants to fund another similar grant opportunity.

- III. Education Action Team Update
 - a. Grant Recipients
Anna Pinter stated that also in mid-May ten (10) education grants were awarded out of thirty-five (35) applications that were received. Most were for \$2,500, some were for less. The goal was to fund projects that would help with career readiness. A few highlights and pictures were shared. St. Clair TEC summer camp had 52 participants from 8th and 9th grades. The 8th graders explored construction and culinary pathways and the 9th graders explored digital media and health career pathways. They did both class work and hands on activities. Owosso Public Schools used

funding to put on a camp for Girls in Engineering. They learned how to use/fly a drone from a certified drone trainer. They watched a demonstration on editing software for taking drone footage and putting into a format that could be shared. Next they visited with several businesses and then they created a storyboard to determine what shots and what footage they wanted to take using both the drone and a camera for each business. The students returned to the businesses and took actual footage using their newly acquired skills. Students worked to create a small video for each business and will be presenting these to each business team to show them the benefits of using a drone in their own business and how they could be of value. YouthQuest serves nearly 2,300, K-12 students each year at 15 school sites in Flint and Flint Township. A partnership with Baker College allows YouthQuest to focus on career readiness and in-demand career sectors. Training consisted of 15 hours of hands-on activities planned and executed by qualified Baker College instructors. Crowell-Lexington exposed young students to the possibilities of robotics, design and fast prototyping. The funding was used to purchase GoPiGo2 Classroom kits.

IV. First Impressions Tourism Program Update

Anna Pinter advised that all assessments have been completed. Four (4) first-time visitors assessed each of the four (4) communities; Sebawaing, Marlette, Imlay City and Elkton. Debriefs with assessors were done and final reports are being drafted. Community Report Forums are being scheduled. Each community will receive \$2,000 to do a project based off the results.

Derek Bradshaw advised that the reports will be shared with the committee so ideas can be taken back to your communities.

Anna Pinter mentioned that Andy Northrop is accepting applications now for 2018 projects. If anyone is interested you can contact him directly or we can put you in touch with him.

V. I-69 Thumb Region Corridor Study Presentation

Joe Kapper from the SRF Consulting Group presented a PowerPoint to the committee. Discussed the objectives of the study, what means they used for the study, intercity bus service, express bus service, spine service concept, mobility hubs, mobility hub potential locations, mobility hub feeder service, mobility management, medical transportation, and the summary findings. Mattie McCormick also discussed the telephone survey that was conducted.

VI. EMCOG's Regional Transit Mobility Study

Anna Pinter stated that staff received EMCOG's Regional Transit Mobility Phase III report in June. Their conclusion was all agencies struggle with fleet maintenance issues, there is a need for enhanced ability to provide transport outside of their county or a better mechanism to connect with adjacent county transit systems, consideration of a regional Mobility Manager approach for inter/intra county trips, and human services agencies help with coordination to address common needs. The next steps, EMCOG staff will be

looking to assist transit agencies with transfer coordination across county borders and facilitate discussion of the development and funding of a common Mobility Manager. If you have any questions you may contact Jacob Maurer of our office or Dave Engelhardt of EMCOG.

- VII. **USDA Loan Program**
Chairperson Lucas stated that the I-69 Thumb Region was awarded a grant. USDA Revolving Loan Funds will be available to businesses in the seven (7) county region. The information on this loan program will be placed on the I-69 Thumb Region website.
- VIII. **Business Plan Competition**
Dan Casey announced that for the 2nd year we are hosting the I-69 Thumb Region Catapult Your Business Plan Competition. There were thirty-five (35) companies that entered the county level competitions. The regional competitions will take place at the September 21st I-69 Thumb Region Summit again this year.
- IX. **Ontario Outreach**
Chairperson Lucas stated that some of the economic developers met with businesses potentially interested in moving or expanding into the U.S./Michigan/Region from Ontario, Canada. The meetings are introductory and require a great deal of follow up. Successes will not be immediate but over time may result in a company or two locating within the Region.
- X. **Regional Target Market Analysis**
Derek Bradshaw stated that we have requested a housing target market analysis from MSHDA. There are 32 markets within our region that they will be able to provide a 2-page summary sheet which will include whether housing is needed and if so what type, how much and other information that will be helpful to local communities and developers. This information will be revealed at the I-69 Thumb Region Summit.
- XI. **U of M Flint**
Paula Nas reported that they have been conducting a business survey and have received 107 responses so far. She thanked everyone for helping to distribute the survey. The UM Flint EDA Center is working on multiple projects, one of which involves Carl and placing shipping containers in Sebewaing's downtown to allow for low cost retail. Another project which is underway, is creating a website for businesses that will assist them with finding pertinent resources regardless of the stage of the business, just an idea, growing business, expanding business.

XII. Next Meeting

a. Wednesday, October 11, 2017

Chairperson Lucas stated that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 11th. Chairperson Lucas advised that at the next meeting the committee will discuss the Election of Officers. If anyone is interested in becoming Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson, let Derek Bradshaw or Anna Pinter know.

Chairperson Lucas adjourned the meeting at 11:57 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debby Compton, Secretary
GLS Region V