



# Minutes

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission  
FULL COMMISSION MEETING  
Tuesday, October 19, 2021, 9:30 a.m.

Meeting Held in Person at Southwest Michigan Planning Commission Office and Remotely Via Zoom

## **MEMBERS PRESENT (in person):**

Marchetti, Roseann, Vice Chair, Cass County Commissioner  
Akinwale, Yemi, Treasurer, Berrien County Representative  
Preston, Linda, Secretary, Cass County Representative  
Gundersen, Kristen, Alternate Secretary, Berrien County Representative  
Remus, Richard, Alternate Treasurer, Berrien County Representative  
Doroh, Kurt, Van Buren County Commissioner  
Hanson, Don, Van Buren County Commissioner  
Hanson, Sandra, Van Buren County Representative  
Janssen, Judy, Van Buren County Representative  
Pantaleo, Paul, Berrien County Representative  
Stauffer, Dick, Berrien County Representative  
Torzynski, Robert, Pokagon Band Representative  
Tyler, Doug, Cass County Representative

## **MEMBERS PRESENT (via Zoom):**

Freehling, Teri Sue, Chair, Berrien County Commissioner (Remote by medical necessity)  
DeLong, Don, Cass County Representative  
Fette, Dan, Berrien County Representative  
Foerster, David, Van Buren County Representative  
Laylin, Leon, Cass County Representative  
Morris, Zach, Van Buren County Economic Development Ex-Officio (arrived at 10:00)  
Patterson-Gladney, Gail, Van Buren County Commissioner (Remote by medical necessity)

## **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Curran, Jim, Berrien County Commissioner  
Meeks, Donnie, Berrien County Commissioner  
Newton, Matthew, Van Buren County Representative  
Payne, Gloria, Berrien County Representative  
Schueneman, James, Berrien County Representative  
Stover, Jim, Berrien County Representative

## **STAFF PRESENT:**

K. John Egelhaaf, Executive Director  
Marcy Hamilton, Deputy Executive Director/Senior Planner  
Maria Vettrano, Office Manager

## 1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Teri Sue Freehling called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Office Manager, Maria Vettrains took roll call and a quorum was present.

## 2. ACCEPTANCE AND/OR REVISION OF CONSENT AGENDA

Chair Freehling presented the Agenda. Linda Preston moved to “**ACCEPT THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.**” Gail Patterson-Gladney seconded. Judy Janssen offered a correction to the August Minutes, she was placed present via Zoom instead of present in person. All agreed to the change. A roll call vote was taken, the motion carried.

## 3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Director Egelhaaf introduced and welcomed Maria Vettrains as the new office manager at SWMPC and then opened the floor to any questions regarding the Executive Director’s Report.

Richard Remus was interested in the treasury report and increase in revenue. Egelhaaf responded that it is possible revenue wasn’t properly categorized and will be taking a closer look to make sure everything is allocated correctly.

Paul Pantaleo wanted to know more about the Coastal Leadership Academy (Item I). Deputy Executive Director, Marcy Hamilton responded about this exciting opportunity that is funded through the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. They have given a grant to the Michigan Association of Planning for Coastal Leadership Academies. Hamilton has been working with them to recruit communities along Lake Michigan. There will be three virtual sessions starting in January 2022. Each community participating will create a team to work through issues including coastal erosion, planning, and zoning to help the coastline be more resilient and find more natural solutions. Kurt Doroh and Gail Patterson-Gladney volunteered to be a part of this, Hamilton suggested a possible Van Buren county team.

Linda Preston asked for more detail on the Palisades Economic Recovery Initiative (Item B). Director Egelhaaf responded that the application has been accepted and the project is approved to move forward. They have been three meetings with the entire Palisades team and will meet on a monthly basis. They are currently at the analysis side of the project, with Kinexus and U of M pulling in data. Hoping to have a report with the current state of the analysis side of the project by December. At the end of the analysis stage they will invite comment from the public and connect with the Citizens Advisory Panel.

Doug Tyler asked where we are with Broadband. Director Egelhaaf said that Chair, Teri Sue Freehling has been talking to representatives from the other two counties. Freehling mentioned she has had multiple informal conversations about where they are in Berrien post survey and are currently diving into the data. Freehling offered anyone to reach out to her if they would like to have a further conversation about Broadband. Egelhaaf talked

about the surveys and mapping to find the gap areas. Gail Patterson-Gladney is interested in talking about Broadband with Chair Freehling.

Patterson-Gladney asked what the goal was for the first quarter of the Palisades project. Director Egelhaaf said the goal was to take the results and present them to PCAP (Citizens Advisory Panel). The meeting was postponed from October to January 2022. They will expand analysis through the project's second quarter and will move to the assessment phase after the meeting with PCAP.

Richard Remus inquired about Ox Creek (Item H). Deputy Executive Director, Marcy Hamilton is helping the Berrien County Drain Commissioner's Office to get a grant for rain gardens on the Meijer property that will be built next year. Hoping the rain garden will help slow rain water and improve water quality going into Ox Creek. Benton Harbor is really interested in cleaning up Ox Creek and finding better practices dealing with storm water.

Dick Stauffer mentioned he is getting many calls about Broadband and inquires about who to refer them to. Chair, Teri Sue Freehling said she will ask the administrator and follow up after the meeting. Stauffer and Freehling discussed the need for improvement of the maps.

Paul Pantaleo moved to **"ACCEPT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT."** Roseann Marchetti seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

#### **4. BUILD BACK BETTER REGIONAL CHALLENGE GRANT APPLICATION RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT #2021-1**

Director Egelhaaf discussed Resolution #2021-1, stating the intent is to catalyze the food sector of the economy across west Michigan. The grant application involves 15 counties within three planning regions. Egelhaaf presented the two phases of the application, by phase 2, 20-30 regions will be successful applicants. He also went over the evaluation criteria – EDA is looking for a compelling list of regional assets, industry leadership potential, sustainability, equity, feasibility, strength of the coalition, and commitment. The grant writer will be West Michigan Shoreline and Egelhaaf has been working with them and sending them information. The grant application is due at midnight today and if passed will firmly establish us as a coalition partner.

Gail Patterson-Gladney motions to read the resolution aloud, Director Egelhaaf volunteers to read the resolution. Patterson-Gladney moved to **"APPROVE RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT #2021-1."** Kurt Doroh seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, the resolution passed.

#### **5. EDA PARTNERSHIP PLANNING GRANT APPLICATION RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT #2021-2**

Director Egelhaaf presents Resolution #2021-2, for which the grant is due in early November. Kurt Doroh moved to **"APPROVE RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT #2021-2."** Yemi Akinwale seconded the motion. Egelhaaf read the resolution aloud. A roll call vote was taken. Resolution adopted.

## **6. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EVALUATION AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORT**

Vice Chair, Roseann Marchetti, gave an update that she has received all of the evaluations, will discuss with Director Egelhaaf today, and plans to meet with the Ad Hoc Committee via Zoom.

## **7. SWMPC ANNUAL AWARDS**

Director Egelhaaf reviewed the Welch-Lackey Award and presented Roseann Marchetti as the staff's candidate. Several options were provided for Board members to return completed ballots to Maria Vettrains by the deadline of October 29, 2021.

Egelhaaf reviewed the Graham Woodhouse Award, including a list of previous winners. A deadline of November 5, 2021 was presented for the nomination forms, which are open to all Board members and available on the SWMPC website

## **8. PLANNER PRESENTATION – Marcy Hamilton**

Deputy Executive Director, Marcy Hamilton shared her presentation, *Trail Talk*. Hamilton dives into different types of trails, including shared use paths, paved shoulders/bike lanes, U.S bike routes, and water trails. She discusses different reasons to invest in trails, such as attracting business, increase real estate values, promote tourism, and reduce environmental impact. Hamilton shows data on Michigan traffic crashes relating to trail safety, plus on and off road trail data for Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties. Hamilton discusses current trail projects – currently working on going from Niles to Berrien Springs. She shares local and regional trail systems and project maps.

Richard Remus asks if and how we can see how much use the water trails are getting. Hamilton responded through surveys and encouraging people to report their trips on Facebook – seeing use growing.

Chair, Teri Sue Freehling discusses possible synergy between non-motorized trails and water trails since there are mutual interests. Hamilton talks about different surfaces regarding longevity and maintenance.

Hamilton ends her presentation with the handout of a new map of the trails.

## **9. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None offered.

## **10. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR**

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. John Egelhaaf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "K. John" and last name "Egelhaaf" clearly distinguishable.

K. John Egelhaaf, AICP

Date: November 9, 2021