



Minutes

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
FULL COMMISSION MEETING
Tuesday, August 24, 2021, 9:30 a.m.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT (in person):

Freehling, Teri Sue, Chair, Berrien County Commissioner
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
Meeks, Donnie, Berrien County Commissioner (arrived at 10:30)
Pantaleo, Paul, Berrien County Representative
Schueneman, James, Berrien County Representative

MEMBERS PRESENT (via Zoom):

Curran, Jim, Berrien County Commissioner
DeLong, Don, Cass County Representative
Foerster, David, Van Buren County Representative
Janssen, Judy, Van Buren County Representative
Laylin, Leon, Cass County Representative
Morris, Zach, Van Buren County Economic Development Ex-Officio
(remote by medical necessity) Patterson-Gladney, Gail, Van Buren County Commissioner
Payne, Gloria, Berrien County Representative
Stauffer, Dick, Berrien County Representative
Torzynski, Robert, Pokagon Band Representative
Tyler, Doug, Cass County Representative

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Fette, Dan, Berrien County Representative
Newton, Matthew, Van Buren County Representative
Stover, Jim, Berrien County Representative

STAFF PRESENT:

K. John Egelhaaf, Executive Director
Kris Martin, Associate Planner

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Teri Sue Freehling called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Associate Planner, Kris Martin took roll call and a quorum was present.

2. ACCEPTANCE AND/OR REVISION OF CONSENT AGENDA

Chair Freehling presented the Agenda. Roseann Marchetti moved to “**ACCEPT THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED.**” Jim Schueneman seconded. A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried.

- a. Meeting Agenda***
- b. Minutes of Commission Meeting, June 15, 2021***
- c. Chairman’s Report**
- d. Treasurer’s Report***

Motion to ACCEPT
1. Roseann Marchetti
2. Jim Schueneman

CHANGES? None

3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Motion to ACCEPT
1. Linda Preston
2. Roseann Marchetti

Director Egelhaaf gave a brief overview of the report and stated that an outside accounting firm will be evaluating our financial system. Among the processes to be reviewed and evaluated is the management of our indirect expense. Currently our process is complicated and an outside accounting firm can review the way we currently do this and recommend a way to do it better. We have two different pieces of accounting software the currently do not integrate with one another. The evaluation will look for a way to potentially connect them. Rich Remus asked if this will replace our current CPAs. It will not. It is a one-time contract that will take about 6-8 weeks. We will continue to use Blossomland Accounting for payroll and Kruggel Lawton for our annual audit.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding from congress update: The funding is going through the EDA and is an interesting opportunity between the federal government and SWMPC. The funding is split between six different categories. To apply for this funding EDA recommends that applicants focus not on multiple applications and categories but rather, toward a single application and category. EDA will assist with applications. EDA’s new funding category is Travel and Recreation Tourism. We are interested in supporting projects that communities would like to implement keeping in mind that they must also align with EDA funding goals.

awarded the project from a wide range of applicants. JR is located in our region. The local food council has been the primary touch point for this project. Farm employment and income have experienced significant declines, but there are also issues with equity, access, and affordability to fresh, local food.

SWMLFC Food Brand Priorities included key insights from over 40 individuals.

The brand and tag line that has resulted is called: Southwest Michigan Fresh - Share our Harvest.

Linda Preston said there are more people canning in our region. Kurt Doroh asked about being able to get local produce like blueberries in the stores in our SW Michigan area.

Rich Remus asked about our regional map of the crops grown in our region and if there is an update coming. Director Egelhaaf replied that there could be if there is funding or a project that could include an update to the regional map of food and crops. Paul Pantaleo asked if we had contact with farmers, growers, and producers. Director Egelhaaf replied that they have but their busy schedules are a challenge.

7. SUPPORT OF SB 514

Changes Proposed to PA 188 for Broadband Expansion via Township Special Assessment

“The construction, improvement, and maintenance of communications infrastructure, including broadband and high-speed internet.” This would allow for special assessment.

Teri Freehling asked if we wanted formal support for this bill. Zach Morris said that he supports the bill on behalf of Market Van Buren and that we need to be creative to solve the broadband problem.

Kurt Dorah moved to **“SUPPORT SB 514.”** Sandra Hanson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Kurt Dorah said that we need a primary contact for broadband. Director Egelhaaf stated that there could be representatives from each county to create a committee or have a primary contact. Linda Preston said we can work collectively but to reach out to your local representatives.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

9. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Roseann Marchetti said they have a new Cass County Administrator, Mr. Newton. There are many improvements to Cassopolis after MSU’s vision session and grants. She said to check out the new park and trails in the Cassopolis area. Linda Preston spoke about the bridge project in Pokagon Twp. and that they were a recipient of a historic bridge project award.

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted by:



K. John Egelhaaf, AICP

Date: September 21, 2021