



November 22, 2021
10:05 AM
City of Fremont

I. **CALL TO ORDER** – 10:00 AM by Secretary James Maike

II. **ROLL CALL QUORUM:** Yes

Commissioners Present

Lake County: Len Todd
Mason County: Ron Bacon, Kathy Winczewski
Muskegon County: Kim Cyr, Jennifer Hodges, Bonnie McGlothin
Roger Morgenstern, Rillastine Wilkins
Newaygo County: Bryan Kolk, James Maike, James Rynberg
Oceana County: Ron Christians, Phil Morse
WMSRDC Appointees: Rich Houtteman, James Kelly

Commissioners Absent

Mason County: Lewis Squires
Muskegon County: Marcia Hovey-Wright, Ken Johnson
Muskegon CC: Dale Nesbary
West Shore CC: Crystal Young
WMSRDC Appointees: Andrea Large

Staff/Guests Present: Erin Kuhn, Amanda Snyder, Kathy Evans,
Fallon Chabala, Jamie Way

III. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion was made by Commissioner Maike and supported by Commissioner Rynberg to approve the agenda for the November 22, 2021. Motion carried.

IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion was made by Commissioner Rynberg and supported by Commissioner Todd to approve the Commission meeting minutes of September 20, 2021. Motion carried.

The October 25, 2021, executive officer's meeting was cancelled.

V. **PUBLIC COMMENT – AGENDA ITEMS**

Commissioner Rynberg welcomed the board members to Fremont. The Budweiser Clydesdales parade happened last week with a great turnout!

VI. **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

There was no report. But Commissioner McGlothin stated she's glad to be back, regarding the election!

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Transportation – Staff participated in three virtual meetings with SRF regarding the Transit Governance Study. There will be more opportunities for input into the study within the coming weeks. Recommendations for a governance structure are expected to be presented in December. Erin encouraged all, but especially those in Muskegon County, to participate.

Economic Development – Staff worked with several partners to submit a Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the West Michigan Agricultural Technologies and Regional Food Systems Initiative. The grant was submitted on October 19. Award announcements are expected in December. This is an extremely competitive grant program. If the project is not funded, WMSRDC will continue to work with coalition members to determine next steps and seek alternative funding.

Surveys for the Pandemic Response and Recovery Plan are available on the WMSRDC website through November. WMSRDC has worked with the five county Economic Development Organizations to develop and get the word out regarding the electronic surveys. There are three different surveys to choose from including: private sector business, public sector governments/not-for-profits, and individual residents in the WMSRDC region. To date approximately 500 surveys have been completed. Information gathered through the survey will help to develop the Pandemic Resiliency Plan.

Stephen Carlson is calculating the survey information. WMSRDC has hired an intern to help Stephen with the development of the Pandemic Response and Recover Plan. Robert Johnson is a student at GVSU and will begin December 1.

Other Activities – The October 12 ARPA local government workshop included more than 50 participants from our region. Fourteen workshops were held across the state and presented by representatives from MSU in partnership with WMSRDC and the Michigan Association of Regions. MSU recently made a recording compilation of the fourteen workshops. Erin will forward this recording to our local government distribution list, including the board members. The recording will also be on the landing page of the WMSRDC website.

Erin presented at the Michigan Economic Developers Association Conference, talking about the Michigan Infrastructure Council, the project portal, and the pillars that are being developed.

Lastly, Erin wanted to extend a personal invitation to Kathy Evans' retirement party on December 10, 2021, from 2-4 pm at the WMSRDC offices.

VIII. PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS – INFORMATION Due to Pending Audit

Amanda Snyder gave an overview of the preliminary financials for the months of September and October 2021. The audit begins today.

Commissioner Houtteman asked if the Muskegon River Watershed Tree Planting project could carry over into the next year. Amanda stated that a no cost extension is currently in process.

IX. STAFF PRESENTATION

Kathy Evans and Fallon Chabala gave a presentation on the Environmental Program.

X. NEW BUSINESS

- No new Business

XI. ROUND TABLE

- Commissioner Christians shared that the Crystal Valley Dam is a new project they are looking at. Steve Bruch has joined the Oceana County staff to work with economic development. There are also conversations about projects related to Pentwater Lake. Oceana has a new redistricting plan, which reduces their commissioners from seven to five.
- Commissioner Cyr reported that Muskegon County has reduced their commissioners from nine to seven due to redistricting. This does create much more work for some. Most of the ARPA funds have been committed to infrastructure type projects. There is a possibility of Muskegon County staff moving to a new location.
- Commissioner Hodges commented that as chairperson of the Muskegon County Water Policy board, they are in the process of doing a large channel crossing project that was suggested by the State in the 1990s. The board finally came up with the mechanisms and funding to make it happen. The project will result in a redundant water system that connects through the channel to make a complete loop of our water system.
- Commissioner Kolk was happy to see the Maple River project on our NOAA regional partnership project list. The White Cloud dam is being looked at as a potential project in Newaygo County.
- Commissioner Morgenstern asked if WMSRDC worked with Mona Lake Watershed Council (MLWC)? Kathy stated that MLWC has participated in the West Michigan Watershed Councils' meetings in the past, but she hasn't seen them recently.
- Commissioner Maike commented that there is a significant waiting list for recreation plans. Erin stated that staff capacity is limited due to existing projects and commitments. An intern has been hired, and there are other possible intern and/or part-time employee possibilities. WMSRDC needs to be sure we have long term sustainability for any new hires. The District 10 Health board is partnering with NCRESA to provide free testing for Covid at the NCRESA building.
- Commissioner Morse stated the environmental presentation was so helpful to him. He also announced that he is running for State Representative for his district.
- Commissioner Todd stated that Erin and he met to talk about a few potential projects: West Alleyway in downtown; the dam removal; and the airport project. He has new areas to cover as Commissioner.
- Commissioner Winczewski stated that the City of Ludington is going through a housing boom. Someone purchased an old WWII warehouse and is turning it into a 62-unit apartment building. The city passed a school milage to combine all elementary students into one new building. New homes will be built in the two empty elementary buildings. Someone purchased another building near the Ferry, and 96 high end apartments will be built there. Four condos are going up on Washington Avenue right by the bridge; five townhouses right in town; three row houses on Rath Avenue; two apartment buildings on Washington just added a third building with 10 new units; ten new duplexes which will provide 34 new units; and we're looking at a new city ordinance to allow for a tiny home to be built behind an existing home for a mother-in-law unit.
- Erin talked about the recently passed and signed infrastructure bill which will impact both the transportation and environmental programs. Many of the current environmental projects discussed in the environmental presentation received funding. Federal departments are still deciding how the money will be programmed. The national associations we belong to are putting together webinars and

information. The Federal Transportation bill was included, so transportation will receive additional funding. Drinking water and wastewater are also included in this. The Economic Development Administration is not included in this bill. However, they did receive \$1.5B through the Cares Act; \$3B in ARPA funds; and if the Build Back Better goes through, they will be awarded another \$5B in funds. The State also has \$11B to spend in ARPA and surplus funding. WMSRDC is trying to be prepared should all of these programs get funded. Erin and her counterparts are encouraging the State to spend this money utilizing the principles of asset management, so we don't get into a long-term legacy liability.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENTS – WMSRDC PROGRAMS

There was no public in attendance.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Commissioner Maike and supported by Commissioner Rynberg to adjourn at 11:26 AM. Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING: **January 24, 2021** – WMSRDC Conference Room


Bonnie McGlothlin, Chairperson


Erin Kuhn, Executive Director

1/24/2022
Date

1-24-2022
Date