



November 25, 2024
10:00 AM – Newaygo County
Fremont City Hall, 101

I. **CALL TO ORDER – 10:00 AM** by Chairperson Jennifer Hodges

II. **ROLL CALL QUORUM: Yes**

Commissioners Present:

Lake County: Clyde Welford
Mason County: Les Johnson, Kathy Winczewski
Muskegon County: Kim Cyr, Rachel Gorman, Jennifer Hodges,
Marcia Hovey-Wright, Bonnie McGlothlin, Roger Morgenstern
Newaygo County: Bryan Kolk, Paul Mellema, James Rynberg
Oceana County: Tim Beggs
WMSRDC Appointees: James Kelly, Andrea Large, Jonathan Wilson

Commissioners Absent:

Mason County: Lewis Squires
Muskegon County: Michelle Hazekamp
Oceana County: Joel McCormick
Muskegon CC: Beth Dick
West Shore CC: Mark Kinney

Staff/Guests Present: Erin Kuhn, Amanda Snyder, Syndi Copeland

III. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

A motion was made by Commissioner Wilson and supported by Commissioner Morgenstern to approve the agenda for November 25, 2024. Motion carried.

IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Commissioner Kelly and supported by Commissioner Morgenstern to approve the September 23, 2024, Commission meeting minutes. Motion carried.

The elected Officer's meeting minutes for October 28, 2024, is for information only.

V. **PUBLIC COMMENT – AGENDA ITEMS** - There was no public comment.

VI. **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

A. Updated Regional Board Directory

VII. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Transportation – All of the FY2025 transportation project authorizations have been awarded.

Economic Development – WMSRDC was successful in receiving the EDA grant in the amount of \$125,000 to do the Regional Agriculture Cluster Impact Analysis. In looking for matching dollars of \$125,000, WMSRDC received a grant from the state through the Making It in Michigan Fund in the amount of \$62,500. We also received \$10,500 from the Community Foundation of Muskegon County. WMSRDC awaits word on a grant application with the Fremont Area Community Foundation as well. WMSRDC will apply to both Mason and Oceana Foundations when their rounds open in the spring. WMSRDC has committed money to the local match as well. We are in the process of contracting with MSUs RE&GIS and Product Center to conduct work on the study. An RFP has been issued to hire a national consultant for this project, and proposals are due by December 11.

Erin talked about the work of the ERC fellow, Annika Gacnik. Annika is making state-wide connections, reaching out to our communities and just doing a fantastic job.

EDA, through the Senate, has received some traction for reauthorization. This reauthorization has been tied to the federal defense fund. Our national associations are looking for support from the local agencies to our legislators. Erin asked the board to reach out to our legislators to gain support for this. Erin added information regarding how this reauthorization would benefit WMSRDC and our local communities.

Environmental Program – WMSRDC received a \$225,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to assist the City of Muskegon in doing a tree inventory, a tree maintenance plan, and some plantings. We also learned last week that we received a \$200,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Federal to help us provide technical assistance to develop environmental projects within our five counties focusing on the drowned river mouth system.

Erin mentioned the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) and the work she has done towards receiving this designation. NOAA supports a NERRS in West Michigan, but does not have the staff capacity or resource to move it forward at this time. Erin continues to reach out to legislators to encourage this for West Michigan.

The National Oceanic & Atmospheric Association (NOAA) is removing the last Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI) for Muskegon Lake. All nine BUI's have been removed and documentation started by the State to remove Muskegon Lake as an Area of Concern. We look for the announcement sometime in the spring.

VIII. PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Amanda gave an overview of preliminary financials and stated that cash is in a good position at the end of the year. Audit field work was conducted last week, and the work was completed in four days.

IX. STAFF PRESENTATION - Erin Kuhn, Executive Director – Materials Management Plan Update

X. NEW BUSINESS – There was no new business.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS – WMSRDC PROGRAMS - No public attended the meeting.

XII. ROUND TABLE

- Les Johnson, Mason County – Les informed the group that Friday they received a \$200,000 My Neighborhood Grant for building two small homes. A housing inspector has been approved for Chill Grant housing inspections. Mason County decided to go with the Spicer Group.


- Tim Beggs, Oceana County – The road commission finished up 144 miles of road upgrades this summer. The Village of Rothbury is proposing a large indoor recreation facility. Shelby Township recently built an outdoor recreational park and now wants to put up an indoor facility. A new kayak trail is completed and goes from the dam in Hart to Pentwater.
- Kim Cyr, Muskegon County – Kim introduced the board to the *County Communicator*, which may be found at <https://www.co.muskegon.mi.us/1749/Muskegon-County-Communicator---Monthly-N>. The County is in a conversation with Dalton Township Supervisor, Jeffrey Martin, who mentioned some changing housing rules regarding home size and the possibility of tiny homes.
- Rachel Gorman, City of Muskegon – Housing zoning ordinance updates are continuing which would make the city more modern and friendly. They updated their short term rental zoning. A percentage cap based on the neighborhood is in place. The Commission did give the blessing to move forward with the opportunity of a land swap between Fisherman’s Landing and the Mart Dock area. There are three public engagement opportunities scheduled in early January 2025, regarding the land swap, and two are in the Jackson Hill area.
- Roger Morgenstern, City of Norton Shores – The city is researching other communities for information on short term rentals, as they currently do not have an ordinance in place. The fire chief has announced his retirement at the end of December. They are looking at the idea of a Metropolitan Fire Authority. Norton Shores included some road projects in the WMSRDC transportation plans. They are hoping to use more local funds along with federal to speed up processes.
- Bonnie McGlothlin, City of Muskegon Heights – The city continues looking for both a city manager and city inspector. The Broadway and Rowan Park projects have been started. Bonnie is working on her strategic plan.
- Bryan Kolk, Newaygo County - The grand opening of the Dragon Trail occurred. A new marina is being built on the back side of Hardy Dam. Phone upgrades in central dispatch have been completed. Currently the County is putting bleeding control kits in their schools. A MSHDA grant has been submitted to help fund repairs to keep people in their homes. The County is in the process of changing their pension plan. A first amendment audit is in process, so the county staff have started first amendment auditor training.
- Jonathan Wilson, DTE Energy –On the gas side of the energy sector, several projects including expansions and gas main renewals are being completed. About 7,500 new customers are connected every year. DTE had to push forward a gas main renewal in the City of Ludington, but it should start early 2025. On the solar side, they are working with Mason County on a solar ordinance as well as a solar project. DTE Energy is trying to get information out to locals on how to save money.
- James Rynberg, City of Fremont – All were welcomed by James to Fremont. To alleviate housing shortages, the City of Fremont is currently in housing/condo building mode. More to come next Spring.
- Jennifer Hodges, Muskegon Charter Township – The township started the process of approving a vacant building and home ordinance to get some of the blighted buildings cleaned up and to get vacant homes back on the market. They have approved an extension on an IFT application for \$760 million as well as a Metro Act application to give another broadband option to our residents. Tonight is the annual tree lighting ceremony where Santa will give out 200 gifts.
- Kathy Winczewski, City of Ludington – Kaitlyn Aldridge will host the council meeting tonight and will discuss the budget. The city is in the process of looking at a new zoning package called Unified Development Ordinance. A consultant has been hired to review the current housing density, and they are hoping to reduce the number of buildings in any certain area. ARPA funds were used to hire North County CISMA to conduct a survey last summer on three invasive species: Knotweed, Oriental Bittersweet and Tree of Heaven. The results of the survey will be reported at the December 9 meeting.

- James Kelly, MSU – The president of MSU stopped in a couple of West Michigan counties last month. The tour then went to Muskegon County for a reception at the Museum of Art and an overnight stay in downtown Muskegon. Adelaide Pointe has a reception center and will show off the facility as a construction project which uses “mass timber”.
- Clyde Welford, Lake County – The Road Commissioner attended a Webber Township meeting and stated that EV projects have depleted their funding, so road repairs likely won't happen. Clyde was sworn in last Friday. The Baldwin Chief of Police received a Michigan State Police certificate of accreditation for upgrades and changes.
- Andrea Large, Community Foundation for Mason County - The Foundation awarded over \$60,000 in education related grants. One of these, in conjunction with House of Flavors, was to the West Shore Educational Service District for a regional robotics facility. Mason County Housing Alliance was formed by a Rural Readiness grant. Ryan Kilpatrick, Consultant, led the Foundation in developing a tool kit for municipalities to layer incentives so housing development will pick up in our community. They have also developed a strategic plan for housing development. The Foundation has just finished up the Multigenerational Community Center Feasibility Study.
- Paul Mellema, Newaygo County – There was only one change in this election on the Commissioners board, and it was due to a retirement. The local emergency planning team has been working on a plan for emergency vehicles during the time the Hardy Dam will be shut down. A year ago, we met at the Stone Lodge at the Medial Care Facility in Fremont. This facility was ranked 14th in the U.S. by Newsweek Magazine.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Commissioner Kolk and supported by Commissioner Welford to adjourn at 11:15 AM. Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING: January 27, 2025 – Muskegon County



 Jennifer Hodges, Chairperson
 1/27/2025

 Date



 Erin Kuhn, Executive Director
 1-27-2025

 Date