

MICHIGAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND BOARD MEETING

May 17, 2017

Village of Mackinaw City
102 Huron Street
Mackinaw City, Michigan

Board Members Present:

Laura Braun, RD Fund Board Member
Margaret Minerick, RD Fund Board Member
John Walters, RD Fund Board Member
Fred Taccolini, RD Fund Board Member

Other Attendees:

Jason Allen, MDARD
Heather Throne, MDARD
Dennis West, Northern Economic Initiatives Corporation
Bob Jacquart, Copper Peak

The meeting was called to order by Jason Allen at 1:04 p.m.

Jason Allen welcomed the Board to the meeting.

MOTION: Fred Taccolini moved to approve the September 29, 2016, meeting minutes. Seconded by Margaret Minerick. Motion carried.

Heather Throne, MDARD, provided an overview of all 17 projects approved for funding under the Rural Development Fund grants. There were 72 eligible proposals submitted requesting \$12.9 million. Of those, 17 were awarded funds through the competitive Joint Evaluation Process (JEC) totaling more than \$1.5 million. Discussion included scoring criteria, JEC points, project types, and risk assessments conducted with the approved projects.

Presentations were given by two awarded grant projects. Dennis West, Northern Economic Initiatives Corporation, provided an overview of their project in Marquette to access and create strategies for 20 Central U.P. small businesses to improve their processes and profitability. Following a lean assessment, these manufacturers will be poised to launch "Lean journeys" to be more profitable and as a result, more sustainable, more likely to add jobs, and support the rural communities of the central U.P.

Bob Jacquart, Copper Peak, discussed how this grant is a key part of a much larger initiative to bring the Copper Peak Ski Flying Facility into ongoing use. The grant supports the cost of engineering the landing hill of the Copper Peak facility to install a permanent summer jumping surface.

Discussion included recommendations received for grant process and criteria changes for the next grant cycle. Proposed changes include establishing a funding cap for projects, the elimination of state agencies as eligible applicants, establishing a ratio on funding for category types, requiring a letter of viability for projects, and requiring a review of other funding resources used for a project.

A press release requesting public comment on the Rural Development Fund grants was being released and public comment will be open until July 12. The public comments received will be presented at the next board meeting.

The board expressed an interest in being more involved in the grant review process for the next round.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 6, 2017, in Mackinaw City.

There was no public comment.

MOTION: Laura Braun moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:43 p.m. Seconded by John Walters.