

**MICHIGAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND BOARD MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES**

September 23, 2021

102 South Huron Ave

Mackinaw City, MI 49701

Board Members Present:

Justin Horvath, RD Fund Board Member

Erin Kricher, RD Fund Board Member

Margaret Minerick, RD Fund Board Member

Fred Taccolini, RD Fund Board Member, via Teams

Jamie Zmitko Somers, representing Director Gary McDowell, MDARD

Other Attendees,

Heather Throne, MDARD

Sherri Goodreau, MDARD

The meeting was called to order by Jamie Zmitko Somers in Director McDowell's absence at 10:04 a.m.

Jamie Zmitko Somers welcomed members of the Board and guests. Introductions were made. This will be Fred's last meeting for the Rural Development Fund Board.

Minutes of the February 11, 2021 Rural Development Fund Board Meeting

MOTION: Margaret Minerick moved to approve the February 11, 2021, meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by Justin Horvath. Motion carried unanimously.

2020 Annual Legislative Report

Heather Throne presented the 2020 Annual Legislative Report to the Board. The document reports on the annual progress which the Rural Development Fund Board is required to review:

- 2019- There is one grant open, "Republic Dam Modification." The Michigan River Basin Tax Increment Financing and Water Improvement Authority. The local board has approved moving forward on this project.
- 2020-The Copper Harbor Tails Society grant has been terminated. They were not able to secure permits from the DNR to date. Once they have the permits, they will reapply for grant funding.
- 2021-Two grants have completed their projects and closed.

Project and Partnership Updates

Sherri Goodreau gave a slideshow presentation to the Board of Completed Grant Projects. The presentation included Food for Thought, City of Escanaba, Village of L'Anse, and Powell Township.

Public Comment Report, Review 2020-2021 Grant Guidelines and Timeline

Heather reported on the memo she sent to the director and the board members pertaining to the open comment period. Comments included:

- Too much money is going to “Alcohol Agri-tourism.”
- Professional grant writers needed to apply for grants.
- Lucy Wilcox represented Powell Township as a volunteer member supporting Agri-tourism in the area.
- Funding equipment that is purchased outside of Michigan.
- Grants supporting one business, one product.

The Board addressed these concerns. The following suggestions were made:

- Have grantees submit letters of support from community stakeholders and how that business is helping the community.
- Have the applications ask if the project will create more jobs.
- Promote completed grants.

Guidelines

Heather reported that the new census data came out. The current guidelines dictate that counties must have populations 60,000 or less for businesses to be eligible to apply for Rural Development Grant funds. Based on those guidelines, the new census data for Barry, Ionia, and Shiawassee Counties are no longer eligible. The board has the option to keep the population numbers at the current 60,000 or increase that number to 70,000. Increasing the number to 70,000 would keep the three counties listed above and add Montcalm County. The board discussed the options, all agreed to increase the guidelines making counties with populations of 70,000 or less eligible to apply for Rural Development Grant funding.

Timeline

Heather asked the Board to approve the following timeline for the 2022 Rural Development Grant period:

- Request for proposals, October 1, 2021
- Informational webinar (this is new for applicants) October 2021
- Application due, November 18, 2021
- Joint Evaluation Committee meeting, January 2022
- Announce awards, February 2022

The Board discussed funding areas in the guidelines. Broadband and childcare issues were brought to the table for discussion.

The Board approved the following changes to the guidelines for 2022:

- The population for counties to be eligible to apply for Rural Development Grant funding will increase to 70,000 and under. This will be for Barry, Ionia, and Shiawassee Counties to remain, but will also add Montcalm County.
- In the funding categories, broadband will be added to Infrastructure Development excluding what is considered ineligible on page 4 of the guidelines.
- In the funding categories, childcare will be added to Talent Development and Training.

MOTION: Margaret Minerick moved that the Board amend the 2022 Guidelines as discussed. Justin Horvath seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2022 Meeting Schedule

Heather will create a doodle poll in conjunction with notice of award for February 2022 meeting.

Margaret commented that the State of Michigan needs to update legislation allowing meetings to take place virtually.

Jamie Zmitko Somers responded, "It takes legislative action."

The Board agreed to have the February 2022 meeting in Mackinaw, with the date and location to be determined based on doodle poll results.

The summer meeting will be scheduled in July or August in the Upper Peninsula. It was reminded to avoid the week of the State Fair.

MOTION: Margaret Minerick moved to approve the 2022 meeting schedule as discussed. Erin Kreicher seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

Heather announced that the Director, Gary McDowell, signed a tribute to Fred Taccolini for his dedication and work on the Rural Development Fund Board.

Adjourn

Fred Taccolini moved to adjourn the meeting. Margaret Minerick seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.