



NOTES: March 28, 2008 – 7:30 a.m.
Government Relations Committee

Attendees: Tony Anderson, Drew Buchholz, Brandon Fewins, Kathleen Guy, Scott Hardy, Fred Hoisington, George McBath, Janie McNabb, Steve Perdue, Gabe Schneider, Jack Schripsema, Paul Shirilla, Sharon Wise, Joe Zayaz, Art Jeannot, and Jamie Callahan

Guest: Debbie Nicholson

I. Welcome and Presentation

Art Jeannot opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Janie McNabb was introduced as a new committee member, taking the place of Elaine Wood as a representative from the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments on the committee. Introductions were made around the table, which included Debbie Nicholson from Northland Computers. Jamie Callahan asked for a review of the February Notes. One correction was requested.

II. Committee Action and Updates

Jamie Callahan updated the committee on the following items:

Old Town Economic Development resolution

Jamie informed the committee that the Old Town Economic Development resolution was adopted by the Board of Directors last month and that the Chamber's support is highlighted on the homepage of the website with a link to the resolution.

Great Lakes Compact

Jamie updated the committee that the Board of Directors also followed the recommendation of the committee by voting to support the adoption of the Great Lakes Compact. He also relayed that the Regional Chamber Alliance was of the same mind in support of the Compact and to work for the region's best interest when it comes to the House and Senate bills which have been attached to the Compact legislation.

Regional Chamber Alliance Legislative Agenda 2008

Jamie relayed the events of the past month. He has been discussing the document with all the Alliance partner boards, gathering input and suggestions for change. The largest change looks to be the creation of the top five legislative items and to focus on those, with some brief talking points. The points that rose to the top were relatively consistent between chambers. Most of the suggestions made by the Alliance chambers were able to be incorporated into the new version. The revised document will be sent out to chamber boards for approval.

City Center Investment/redevelopment Legislative Package

Jamie relayed how Sen. Allen's March 14th presentation on a legislative bill package he assembled intended to stimulate redevelopment in city centers went. There were a good number of Government Relations Committee members in attendance for the presentation. Jamie relayed the status of each bill in the package and explained that the bills would be farther along, but the tourism promotion and film incentive bill packages took precedence. Discussion followed.

Scott Hardy brought up the point that public officials need to be educated on the incentives for regional development that are available to cities and whether there was any discussion to that point at the event. There was not. Discussion continued on possibilities for education or handout could be made for cities. It was noted that EDCs and DDAs were pretty informed, but publicly elected officials were likely unaware. It was suggested by Janie McNabb that maybe New Designs for Growth and the Council of Governments could play a role as the information conduit to the different municipalities.

A motion was made by Joe Zayaz and seconded by Steve Perdue to support the city center bill package. The motion was adopted by the committee. The comment was made afterwards that vibrant city centers are one of the things that knowledge based workers are interested in seeing in where they live and work.

III. Capitol Report

Jamie gave an update on the following legislative items:

Film incentives

Legislation was passed by both chambers and was being prepared to be presented to the Governor. It is anticipated she will sign them shortly after presentation.

Tourism funding

The House version of the legislation was passed by the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee earlier that week. The Senate also passed the Senate sponsored version from committee and the full Senate. It was mentioned that there is a sense of urgency to get the legislation signed, so the funds can be still used for the 2008 travel season. The point was brought up that Travel Michigan is all ready to go, the ad spots produced, the ad time is reserved, and they just a need check

Individual market reform

Sen. Tom George, Chair of the Senate Health Policy Committee, outlined his alternative proposal to the House passed individual market reform bills. Other senators stated they were also working on alternatives and would like the committee to hear all the proposed substitutes before moving forward. The committee will begin the George proposal and others when the committee reconvenes after spring recess.

Housing foreclosures

Jamie reported that this item was put on the agenda to see if there was sufficient interest in further research or something more to monitor. Discussion followed. The question was raised if there was any data on tracking the reason for the foreclosures. It was reported that there was data and the top reason is

job loss. Further discussion noted that creating jobs and growing the economy would eliminate the foreclosure problem.

IV. Other Items

TC based legislative agenda

It was reported that there was a good level of response from the committee members with suggestions and willingness to work on crafting a Traverse City area legislative agenda. Discussion followed with the conclusion that as we are a quarter of the way through the year, it would be best to create an agenda that was for 2009 and not try and force together something in haste.

Individual market reform survey update

Jamie reported that the individual market survey had a very good response rate. Results showed that approximately half of the individuals were aware of the legislation. Of that half, the results were pretty much split down the middle supporting and opposing the legislation. Considering this, there are not strong feelings one way or the other at this point to take an official position on the bills.

Federal reports

Sen. Stabenow – Brandon Fewins reported the senator was working on trade issues which is one thing the Senate Finance Committee, which she a member, oversees. She has been working on patent violations, and trade infringement. The senator hosted a stakeholders meeting in Lansing recently and brought in Undersecretary of Commerce Padilla. One of the problems is getting trade officials at WTO to follow up on anything. It was mention that in discussions with the Chinese government, they were very aware of what Sen. Stabenow was trying to do with her legislation.

Rep. Camp – Sharon Wise reported Congressman Camp is working on raising awareness of tax rebate scams. Senior citizens make up most of the victims. He recently kicked off his re-election campaign and has an opponent from mid-Michigan. Still working on becoming leader of the Ways and Means Committee. Sharon answered a question. Promoting scam awareness through the Commissions on Aging and Senior Centers was suggested.

Sen. Levin – Gabe Schneider reported Sen. Levin is holding foreclosure workshops downstate to gather information on the foreclosure problems in Michigan. Patent reform legislation should be coming up in committee soon after the Senate returns from their recess.

V. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be April 25, 2008, 7:30 a.m. at the Chamber office

Meeting was adjourned.

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NOTES: Marcy 21, 2008 - 7:30 a.m.
Transportation Committee

Attendees: Mary Gillis, Rise Rasch, Peter Read, Matt Skeels, Dave Skibowski, Evan Smith, Jamie Callahan.

I. Welcome and Notes review

Evan Smith opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He then asked for a review of last meeting's notes. No changes were offered.

II. Grand Vision update

Matt Skeels reported that the transportation themed sessions on March 20th hosted about 500 people total between the two sessions – 200 in the afternoon, and 300 in the evening. There were a number of first time attendees from some of the adjacent counties. It was noted it was good that there were two sessions versus just the original one.

The adjacent county workshops will most likely become a separate contract with the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (COG) as the contractor, as the out counties are not represented on TC-TALUS, while they are in the COG. This setup will also speed up the contracting process. The same company, Mead and Hunt would still hold the contract, so the community input process will be consistent with Grand Traverse. Having the COG do the out county contracting creates separation between the TC-TALUS portion of the project and the other counties as it relates to the federal funding. This arrangement shows that all of those funds went into the Grand Traverse County part of the project, as required.

The adjacent county workshops are tentatively set as May 7, 8, 27, and 28. This will allow the consultants to travel in and do the five counties in groups. These will be scenario planning sessions as was done initially in Grand Traverse.

The values survey to determine the overarching values that people have in the region is the next big hurdle. From those responses, the scenarios can be created using the values survey information and input from the planning sessions. Harris Interactive will be working on this project.

Discussion continued on the March 20th Grand Vision transportation meeting. Each of the attendees participated and gave perspectives on their experience.

III. 2008 Road Construction Presentation

GT County

Mary Gillis distributed a handout. She explained a few projects from the list.

1. Hammond to Keystone and Keystone to Birmley Road, and Three Mile Rd. and Hammond Rd. to South Airport Rd. These projects use Build Michigan funds, so need to be completed or the county would likely lose the funds to the State.

2. Cedar Run Rd. from Harris to Gray Rd. reconstruction will use some federal funds. There are a lot of curves, some areas being redone to meet speed requirements.

She noted that about 4% of county roads are in good condition. The rest are in fair to poor condition. She has been exploring ideas and gathering information on what could be done. For example, what could a 1 mil levy generate? Assembling a short term improvement program.

3. Installation of a traffic signal at Franke and Silver Lake Rd. This is part of the long term planning with the Recreation Authority and the need to create access to the GT Commons.

The question was asked on how Grand Traverse County fared on the winter road budget. Mary responded that they are likely over budget and have spent the MDOT road budget for the year. One big factor in addition to the extended winter is the increased fuel and oil costs. Asphalt has also become very expensive which eats up a larger portion of a project budget.

Discussion on road conditions and funding followed. There is legislation pending in Lansing to allow a local option county gas tax for roads. It is likely not going anywhere with the heavy no tax sentiment in Capitol. It was also noted that area road conditions have an impact on tourism and how the quality of the roads leaves an impression with visitors.

MDOT

Rise Rasch passed out maps showing the projects in the GT area and project timelines.

There are not many projects this year, as they accelerated the work project on US-131 between Kalkaska and Mancelona.

They will be installing some rumble strips on the center lines and edges as a safety measure on some of the region's non-freeways in areas that are not close to homes and where speed limit is 55. They anticipate that this will be an education process for people.

Biggest project is in Kingsley on M-113. There will be some streetscape work and widening past the railroad tracks up the hill. Kingsley will be doing some water sewer work at same time and DEQ will be doing some contamination clean up before any of the road work starts. The DEQ work will possibly require a detour.

The other project is in Empire and is similar to Kingsley with some streetscape work.

There will need to be some preventative maintenance on US-31 from 14th St. to S. Airport in 2009. The asphalt didn't age how it should have and has become slippery so needs to be redone.

M-37 north of Mapleton out to the lighthouse will be repaved after Labor Day.

Statewide road projects for the year are on the MDOT webpage.

Discussion followed on how MDOT works to plan and coordinate projects to reduce costs as much as possible.

Other area county updates

Jamie Callahan gave an update on what some of the other counties in the area have planned for road projects. Though he was not able to connect with all four counties to get information, he was able to connect with a couple. Benzie: as they spent over \$1 million for the first time on winter plowing, they will only have three projects for the summer. Antrim: they are still working on which projects to include.

IV. Strategic Initiatives and Other Items

Advocacy

Evan Smith noted that we will keep the Advocacy item on the agenda for each meeting so that committee members can bring up issues that the committee should look into.

Any other business

Jamie Callahan went through the tentative topic schedule for meetings over the next three months. A Grand Vision update is scheduled for the April meeting. Matt Skeels said he would contact Mead and Hunt for a possible presentation. May meeting is on rail and June is on air service.

Boardman Dams project: Mary Gillis met with Jennifer Jay on March 20 regarding the project and the Cass Road bridge. She has learned that if the outcome of the study shows sufficient information for bridge removal, the Army Corps of Engineers could pay for 65% of the costs for a new bridge. More should be known by December with the completion of the Boardman Dam study. The Grand Vision values survey may include some Boardman Dam questions, which would save some money with the two projects working jointly.

VI. Next meeting

The next meeting will be April 18, 2008, 7:30 a.m. at the Chamber office.

The meeting was adjourned.

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Committee Meeting: Small Business Council

Date of Meeting: Friday, March 14, 2008 – 8:00 a.m.

Next Meeting Date: Friday, April 11, 2008 – 8:00 a.m.

Committee Purpose:

The Small Business Council will be the primary vehicle to connect and help grow the Chamber's small business members. The Small Business Council's focus is to embrace and encourage entrepreneurial business practices, to serve as the voice for small business, and to offer opportunities for development through networking and chamber programs.

Committee Chair: Steve Merten, Fawcett/Dopke Agency

Meeting Summary:

Welcome & Introductions - Chairman Merten reminded the Council of upcoming Chamber events: Business After Hours March 19th, Traverse Bay EDC Annual Meeting March 20th, Young Professionals Organization kick-off event March 25th, and the Small Business Celebration Candidate's Showcase March 26th in which two Small Business Council members – Safety Net and Professional Solutions Plus – will be exhibiting at.

Chairman Merten announced that some agenda items may be tabled until the next meeting to accommodate enough speaking time for both guests – Matt McCauley, Regional Planning Director from the N.W. Michigan Council of Governments and Jamie Callahan, Senior VP of Government Relations, Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce.

Michigan Business Tax Discussion - Jamie Callahan provided the Council with a historical overview of the Small Business Tax and Michigan Business Tax. He also explained where the Michigan Business Tax is currently and how it will impact businesses filing the first quarter of 2008. Some businesses may experience a 200-300% tax increase with the MBT vs. the former SBT. Discussion ensued. Chairman Merten asked what can we as a Chamber can do? Callahan strongly encouraged that everyone contact their legislators as they need to know - let them know what their businesses new process has been this year in having to file the new MBT and how much their rate has gone up. It was

also suggested the Small Business Council and Government Relations Committee coordinate an effort to collect data from members on what their experience has been with the new MBT. Callahan agreed this would be a good idea and he could be the collection point for gathering, in essence, MBT “horror stories” from members to share with the legislature in Lansing.

Council member Juliette Schultz suggested we set this collaborative effort up in a problem/solution frame. Collect the information, come up with a solution and then present to the legislature either via a letter from the Chamber, the Chamber Alliance or send a delegation to Lansing. It was also suggested and agreed that the Chamber would conduct an online survey and e-mail to the membership via the Weekly e-News or special e-Announcement asking for feedback.

Creation of a Regional Business Index or Economic Indicators – Matt McCauley provided an overview of what this would mean to our region and would be required to complete the project. He explained that the 2008 Economic Forecast published by the Traverse Bay EDC in cooperation with the N.W. Michigan Council of Governments is more of a barometer, not what’s “on the ground” now. The Regional Business Index would be more robust and a more useful tool for researching how many people are employed in our region, gross sales, capital improvements, etc. He explained the problem with gathering this data is not all businesses want to divulge this information. Discussion ensued. It was agreed the Small Business Council should explore this project/opportunity more with the Council of Governments so the Chamber can play a role in it. McCauley will get back with the Council to see what the Chamber can do to assist. It was also suggested a Cost of Living Index be added to the mix.

White Papers on “Para” Government Effects on our Economy (i.e. TCAPS, others) – Matt McCauley informed the Council he and Tino Breithaupt have been meeting with area superintendents to discuss framing the education system as an economic development driver. Discussion ensued. It was agreed the Small Business Council should focus more on the Index rather than White Papers as the Index may be more useful.

Young Professionals Organization – Tabled until next meeting due to time.

Explore Global Collaborations Further – Tabled until next meeting due to time.

Communication & Dissemination – Tabled until next meeting due to time.

Other Items of Discussion – Chairman Merten asked for feedback from Council members regarding the agenda items, meetings, etc. It was suggested and agreed that too much time is lapsing between meetings and there is a lot going on. With that feedback Chairman Merten announced the Council will meet on a monthly basis possibly taking a couple of summer months off. Kelly Walter will find a time on the calendar in April that works for him and Tino Breithaupt – a meeting notice will be sent out along with a new meeting schedule for the entire year.

The topic of downtown issues was addressed (i.e. influx of restaurants, banks coming in but not more retailers, or substantial retailers). He asked if this issue fits within the new draft of the Traverse City Economic Development Strategy. Breithaupt assured the Council it does. Discussion ensued. It was suggested and agreed that an agenda item in the next couple of meetings will be Downtown Development and the Chamber will invite downtown merchants and possibly members of the DDA. Breithaupt added that the Chamber's Board of Directors recently adopted a Resolution of Support for the proposed development in Old Town. At this point Breithaupt also provided the Council with an update on the Hagerty parking deck/development update. He asked Council members to read their e-News this week for more information regarding the Chamber's Resolution of Support for Old Town and the draft of the Traverse City Economic Development Strategy.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.