

**Neebing Economic Development Advisory Committee
Minutes
Monday, April 10, 2017
5:15 pm Neebing Municipal Office**

Neebing Economic Advisory Committee 2017

1. Attendance: D. Kilgour, C. Butikofer, G Davies, Dennis Crack, Andrea Wallenius, B. Marshall
regrets- W. Robinson, C. Bruce, E. Butikofer, P. Cain
2. Approval of the Agenda.
Moved by: C. Butikofer/G. Davies. Carried
3. Declaration of conflict of interest: none
4. Approval of the minutes of March 14, 2017 as amended (removal of C. Bruce from minutes)
Moved by A. Wallenius/ B. Marshall . Carried
5. Business arising from the minutes-
 - a. Clara reported - Retractable banner design is near completion by in house designer at Impact Promotions soon with the banners to be printed and received for May 6th event.
 - b. Dawne reported that she received updates/request from Mayor Polkowski:
 - *Gas- O- Fire project
 - developer has purchased a kit for the building
 - Waiting for approval regarding air quality in structure
 - The developer will make presentation to Council and NEDAC will be included.
 - Mayor has requested that a letter be sent to Don Rusnak M.P. seeking restitution from the government for lost taxes from conservation land
 - After much discussion and input from the committee, it was agreed that the letter should be sent to Premier Wynn and Bill Mauro M.P.P. , Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Natural Resources , and CC'd Don Rusnak .
 - As Gary has experience with Government correspondence he offered to help Dawne write the letter
6. Old Business
 - Clara and Gary reported on the Heart of the Continent meeting they attended in Duluth. A full report of this is attached to the end of the minutes.
7. Update on Neebing Community Fair :
 - The registered businesses were reviewed- still need more
 - It is yet to be determined which businesses will be in the hall or outside- Dawne task
 - Parking overflow- Dawne to call the owner of the land across from the hall for extra parking- Dennis in charge of parking
 - Signage – at Hall 1 and Municipal office to be posted- smaller sign at Blake Hall Rd
 - Set up and clean up – 12:00pm and 8:00pm – all hands on deck
 - Advertising- press releases, Neebing News – Not Coffee Talk as cost was prohibitive, A flyer in the Ad Bag for distribution on April 26
 - Facebook page – Andrea agreed to set up a Facebook page and Clara will approach Rosalie and council to get permission
 - Other businesses to be approached- Dog Rescue, Real Estate , Call backs to all originally asked
 - The whole committee will be involved in the day. Dawne will be in charge. Penny Shott will be asked to attend for a stipend to be available for hall maintenance
8. Next Meeting May 12 , 2017
9. Adjournment at 6:30 pm

The Heart of the Continent International Partnership
Roundtable Meeting – Duluth, Minnesota
April 5 to 7, 2017

Clara Butikofer and Gary Davies attended on April 6 and 7th representing the Neebing Economic Development Advisory Committee. Other attendees included representatives of public land organizations such as Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, US Forest Service, City of Duluth, Ontario Parks, Animikii Tours (Thunder Bay business), the Trust of Public Land, and many others.

Note regarding April 5th portion of meeting – This was the “land manager” portion of the roundtable meeting. It was attended by representatives from the various agencies who manage land in the area. These included the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the US Forest Service, Ontario Parks (superintendents from Quetico and Kakabeka Falls) and Voyageur National Park. Conspicuous in their absence was MNRF, Crown land managers.

Recreation and Tourism Summit:

- presentations by some of the land managers as to how their lands fit into the vision of the Heart of the Continent (HOC). This included Trevor Gibb, Superintendent of Quetico and James Bennett, Superintendent Kakabeka Falls group of parks. All of the presenters stressed how critical partnerships and information sharing are to ensuring the sustainability of public lands and promoting their use. James tried to help our US friends pronounce La Verendrye Provincial Park, with no luck. The Minnesota DNR representative shared information about the level of use some of their parks receive. Over a million people visit Gooseberry Falls and Split Rock Lighthouse every year alone. The challenge is how do we get those folks to come just a little bit further north to Neebing and beyond.

- the presentations were followed by what was called “World Café Sessions”. This was a type of workshop in which the participants were asked to consider questions and challenges that related to recreation and tourism in the HOC. Participants were put into groups of 4 or 5 and were required to move to another group after each discussion to ensure everyone had a chance to discuss the questions with a variety of folks.

Questions were asked of the group to get them thinking about what makes the Heart of the Continent unique as a destination and how do we spend our free or vacation time? How does recreation and tourism contribute to the quality of life? How can we communicate these values that we hold for the area to others? What can enhance recreation and tourism in the Heart of the Continent?

There was some good discussion. It was obvious that everyone has similar issues and challenges.

Representatives from the Boundary Waters Canoe Wilderness Area have a somewhat unique challenge in that they may have too many visitors at times leading to the degradation of facilities such as campsites. All in all the theme of the discussion was that we all live in a wonderful part of our respective countries and feel tourism can not only contribute to our local economies but the quality of life of our broader societies.

- Heart of the Continent/National Geographic Geotourism Site was demonstrated by Eric Johnson (tourist operator from International Falls) and Chris Stromberg (HOC). The site can be found at:

www.traveltheheart.org

Essentially the site allows the public to nominate their favourite places in the HOC as designations for tourism and recreation. It is set up to permit the posting of pictures and links to other sites such as tourism businesses. There are a number of sites posted in Canada, such as local restaurants and breweries. But a lot more could be posted to really let potential visitors know what we have to offer.

- Evening presentations as the Clyde Iron Works (former iron works now a brewpub and restaurant Duluth Mayor Emily Larson spoke about the challenges facing her community and how they had been

successful in addressing many social and economic issues. They have been successful in reviving parts of the city in part by providing the residents with green spaces to enjoy and enhance their quality of life. The Mayor made it clear that despite the current political tone in Washington they still consider the border to be open and are open to working with their friends to the north.

- **Paul Danicic** presented on an economic impact study conducted by The Friends of the Boundary Waters in partnership with Dr. Evan Hjerpe of the Conservation Economics Institute and the Quetico Superior Foundation. The study was conducted during 2016 summer tourist Season. Data shows that out-of-region visitors spent \$57 million in three surrounding counties. This led to nearly 1000 jobs and an over-all economic output of \$77 million in one summer. “We have always believed that the Boundary Waters visitor spending creates sustainable economic opportunities and jobs in the surrounding communities. The study scientifically validates that the BWCAW is critical to the economic health of Northeastern Minnesota and will continue to have a significant impact for years to come.”

- **Dave Pagel** presented on what he liked to call “Casket Quarry—back from the dead.” The quarry is located in the heart of the north end of the city. A group of climbers are transforming an old quarry and casket storage area within the city to a recreational park for the entire community. They have taken an abandoned former industrial site and are turning it into a destination for not only climbers but cyclists, hikers and the local community. Most of the land was owned by the County but was transferred to the City to allow for this work. A great example of a successful partnership.

- **Aric Fishman** is a dedicated adventurer who lives in Thunder Bay and is the founder of Outdoor Skills and Thrills and author of Thunder Bay Climbing—A Guide to Northwestern Ontario’s Best Kept Secret. Aric’s enthusiasm and excitement to share his passion is always evident. He did a beautiful slide show and videos, talked about drone photography, the small but growing community of climbers in Thunder Bay and about his guidebook showcasing popular and some unknown 5 star climbing destinations within an hour and a half from Thunder Bay. Aric is taking advantage of a long overlooked opportunity. Many of the sites he spoke about are in or near Neenah.

- Connecting Volunteers to the Heart of the Continent

The final session involved presentations and follow up discussions about how to engage and maintain volunteers in the management of public lands. It was apparent from the discussion that without volunteers many land managers would be unable to properly manage their land and facilities.

Presentations from: Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation in Montana who provide volunteers to maintain a vast trail network across this huge Wilderness Area (1.5 million acres) is used by thousands of visitors every year for hiking, biking, and other outdoor activities. A very successful organization that organizes many volunteer work trips that have waiting lists. Some are for a week or more in the wilderness.

Northwoods Volunteer Connection – an organization that was created a few years ago to bring volunteers to work on public lands such as the Superior National Forest. They organize volunteers around projects that are provided by the US Forest Service staff. Appeared to be a very successful partnership. The group can access funding that the US Forest Service can’t.

The Friends of Boundary Waters Wilderness – runs a “Superior Wilderness Ranger Program”. This program puts volunteers in the bow of Forest Service canoes, with Forest Service staff in the stern. Volunteers — most of them working the entire permit season from May to September — paddle and portage with the staff. Sometimes there are bigger projects that need volunteers for longer, multi-week trips. They help with campsites

and portage maintenance, as well as with monitoring and education efforts that help maintain the BWCAW's wilderness character despite the heavy pressure the Wilderness receives.

There was some discussion of how the Ontario government could benefit from organizations such as these if they existed in Ontario as there are currently limited mechanisms to volunteer for similar work such as with Ontario Parks.

Prepared by:

Clara Butikofer and Gary Davies, NEDAC