

Forestry Affairs
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
April 24, 2009

Present: Steve Arbour, Rick Utech, Jill Castilla, Bernadine Joselyn, Margie Ritter, Paul Peterson, Julie Miedtke, Craig Engwall

Advisory Members Present: Greg VanOrsow, Joe Alexander, Tracy Beck, Catherine McLynn

Chamber staff: Renee Thompson, Bud Stone

Steve Arbour called the meeting to order and asked for a motion to approve the March 27, 2009 meeting minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Rick Utech made a motion to approve the March 27, 2009 meeting minutes. Jill Castilla seconded the motion. Motion carries.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

UPPER MISSISSIPPI FOREST CONSERVATION EASEMENT

Bud informed the committee that during a conference call this morning with Senator Saxhaug and Representative Solberg discussion took place regarding the LOHC fund. It appears that the legislature is leaning toward allocating 2 million dollars to fight the Emerald Ash Borer infestation. If that passes, then the UMFC Easement would be funded 16 million dollars this year and 18 million next year. Nothing has been finalized yet. The next LOHC meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 27, 2009.

Craig Engwall informed the committee that he will be testifying on Monday at the LOHC meeting.

Bud will be participating in a FLAG conference call this afternoon.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

STIMULUS PACKAGE FOR THE CHIPPEWA NATIONAL FOREST

Joe Alexander discussed the Secure Rural Schools Act and Resource Advisory Committee. The Act allows Title II implementation of special projects on federal land via a Resource Advisory Committee.

At this time they are looking for members to form the Resource Advisory Committee. Joe distributed an application form to the committee members. The committee term is four years. The committee will meet 2 – 6 times per year. The committee will decide how to spend about \$226,000 annually.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT COMMENTS

Tracy Beck spoke about the Continental Divide Resource Management Project. The public comment period ends April 30, 2009.

Consensus of the voting committee members present was to support Beck's preferred alternative "C". Steve Arbour asked Bud to draft a letter from the committee.

ACTION: Bud will draft a letter supporting Alternative C.

SENATOR SAXHAUG PERMITTING BILL

Bud informed the committee that Senator Saxhaug has offered legislation to streamline the permitting process at the MPCA. Bud also distributed a copy of the legislation to the committee members.

The legislation states: "January 15, 2010 the commissioner of the Pollution Control Agency shall submit a report to the environment and natural resources policy and finance committees of the house and the senate on options to streamline the environmental review process under Minnesota Statutes, chapter 116D".

ACTION: No further action necessary.

BLANDIN AND 70 MILE OHV TRAIL UPDATE

Rick Utech gave the committee an update on the 70-mile trail. Work on Phase 1 has begun.

The Project Committee is looking for trail names. Final selections will be made soon. You can go to www.70miletrail.net to submit an entry.

The next trail meeting is scheduled for May 19, 2009.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

MEMBER UPDATES

Steve informed the committee that he will be giving a presentation to the Chamber's Board of Directors on Monday, April 27, 2009. The purpose of the presentation is to inform the board about the Forestry Affairs Committee's history, accomplishments and future goals. Steve asked the committee to let him know if there is anything specific they would like Steve to discuss.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

Paul Peterson informed the committee that their foresters were asked to identify additional available harvests. They were able to find quite a bit that they will be able to auction this spring.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

Craig Enwall informed the committee that he has been working with Spang Township to solve any issues or misconceptions they have regarding the UPM/Blandin Easement project and how it might affect property taxes.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

Julie Miedtke informed the committee that Sheila Hunter will be retiring after 37 years of service and that they continue to work hard on the Firewise Program.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

Commissioner McLynn discussed the possibility of using funds from the Land Departments Forest Resource Fund Reserves to help with budget cuts. The County Board has not approved this yet. Commissioner McLynn is trying to gather support to gain County Board approval.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

Tracy Beck informed the committee that in the Blackduck area they are on target for harvest goals.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

Joe Alexander informed the committee that he will be temporarily filling in at Cass Lake to cover for a retirement over the summer. Greg Morris will be filling in for Joe.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

Bud asked Tracy and Joe what they do with the biomass on the federal forests. At this time there is not much demand for biomass on federal lands. Bud then explained an idea he had for cost efficient removal.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, May 29, 2009 at the Depot Commons meeting room.

Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by: Renee Thompson, Administrative Assistant & Finance Coordinator.