



## HOUSING TASK FORCE MEETING

Tuesday, March 8, 2011

9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

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### **Members Present**

Bob Long  
Bob Carstens  
Nan Smith  
Bill Merry  
Becky Ewing  
Jon Hoover  
Ingemar Johansson  
Jeff Vitton  
Cathy Odom  
Kris Brady  
Virginia Coulter  
David Dennison  
Glenn Puitt  
Pam Doty-Nation

### **Staff Present**

Sarah Lucas

### **A. Welcome and Introductions**

### **B. Consideration of Agenda**

The agenda was accepted as presented.

### **C. Consideration of January 11, 2011 Meeting Minutes (attached)**

The minutes were accepted as presented.

### **D. Honor Area Restoration Project (HARP)**

Ingemar Johansson discussed the history of HARP. A young family initiated discussion on revitalization of the town; eventually the Alliance for Economic Success (Manistee) offered assistance in facilitating a community meeting, and later decided to take this on as a project for no charge. The group submitted a Grand Vision grant application that involved Inland and Homestead Townships, which would include Honor in their joint planning commission. The application was not successful but the process brought officials together into a team of committed leadership. There are 120 people on the HARP email list (out of 400 people live in the village), which is used for weekly/biweekly announcements. Meetings are held every Thursday at 7. The group is all volunteer based, all ages, and is inclusive and welcoming. A \$5000 planning grant was received from Rotary that allowed us to hire a community planner (Beckett Raeder), which will conduct a feasibility study of the downtown area.

The group discussed Honor's assets and challenges— it is the gateway to Sleeping Bear Dunes which attracts 1.3 million visitors per year. Basic businesses and services are available, and 12,000 cars pass through Honor every day, but the challenge is getting people to stop. There is no easy access to the Platte River from within the Village. Johansson noted that a lot of activities have already begun – a garden club has been formed with help from Connor Miller, the Grand Vision Vista. Honor Gifford Day will be held on Memorial Day to celebrate local history. A design

committee is working with students from NMC to design new Village signs, and an application will be submitted to USDA for a walkway between the plaza and downtown. Also, the group has committees that are working on different organizational aspects, including the website and grant coordination.

The group discussed housing issues in Honor and the potential for affordable housing. A process has been initiated for new affordable housing project behind plaza; approval will depend on site specifics. B. Merry noted that Homestretch has an affordable unit for sale on Main Street and discussed resources directed to Honor.

B. Ewing stated that this is a perfect example of Grand Vision implementation and shows tangible progress.

V. Coulter noted that MSHDA provides resources for small town development through its Main Street Program.

K. Brady stated that NMCAA, Homestretch, MSHDA, will be meeting with HARP to discuss programs and potential resources or involvement.

Members discussed the March 1 Placemaking Summit and efforts that could impact the Honor project. Honor is a perfect opportunity to implement placemaking ideas such as “1000 nights of fun” – there are lots of opportunities for things like bike races, marathons, etc.

Johannson noted that a visioning session will be held on April 18 and invited members to attend. We are hoping to have a large turnout for this event.

#### **E. “Families on the Edge” Release**

Glenn Puitt, Michigan Land Use Institute, discussed the release of the Michigan Land Use Institute (MLUI)’s reporting series on poverty in the region. MLUI is primarily an environmental group that addresses issues such as energy, farmland, etc. Journalism is one of MLUI’s strong points. As part of its activities around the Grand Vision, MLUI wanted to ensure that the Grand Vision benefits rural communities, many of which are often not represented or part of the dialogue. Funding was received from Kellogg to do communications work around poverty in rural areas, and as part of this project we looked at challenges for families in rural areas related to housing, transportation, and food. The “Families on the Edge” series talks about local struggles to find housing, transportation, etc that allow individuals or families to live and work in the region. We will be doing a big media push around this series in an effort to bring rural communities, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, etc into a network. We’ll also be going to communities and community groups in other counties to talk about these issues over the next few months.

B. Ewing noted that this is one of the challenges of the Grand Vision. The group discussed outreach activities to local communities and the importance of neighborhood involvement and local momentum to make things happen.

#### **F. Committee Updates**

S. Lucas noted that the Michigan Association of Housing Officials will be holding their state conference in June and are interested in tour of Traverse City housing activities.

#### **G. Roundtable Discussion and Announcements**

Bob Long reported that the number of homebuyer loans from USDA is down as ARRA money and first time homebuyer credits are not available.

B. Merry asked when the Grand Traverse County housing trust fund dollars would become available. J. Vitton answered that the County is currently working to build the fund.

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The purpose of the Housing Task Force is to provide a forum for interagency and intergovernmental communication and coordination related to housing issues in Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, and Wexford Counties. This meeting is open to all who wish to attend. If you are not planning to attend this meeting, but would like to have input in the discussion, or provide handouts to the group, please contact Sarah Lucas, Northwest Michigan Council of Governments at (231) 929-5034 or [sarahlucas@nwm.cog.mi.us](mailto:sarahlucas@nwm.cog.mi.us).