

Aitkin County Board of Commissioners
Request for County Board Action/Agenda Item Cover Sheet



To: Chairperson, Aitkin County Board of Commissioners Date: 9/26/12
Via: Patrick Wussow, County Administrator
From: Ross Wagner, Economic Development & Forest Industry Coordinator
Title of Item: 2012 MAPCED/AMC Economic Development Award
Requested Meeting Date: October 2, 2012 Estimated Presentation Time: 10 Minutes
Presenter: Ross Wagner

Type of Action Requested (check all that apply)

- For info only, no action requested Approve under Routine Business
- For discussion only with possible future action Adopt Ordinance Revision
- Let/Award Bid or Quote (attach copy of basic bid/quote specs or summary of complex specs, each bid/quote received & bid/quote comparison)
- Approve/adopt proposal by motion Approve/adopt proposal by resolution (attach draft resolution)
- Authorize filling vacant staff position Approve under Consent Agenda
- Request to schedule public hearing or sale Other (please list) _____
- Request by member of the public to be heard
- Item should be addressed in closed session under MN Statute _____

Fiscal Impact (check all that apply)

- Is this item in the current approved budget? Yes No (attach explanation)
- What type of expenditure is this? Operating Capital Other (attach explanation)
- Revenue line account # that funds this item is: _____
- Expenditure line account # for this item is: _____

Staffing Impact (Any yes answer requires a review by Human Resources Manager before going to the board)

- Duties of a department employee(s) may be materially affected. Yes No
- Applicable job description(s) may require revision. Yes No
- Item may impact a bargaining unit agreement or county work policy. Yes No
- Item may change the department's authorized staffing level. Yes No



Supporting Attachment(s)

- Memorandum Summary of Item
- Copy of applicable county policy and/or ordinance (excerpts acceptable)
- Copy of applicable state/federal statute/regulation (excerpts acceptable)
- Copy of applicable contract and/or agreement
- Original bid spec or quote request (excluding complex construction projects)
- Bids/quotes received (excluding complex construction projects, provide comparison worksheet)
- Bid/quote comparison worksheet
- Draft County Board resolution
- Plat approval check-list and supporting documents
- Copy of previous minutes related to this issue
- Other supporting document(s) (please list) Applications

Provide eleven (11) copies of supporting documentation NO LATER THAN Wednesday at 12:00 pm to make the Board's agenda for the following Tuesday. Items WILL NOT be placed on the Board agenda unless complete documentation is provided for mailing in the Board packets. (see reverse side for details)

Aitkin County Economic Development & Forest Industry Coordinator
Aitkin County Courthouse
Ross Wagner
217 Second Street N.W.
Aitkin, MN 56431
Phone: 218/927-7305
Fax: 218/927-7374

TO: Aitkin County Board

FROM: Ross Wagner, Economic Development & Forrest Industry Coordinator

DATE: September 26, 2012

SUBJECT: 2012 Outstanding County Economic Development Award Application

Enclosed are applications for the 2012 Outstanding County Economic Development Awards. These are the awards that are given at the annual AMC Conference in December and are sponsored by the Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers (MAPCED). Projects submitted are the Trail Towns under the Economic Development Initiative and the Hawkins Sawmill road upgrade under Business Retention/Expansion and Partnerships. We are submitting the Hawkins project as a joint application with Mille Lacs County.

The Trail Towns Project brings communities in the county together to work for a common goal. The Hawkins Sawmill road upgrade is an excellent example of a private and public partnership involving two public agencies working together with a private business to solve a major roadblock for a business expansion. I feel both are projects we should be proud of and are not necessarily common for other Counties to undertake.

2012 Outstanding County Economic Development Award Nomination Form



For counties who have exhibited an outstanding Economic Development Venture..

INFORMATION ON NOMINEE:

County: Aitkin

County Contact: Ross Wagner

INFORMATION ON NOMINATOR: *NOTE: This person will receive notification of award selection.*

Name: Ross Wagner

Title: Economic Development & Forest Industry Coordinator

Telephone: (218) 927-7305

E-mail: rwagner@co.aitkin.mn.us

Check the category of this effort

- Business Retention/Expansion:
- Economic Development Initiative:
- Business Recruitment:
- Redevelopment:
- Partnership:

ENCLOSURES:

Your application must include the following:

This completed nomination form.

One-page statement of why nominee should receive the award.

One-paragraph (200 word maximum) summary for use in AMC Annual Conference materials and press coverage.

Additional supporting information, as needed.

**RETURN THIS FORM & ALL SUPPORTING MATERIALS BY FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2012 TO
Outstanding County Economic Development, Attention: Nancy Hoffman, Chisago County HRA-EDA,
PO Box 815, North Branch, MN 55056 or nancy@chisagocounty.org**

This form may be photocopied for additional applications. There is no limit to the number of applications per county.

Aitkin County Trail Towns, Aitkin County, Minnesota

Why Aitkin County should receive the 2012 Outstanding County Economic Development Award.

Aitkin County is a large county land mass wise but sparsely populated with small cities and unincorporated communities scattered throughout the county. A challenge in Economic Development for Aitkin County is the spread out population and a history in not working together for common goals. Some of the communities have had very little to no formal economic development activity. The county itself has received criticism from the communities for not reaching out county wide and engaging the communities in development opportunities. When Aitkin and Itasca Counties formed a partnership to construct the Northwoods ATV Trail System, a common bond was formed with the Aitkin County cities and communities along the Northwoods Trail. When the construction of the Northwoods ATV Trail was nearing completion, Aitkin County through its Economic Development & Forest Industry Department, formed Aitkin County Trail Towns.

Aitkin County Trail Towns consists of the Aitkin County communities of McGrath, Lawler, McGregor, Palisade, Hill City and Jacobson, all located on the Northwoods ATV Trail system. The initial focus was to promote the Northwoods ATV Trail and provide "ATV Friendly" Trail Towns for riders to stop and get gas, eat lunch and stay in the area motels and campgrounds while enjoying the premier ATV Trail system in the Midwest. Routes through town to the various establishments have been established, a geo-caching course is in place so there is much to build on and promote for years to come. Upon completion of all trail Kiosks the Trail Town communities will have information boxes that brochures and flyers for all trail towns can be placed. However, there is more to community development than promoting the ATV Trail. Now that the communities are meeting and have established relationships, there other goals to consider. The County and the communities both felt that the ATV Trail and Trail Towns could be a springboard for further development.

Two new initiatives are getting underway for Aitkin County and the Trail Towns. The first is a Minnesota Main Street type approach to the communities from the ATV Trail. Aitkin County staff, with previous experience in community design, will be riding into and out of each community to develop a vision for future development of amenities and community entrances. This will create a unified vision and plan, versus each community going it alone. This type of cooperation is one of the goals Aitkin County had hoped for. Second, is the broadband internet initiative. Aitkin County has received a Community Broadband Resources grant from the Blandin Foundation. The Trail Towns meetings, with representation from all corners of the county will be the platform to launch the counties broadband efforts.

Enclosures; Aitkin County Trail Town Overview; June 2011 Report on initial meetings, Northwoods ATV Map, Northwoods Brochure.

Aitkin County Trail Towns, Aitkin County, Minnesota

Why Aitkin County should receive the 2012 Outstanding County Economic Development Award.

Summary

The Aitkin County communities of McGrath, Lawler, McGregor, Palisade, Hill City and Jacobson, located along the Northwoods ATV Trail, have a desire to work together to promote and enhance the Northwoods ATV trail experience in their communities. To accomplish this goal, the Aitkin County has formed the Aitkin County Trail Town Committee (ACTTC). A structure has been put in place by Aitkin County to insure that a sustainable and workable group can facilitate the goals of the Trail Town communities. By forming the ACTTC, the community members will also pursue other economic development opportunities that will mutually benefit the member communities.

- Goals for Aitkin County Trail Towns.
 1. Facilitate collective action by the Trail Towns to create a world class recreational destination
 2. Improve the buildings and infrastructure in each town to create a visitor friendly destination
 3. Retain, expand, and increase revenues of existing trail town businesses
 4. Pursue sustainable economic development opportunities that will benefit member communities

Aitkin County Trail Towns
June 21, 2011
McGregor City Hall

Based on response from previous meetings, it seems to be a foregone conclusion that the communities along the Northwoods ATV Trail have a desire to work together and promote and enhance the ATV experience in Aitkin County. Now that the consensus is to move ahead, what structure needs to be put in place to insure that a sustainable and workable group or committee can facilitate the goals of the Trail Town communities in Aitkin County.

- What is the main purpose or purposes of this committee?
 - Is it a temporary, “get things started” or permanent?
 - Goals as listed by the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) Trail Towns
 1. Retain, expand, and increase revenues of existing businesses
 2. Recruit sustainable new businesses
 3. Facilitate collective action by the Trail Towns to create a world class recreational destination
 4. Improve the buildings and infrastructure in each town to create a visitor friendly destination
 - Should similar type goals be adopted for Aitkin County, or do we look at other goals.

- Who should be involved, community representatives from;
 - McGrath, Lawler, McGregor, Palisade, Hill City, Jacobson, others? or stick with this for now?
 - Who else should be involved, County Staff, Chamber of Commerce’s, ATV Clubs, Business representatives from trail businesses?

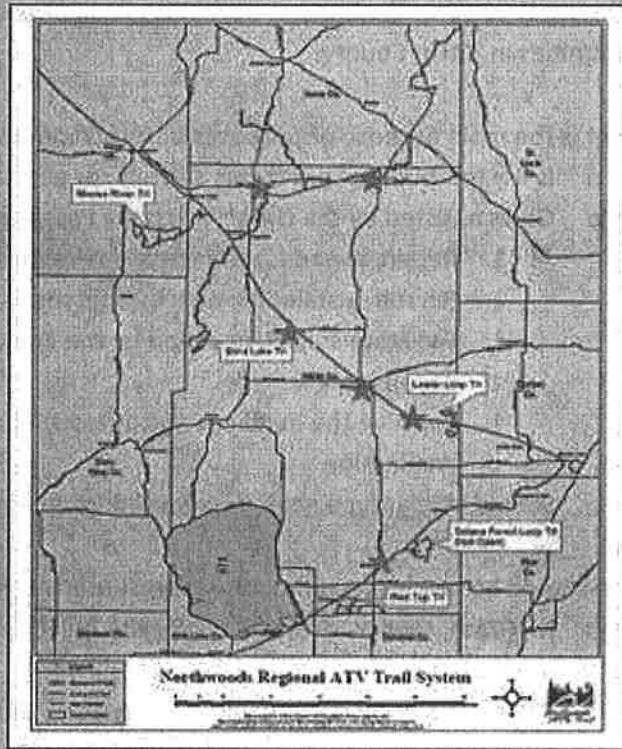
- When the Trail Town Committee is formed,
 - Do groups above appoint a representative, 1 or 2 from each City or groups?
 - Northwoods ATV Committee has rep’s from organizations but meetings are open and public comments and is involved.
 - Items such as terms, chairperson, secretary, etc., sustainable and workable.

- What are the next steps
 - Could we get contact names and numbers for each area so we can set up a "stakeholder mapping" and planning mtg with all involved? – as per Kelly Olson- or use a sub or planning committee.
 - Next Tourism Grant deadline is July 22nd
 - Work with Committee/County to establish trailheads and routes into and through town.



Trail Towns...

Cities/towns along the trail route that can provide services to trail users.



Trail Town Map

Aitkin County Trail Towns
Northwoods ATV Trail

General Overview; The Aitkin County communities of McGrath, Lawler, McGregor, Palisade, Hill City and Jacobson, located along the Northwoods ATV Trail, have a desire to work together to promote and enhance the Northwoods ATV trail experience in their communities. To accomplish this goal, the communities have formed the Aitkin County Trail Town Committee (ACTTC). The following Trail Town structure will be put in place to insure that a sustainable and workable group can facilitate the goals of the Trail Town communities. By forming the ACTTC, the community members will also pursue other economic development opportunities that will mutually benefit the member communities.

- Goals for Aitkin County Trail Towns.
 1. Facilitate collective action by the Trail Towns to create a world class recreational destination
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 3. Retain, expand, and increase revenues of existing trail town businesses
 4. Pursue sustainable economic development opportunities that will benefit member communities
- Each Community located along the Northwoods ATV Tail will have one member appointed to the committee by their respective City Council or Town Board. Each community will be allowed one vote on matters requiring a vote that come before the ACTTC. An alternate representative may be appointed and welcome to attend all meetings, however, an alternate will only be allowed to vote in the absence of the community representatives. Representatives will be appointed from the following communities by the governing entity, it is not required that a representative be a formal member of the governing body.
 - City of McGrath, McGrath City Council
 - Community of Lawler, Salo Township
 - City of McGregor, McGregor City Council
 - City of Palisade, Palisade City Council
 - City of Hill City, Hill City Council
 - Community of Jacobson, Ball Bluff Township
- In addition to the above Community Representatives, the following Organizations will appoint one member and optional alternate. Organizations will be allowed to vote on matters that may arise and require a vote of ACTTC members. An alternate will be allowed to vote in the absence of the representatives.

- Aitkin County, a representative from Economic Development and Forest Industry Department, or Land Department.
- McGregor Chamber of Commerce.
- Hill City Chamber of Commerce.
- Two business representatives from trail businesses located on or near the Northwoods ATV Trail, one from the southern portion of the trail and one from the Northern portion. The businesses representatives will be solicited and appointed by the existing ACTTC members, the businesses representative may appoint an alternate.

There will be a total of 11 voting members, or designated alternates of the Aitkin County Trail Town Committee, a quorum will consist of 6 voting members, majority vote shall rule. Terms will be for a period of one year with no limit to the number of terms a member may serve. Communities and organizations will annually appoint their respective ACTTC members and their alternate except in the case of the business representatives which will be annually appointed by the ACTTC. ACTTC members may be able to represent more than one entity but will only be able to vote on behalf of the entity that actually appointed them.

- Once the Trail Town Committee is formed, any changes in committee goals, membership, governing rules or financial matters will be allowed by a full majority vote of the committee.
- An annual election of officers will be made by the committee and consist of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary.
- Organizational meeting of the ACTTC will be held August 15th at 6:30 in McGregor. Each organization will be sent a letter from Aitkin County Economic Development Coordinator, with Trail Town information and request that they appoint their representative. As initial host community, the McGregor City Council may wish to send an invitation as well. Subsequent meetings will be held on a rotating basis, date, time and locations to be determined by the committee.
- ACTTC meetings are open to the public, guests and speakers may be asked to attend as needed.
- Serving on the ACTTC is voluntary, compensation from members appointing body is up to that organization.
- The ACTTC is an informal entity with no sources of funding or ability to incur expenses. In the event that funding sources should become available, the ACTTC would work with one of the governing bodies or other entity to act as fiscal agent.
- A temporary ad-hoc committee may be formed to submit an Aitkin County Tourism Grant by the July 22nd deadline.

2012 Outstanding County Economic Development Award Nomination Form



For counties who have exhibited an outstanding Economic Development Venture..

INFORMATION ON NOMINEE:

County: Aitkin and Mille Lacs

County Contact: Ross Wagner

INFORMATION ON NOMINATOR: *NOTE: This person will receive notification of award selection.*

Name: Ross Wagner

Title: Economic Development & Forest Industry Coordinator

Telephone: (218) 927-7305

E-mail: rwagner@co.aitkin.mn.us

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PO Box 815, North Branch, MN 55056 or nancy@chisagocounty.org**

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Aitkin County and Mille Lacs County, Hawkins Sawmill Road Upgrade

Why Aitkin County should receive the 2012 Outstanding County Economic Development Award.

Recently Mille Lacs County received a State of Minnesota, Department of Transportation Economic Development Grant or a DTED grant. The purpose of the grant is to re-build and pave two miles of Mille Lacs County Road 132 in East Side Township. This road project will bring the road rating to "all weather" status, something that has been missing for Hawkins Sawmill and others. Hawkins Sawmill is located in Idun Township of Aitkin County but the main access to the mill is using Mille Lacs County Road 132. So, Hawkins Sawmill was faced with the situation of operating in Aitkin County yet using Mille Lacs County Roads to access the Mill. Further complicating the matter was the fact that not having all weather access forced the mill to stage and assemble loads off site during certain time periods, a costly and labor intensive undertaking. When the time to make a decision to purchase new equipment for the staging, Hawkins was at a crossroads. Their preference would be an all weather access road which would allow them to invest in the actual sawmill operation, to make it more productive and allow for additional growth and employment opportunities for local residents. Aitkin County Economic Development and Forest Industry Coordinator, Ross Wagner, knew this was the best case scenario.

Aitkin and Mille Lacs Counties have been pro active in maintaining and building roads and other infrastructure to help local businesses expand. Mr. Wagner, felt the two counties might be able to work together and help Hawkins Sawmill out. A series of meetings and discussions was held with Wagner, Tom Hawkins Sr., Tom Hawkins Jr., and Aitkin County Engineer John Welle and Mille Lacs County Engineer Bruce Cochran. All understood the situation Hawkins Mill faced with dual jurisdictions yet also understood the benefit to both counties with Hawkins Sawmill being able to grow and expand. All agreed to the best way to solve the problem was for Hawkins Sawmill to have all weather access. A circuitous route of Aitkin County and Idun Township roads could be utilized but would be more costly than Mille Lacs Co Rd 132. Hawkins Sawmill was willing to invest a significant sum on money to the road upgrade and favored the most efficient and cost effective route, again, all agreed. Regardless of jurisdiction, Mille Lacs County Road 132 was by far the best option.

With an estimated price tag of \$625,000.00, a financing plan was needed. With the private industry investment from Hawkins Sawmill confirmed, it was felt that a DTED Grant should be pursued. Mille Lacs County Public Works Department would write and submit the grant with assistance from Aitkin County Economic Development and Forest Industry Coordinator. Mille Lac County's application was successful and a grant was awarded for \$300,000. Hawkins Sawmill agreed to commit \$175,000 to the road improvements and when the Mille Lacs County Board agreed to invest \$150,000 the public – private partnership was sealed. Hawkins Sawmill will be planning to add new employees in the near future, most if not all from Mille Lacs and Aitkin Counties.

Enclosure; Mille Lacs County Times news article

Aitkin County and Mille Lacs County, Hawkins Sawmill Road Upgrade
Why Aitkin County should receive the 2012 Outstanding County Economic Development Award.
Summary

Hawkins Sawmill is located in the southwest corner of Aitkin County bordering the northern border of Mille Lacs County. The challenges facing the wood products industry are well documented and Hawkins is no different in feeling the pinch of the economy. However, Hawkins Sawmill has a solid reputation for quality work producing quality lumber from logs purchased mainly from area forests. Hawkins Sawmill is also known as being an excellent employer and was able to avoid layoffs during the great recession. In addition to avoiding layoffs, Hawkins was able to keep its customers and now is in a position to expand and add employees. This is the type of business both Aitkin and Mille Lacs Counties like to have grow and prosper. So when Hawkins Sawmill had an issue and a "bottleneck" to grow in not having all weather access, Aitkin and Mille Lacs Counties decided to work together and solve the issue. Construction is underway on Mille Lacs County Road 132 to build the roadbed and paving, bringing it to all weather status in 2013.

Mille Lacs County - Partnership will pave road

Brett Larson | Posted: Thursday, June 14, 2012 6:00 am

Tom Hawkins of Hawkins Sawmill in East Side Township appeared before the Mille Lacs County Board on Tuesday, June 5, with County engineer Bruce Cochran.

The two had an intriguing proposal: The county could invest \$150,000 in paving two miles of County Road 132 in East Side Township, and the rest of the \$625,000 for the project would be picked up by a state grant and Hawkins Sawmill.

Hawkins told the board the spring load restrictions limit haulers' ability to move products. They need to bring small loads to a staging area where they are assembled into large loads and brought to market.

Cochran's notes to the board said, "Owners of the mill understand this cost of doing business and are willing to re-direct these funds to a roadway if the need to stage and assemble loads is eliminated."

The mill was willing to pitch in \$175,000 to the project, which made the county eligible for a \$300,000 Transportation Economic Development grant from the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

Commissioner Dan Whitcomb asked Cochran about maintenance costs of a paved road versus gravel. Cochran said, "It's a function of traffic." He added that during the first 10 years, the only maintenance required would be crack sealing.

Commissioner Frank Courteau, in whose district includes the proposed project would occur, said it was the best example of public-private collaboration he's seen in 13 years on the county board.

"That's why I would urge my colleagues to support the measure," Courteau said.

And they did, by a unanimous 4-0 vote.

No to increase

In April, the board approved funding for a turn lane on County State Aid Highway 4 at 12th St. N. in Princeton. The cost was to be split with the Princeton School District and was not to exceed \$15,000.

After bids came in, the cost rose to \$20,000.

Commissioner Phil Peterson said he was having second thoughts due to the price increase.