

## Alpena County Heritage Route Team Meeting Notes

**Date:** 4-18-06

**Time:** 1:30 PM

**Location:** Alpena City Hall – City Council Chambers

The grant application for the conversion of the Mich-e-ke-wis Park Shelter into an Interpretive/Welcome Center was turned down by the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan. The team discussed whether or not to move forward with the project. It was noted that the work by UP Engineers (to include plans and cost estimates) would not exceed \$3,200. The cost breakdown for the various entities involved would be:

40%	City of Alpena	\$1,400
15%	Alpena Township	\$525
5%	Sanborn Township	\$175
15%	CVB	\$525
25%	Alpena County	\$875

The issue of staffing/no staffing was discussed. Pardike explained that the CVB cannot move its operations due to a needed partnership with the Chamber of Commerce. If the center was unstaffed, no public restrooms would be available. It was brought up that weekend staffing would be critical. Information and signage directing visitors to the CVB could be utilized. The best options available for staffing are volunteers and summer help (such as is utilized by the City). In addition, funding could be sought for staffing. CVB funds would not likely be available for added staffing.

Pardike presented a new northeast Michigan travel planner with two pages dedicated to the Coastal Highway.

The group discussed the idea of an “interpretive center” and whether or not any other counties are going to that depth versus a “visitor’s center”. MDOT funding could be used to help with a visitor’s center with interpretive kiosks. It was noted that funding for a similar facility in Standish is garnered from all governmental entities in Arenac County which contribute funds on a per capita basis. It was noted that community coordination for all communities should be discussed at the Management Council meeting. The group discussed the possibility of obtaining funding from private sources or NOAA.

A consensus exists within the group that the center must be staffed (possibly volunteers such as Life Long Learners in conjunction with summer help). For the long-term, a computerized information source must be available. Displays in the center are essential. Lastly, any staff, volunteer or other, must be well-trained. The CVB would be available to train people, to provide help, and to provide support to help answer questions from volunteers.

The team decided to pursue funding options for getting the architectural plan finished, then the question of staffing will be addressed. Funds could possibly come from fees charged to place private brochures at the center.

Next meeting date (tentative): May 31.

Discussion will include possibility of others helping fund the plans. Staffing issues still need to be worked out. Items that need to be researched: Life Long Learners as volunteers, summer staff (cost-sharing), and the Marquette Visitor's Center.