

**AGENDA**

**NORTHERN NEXUS**  
(Grand Traverse Region Next Michigan Development Corporation)

**Thursday, August 27, 2015 – 1:30 p.m.**  
**Governmental Center, 400 Boardman Avenue**  
**Second Floor – Commission Chambers**  
**Traverse City, MI 49684**

1. **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

- a. Approval of May 28, 2015 Minutes .....1

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT/INPUT**

Any person shall be permitted to address a meeting of the Grand Traverse Next Michigan Development Corporation (NMDC), which is required to be open to the public under the provisions of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, as amended. (MCLA 15.261, et. seq.) Public comment shall be carried out in accordance with the following Rules and Procedures:

- Any person wishing to address the NMDC shall state his or her name and address.
- Persons may address the NMDC on matters, which are relevant to NMDC issues.
- No person shall be allowed to speak more than once on the same matter, excluding time needed to answer NMDC questions. The Chairperson shall control the amount of time each person shall be allowed to speak, which shall not exceed three (3) minutes; except as follows:
  - › Chairperson may, at his or her discretion, extend the amount of time any person is allowed to speak.
  - › Whenever a group wishes to address the NMDC, the Chairperson may require that the group designate a spokesperson; the Chairperson shall control the amount of time the spokesperson shall be allowed to speak, which shall not exceed fifteen (15) minutes.

3. **REPORTS / Receive and File Communications**

- a. Update on Economic Development Strategy – Community Business Leader Interviews .....2-4

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT/INPUT**

Refer to Rules under PUBLIC COMMENT/INPUT above.

5. **NOTICES**

Michigan Supply Chain Innovation Summit

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

NORTHERN NEXUS  
Grand Traverse Region Next Michigan Development Corporation

May 28, 2015

Chairman Korn called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in the Training Room located in the Governmental Center, 400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, Michigan.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chuck Korn, Bob Johnson, Glen Lile and Patrick Pahl

STAFF PRESENT: Karen McIntyre and John Sych

EXCUSED: Jeanine Easterday

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Moved** by Pahl, seconded by Lile to approve the February, 2015 NMDC minutes as presented.  
**Approved unanimously.**

PUBLIC COMMENT/INPUT

None

REPORTS/Receive and File Communications:

Update on Economic Development Strategy

Sych provided a draft report and gave an update on the development of an economic development strategy for Grand Traverse County, specifically, Community Business Leader Interviews, which are currently being conducted by Megan Olds of Parallel Solutions.

Promotion of Local Multi-Modal Commerce Businesses

Sych gave a verbal report relative to plans for developing articles concerning local multi-modal commerce, outlining local successes.

Michigan Logistics and Supply Chain Steering Team

Sych reported for information that the MEDC and Prima Civitas will co-host the inaugural Michigan Supply Chain Innovation Summit on August 30-31, 2015 in Dearborn, Michigan.

PUBLIC COMMENT/INPUT

None

NOTICES

None

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

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Chuck Korn, Chair

**NORTHERN NEXUS**

SUBJECT: Update on Economic Development Strategy  
– Community Business Leader Interviews

FROM: John Sych

FOR MEETING DATE: August 27, 2015

We will be providing you with an update on our work to develop an economic development strategy for Grand Traverse County, including findings from Megan Olds of Parallel Solutions on the Community Business Leader interviews. A draft report is enclosed for your review.

This effort along with the Economic Conditions Report will lead to developing the strategy, along with other discussions by community and economic leaders. The goal is to base the strategy on preferences of the community while being reflective of the data and forecasts.

# Executive Summary

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## Purpose

Grand Traverse County is in the process of evaluating its economic strategy. The County hired Parallel Solutions LLC to conduct confidential interviews with area business leaders as part of the strategy process. The purpose and goals of the interviews were to:

- Connect with business leaders on a personal level
- Understand the trends and opportunities that excited and inspired them related to the community's growth and economy
- Understand the unique needs, challenges and opportunities facing their business and their lens on what is missing from the community
- Solicit their ideas and insights
- Identify their preferred scenario(s) regarding tools and resources for a County economic strategy
- Understand how they would like to stay connected and involved

## Methodology

Grand Traverse County Planning and Development staff identified 30 potential interview candidates. These candidates represented a variety of industry sectors including manufacturing, health care, high tech, retail and service and also represented businesses of varying sizes and market areas served. An invitation letter was sent jointly by the County and the City of Traverse City to invite participation. Of those invited, 17 chose to participate within the timeframe allocated for the project. Parallel Solutions LLC conducted each confidential interview and presented participants with the following questions:

1. What do you see as the most exciting or interesting positive trends or opportunities related to the community's growth and economy?
2. What do you feel is missing? What do you wish was happening that is not happening?
3. What are the three biggest external challenges facing your business or industry?
4. What is your business doing to attract and invest in talent?
5. What do you think that local government can do for the business community?
6. Who are your external advisors? Who do you go to for guidance or support to grow or improve your business? Where you do connect (specific places) and network with people who are connected to your business in some way?
7. If anything, and if it's important to you, what's missing in terms of opportunities to network?
8. What could the community do to create networking opportunities and/or fill the gaps?
9. There are a few different directions and/or areas of focus that the community could adopt related to its strategy to support economic growth and development. Tell me what you like and don't like about each focus area and why:

- a. Scenario 1: Focusing on support and incentives for High Tech manufacturing, design, research and development
  - b. Scenario 2: Incentive-Based Approach – Increasing and promoting access to financial incentives for business development and growth (tax credits, abatements, etc.). Manufacturing, mixed use and/or development-oriented.
  - c. Scenario 3: Family Business “institute” – Offering programs and services that address succession and other family business transition needs
  - d. Scenario 4: Innovative Entrepreneurship assistance – Offering and promoting services for small business growth and development. Fostering non-traditional incubator models and places for people to connect and engage.
10. If you were CEO of the region, what would your “scenario” for success look like?
  11. What are the stories that we should be telling about our region and its future?
  12. How would you like for us to communicate with you? How would you like to stay connected with others who are creating and implementing the community strategy for the economy?

Each interview took approximately 60 minutes to complete. Responses to each question are included as an attachment with this report. Names and personal information were removed from individual responses in order to maintain confidentiality. All comments in italics are paraphrased. Quotations indicate exact words and terminology used.

These interviews provide qualitative information. This summary is a compilation of individual perspectives. It is not a recommendation for action. The themes and opportunities listed below should be used to inform discussion about County and other economic development leaders and can help to inform further outreach and engagement with business leaders.

## Themes and Identified Needs and Opportunities

- **Positive Trends:** There were many positive trends, projects and changes identified by interviewees. Some of these included the growth of downtown Traverse City, the growth in numbers of young people moving and returning here, excitement about specific businesses, the protection of farmland and natural land, the area’s quality of life and access to recreation, restaurants, arts and cultural opportunities.
- **Perceived Barriers and Challenges:** Lack of visionary leadership in government was mentioned as a barrier. Transportation and workforce housing were consistently mentioned as well. The number of regulations, differing regulations across jurisdictional boundaries, and lack of consistency in the way decisions are made were cited as barriers. Some interviewees also shared their perceptions of negative aspects of culture and behavior, or “unwelcoming” attitudes, in both the public and private sector. A lack of higher education opportunities related to high tech and manufacturing, as well as relatively low wages were listed as community barriers and challenges.
- **Desire for Integrated Plans and Action:** Interviewees framed this in different ways – “a clear, aligned vision,” “a call to action,” etc. Some of these comments were tied to a perceived need for stronger and more integrated Capital Improvement planning, transportation, workforce housing, sewer, and high-speed fiber.
- **No Clear Consensus on Specific Scenarios for Success:** Participants shared open, frank and thoughtful responses to the four scenarios for directions that the community could adopt related to support for growth and the economy. Each of these responses seemed to relate to the individual’s unique personal and professional lens and history.