

CATF Minutes

February 19, 2026 | 2:00 pm

Members in Attendance:

Krystle Baecker, Pri Bunham, Zosia Eppensteiner*, Jane Fitkin*, Grace Freed, Jenn Hill, Brian Hummel, Robert Kulisheck, Michael Larson*, Emily Leach, Tyler Penrod, Erik Powers, Chloe Ravenscraft, Cathay Ruprecht, Greg Seppanen*, Cera Shelafoe, Anna Solberg, Jes Thompson, Nico Vermaat, Darlene Walch*, Kelsey Wermager

**Joined via Zoom*

Guests in Attendance: David Allen

a. Welcome and Introductions

b. Special Presentation: David Allen, Marquette Brownfield Redevelopment Authority

- David is often asked if brownfield redevelopment is really a good idea... and the answer is a resounding YES!
- What are Brownfields?
 - i. The history of brownfields is rooted in Love Canal where a landfill had been filled with industrial waste. It's the most famous location of federal emergency fund use ever. The superfund took only 2 years to pass.
- What is a Superfund?
 - i. It is a federal law created from taxes on petroleum and chemical industries. It creates a large pot of funds to be used in the clean up of hazardous waste sites if there's no one there to clean it up (after being abandoned, shut down, etc.)
 1. That's not the real power! The liability scheme is.
 - a. Every owner, operator, and arranger of disposal is reliable for any leaks or issues with the chemicals.
 - b. Everyone tries to avoid this liability.
 - ii. Superfunds can cause unintended consequences - no one wants to touch a superfund site.
 1. Industrial rings are created around most cities where businesses have come and gone - and no one wants to open a new business there or build housing.
 2. So these areas are rarely developed.
 3. We don't want to make homeowners or landowners liable for any issues when they build on a place like this.

4. We need an incentive for people to come and build on these abandoned places to help rejuvenate the land and the entire area.
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
 - i. Sets a base year - established with approval of Brownfield Plan
 - ii. Investment increases property value and taxes. It's the developer that pays higher taxes.
 - iii. The increment from development pays off eligible activities
 1. At most sites, the value only goes down because the areas around them also go down with continued blight.
 - iv. Can include state taxes for environmental activities.
 - v. Local taxes can also support a local fund for up to 5 years.
 - vi. After eligible activities are paid off, the higher taxes continue.
 - How Brownfields Work in Michigan
 - i. Brownfields must first be eligible
 1. Contaminated site (chemicals above criteria in soils or water)
 2. Blighted (officially a public nuisance or utilities disconnected)
 3. Functionally obsolete
 4. Historically designated
 5. Housing property (affordable housing units)
 - ii. Eligible Activities Only
 1. Environmental assessments of property
 2. Due care (to avoid making contamination worse)
 3. Additional cleanup if needed
 4. Demolition
 5. Site prep and infrastructure (if in a Core Community)
 6. Property acquisition
 7. Housing development (120% of area median income)
 - iii. Plans Approved in Advance
 1. A Brownfield Plan has to be approved by the Brownfield Authority and City Commission
 2. You need a development agreement (approved by the Brownfield Authority and the City Commission)
 3. Approval of invoices come back to the Brownfield Authority for approval
 4. They can only use money available from TIFs collected so far
 - City of Marquette
 - i. The City Commission established the Brownfield Authority in 1997
 1. 7 voting members, 3-year terms
 2. City Treasurer is an ex-officio member and the MBRA Treasurer
 3. Part-time Executive Director
 4. Deputy City Manager is liaison to the city
 - ii. Examples of Projects
 1. Cliffs-Dow

- a. This used to be the site of charcoal production and later became a chemical plant, operating until the 1970s.
- b. Because there was much contamination at this site, it needed a lot of remediation and continues to need monitoring.



c. Bio-Life Development

2. Founder's Landing

- a. \$100 million invested so far: seawall, boardwalk, pier, street, condos, apartments, hotels, retail space, etc.



b.

3. Liberty Way Project

- a. Now Staybridge Suites & Range Bank



b.



c.

4. Nestledown Project - \$1 million invested
 5. New Hospital & Municipal Facility - will be paid off in about half the time that was expected
 6. 231 West Petissier
 7. Custom House Project
 8. Abandoned Burger King on Washington
 9. NEXT
 - a. Vault Hotel - \$30 million investment
 - b. Chipp Housing Project - 7 apartments
 - c. Hydroponics on Washington - will be apartments
 - d. Old Hospital Site - Will be housing
- Big Picture
 - i. Trying to steer inevitable development to the places it makes sense
 - ii. We can address
 1. Sprawl
 2. Abandoned areas that affect surroundings
 3. Housing and job shortages
 4. Development pressure on green spaces
 5. Revenue shortfalls of the city, library, schools - NOT the opposite!
 - Questions
 - i. Jen Hill: Wondering how much money comes in from these brownfield developments. And asked if CATF could get these numbers.
 1. Approximately \$1-2 million per year for the city
 2. David will look into finding the resource and sharing it with CATF
 - ii. Pri Burnham: How does brownfield deal with newly detected contaminants?

1. Normally, when something like that happens, it's usually a big crisis. Not in the purview of MBRA. That's more so EGLE's responsibility.
 2. Brownfield does a little bit of decontamination of sites, but it's really more of a financing tool.
 3. EGLE and EPA do the assessment of these sites to address the contaminants.
- iii. Greg Seppanen: When dealing with programs like this, there's always danger of it being gamed. What does the public need to be watchful of as the deals start coming together?
1. The most important responsibility of the authority is to ensure that we don't approve a brownfield plan for something that would have been developed exactly the same way somewhere else. We don't use brownfield to do a high profit development somewhere else. And we don't let brownfield take over a development that would have happened anyway. It also has to fully fit the statute.
- iv. Cera Shelafoe: Some of the places you mentioned were totally abandoned, but some weren't/aren't. How do you handle when someone is living there currently?
1. That's on the shoulders of the developer or current owners, not the Brownfield Authority. MBRA doesn't have to worry about tenants.
- v. Bob Kulishek: How do you distinguish the difficulty of due diligence, now that we are dealing with housing as well as environmental issues?
1. Order of magnitude. It's more difficult to understand the affordable housing part of this work. On the other hand, in Marquette (and most places), the gap between what people are actually making in a community and what it costs to build new housing is huge. So it'd be hard to game that system.

c. Bylaw Change

- **ARTICLE 4. MEMBERSHIP A.** *"Persons or organizations seeking to join CATF must be nominated by a Membership Committee member for consideration..."*
- This change was proposed by the Membership Committee to ensure that we can have representation from individuals as well as organizations. For example, some individuals will want to continue their work with CATF even as they change careers/positions. But when we still think it helpful to have representation from

a particular organization, we don't want that to be impacted by employment transitions.

- i. Motion: Pri Burnham
- ii. Second: Anna Solberg
- iii. No Discussion
- iv. Vote: Passed Unanimously

d. Committee Updates

- Outreach, Emily Leach

✚ Climate Health Guidebook Outreach

- i. After assessing the **Marquette Area Climate and Health Adaptation Guidebooks** ([Volume 1](#), [Volume 2](#), [Volume 3](#)) and the [Marquette County Climate Action Plan](#), the Outreach Committee has created a spreadsheet to track the goals and tactics of these plans and to conduct outreach to organizations who have been tasked with meeting these goals. As such, we are in the phase of figuring out the best point of contact at each organization tasked with a component of this work. We continue to ask for help filling in the spreadsheet.
 1. Please take some time to look over the [first tab regarding CATF's Communication Plan](#) (thank you, Isabelle for making this!). We ask that you help us fill in contacts at the organizations listed in Column A.
 2. If you would be interested in being our CATF member responsible for reaching out to the designated organization, please write your name in Column E.
 3. Next Steps: Do NOT reach out to these organizations yet. The Outreach Committee will be creating an outreach packet that you can use to speak with these contacts. More information to come!
 - ii. Eliza Alzheimer who is an Environmental Studies and Sustainability sophomore at NMU will be helping us realize these plans. She is volunteering 100 hours over the course of the year as part of the Student Leader Fellowship Program (SLFP) Community Service Internship.
 - iii. The Outreach Committee will be meeting with Eliza on March 12 to go over next steps. Anyone who wishes to join the Outreach Committee may contact Anna or Emily.
- Membership, Greg Seppanen
 - i. We currently have membership interest from Sue Anderson, SAIL.

- ii. The committee will also be evaluating membership of local governance.
- iii. Question from Jenn Hill: With Jerry Messana's retirement at the Health Department, who will be representing them?
 1. Bob Kulishek is currently Vice Chair for the Health Department, and they plan to ask if the new director will be interested in representation on CATF.

e. 2026 Planning

- Upcoming Presentation Topics
 - i. April 16: Carl Lindquist, Superior Watershed Partnership Update
 - ii. September 10: Dr. Jeffrey Andresen, State Climatologist
 - iii. December 3: Update on the City of Marquette's Climate Action Plan
 1. This will include potential feedback on a draft plan.
 - iv. IF YOU HAVE IDEAS: for either this or Climate at Noon - send us your thoughts and ideas.
- [Year-End Report Request](#)
 - i. Please send any updates, edits, or additions to Anna by February 27.
- [2026 Work Plan Draft](#)
 - i. Jenn Hill: MICAN is currently accepting proposal for presentations. She thinks it would be a good idea to have a presentation on CATF.
 - ii. Jes Thompson: She will be presenting on CATF at this year's MI Healthy Climate Conference.
 - iii. Bob Kulishek: Recommended we plan to work more with the Brownfield Authority in the future.

f. [Member Updates](#)

- [CATF Member Updates Form](#)
 - i. Please submit your updates by SUNDAY NIGHT

g. Good of the Order

- Jenn Hill, Lake Superior Region Indivisible
 - i. Jenn is a member of Re-Amp (a collective of 8 Midwest states supporting sustainable development). They recently met where they heard from Jesse Keenan, author of [North: The Future of Post-Climate America](#). This book is about people already starting to move north (those with means and money). The author has worked closely with Duluth, and it would be a good idea to bring him in to talk.

- ii. There has been concern about implementation of the 2023 Michigan Energy Law. The UMEREC Energy Plan was also recently rejected because Michigan Public Service found they proposed far more projects than were required by law and the costs were unreasonable and not prudent. They have until October 15, 2026 to develop a new renewable energy plan.
[Read more here.](#)
- Darlene Walch, Marquette County Townships Association (MCTA)
 - i. Reminder that CATF is on the Marquette County Township Association agenda for March 25. Anyone who is able to attend, please do.
- Grace Freed, Marquette County Planning
 - i. She has posters available with the Marquette County Master Plan survey.
 - ii. There will be a Grand Opening event for Silver Lake Greenway at the Little Trout Lake Park in KI Sawyer. She passed out save-the-dates for people to share.
- Jane Fitkin
 - i. There is a seat open right now for the City Planning Commission.
- Emily Leach, Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy
 - i. Mulligan Pines is a new nature preserve in Champion Township. They closed in December, but are currently coordinating an announcement with the North Country Trail Association as they will have an old cabin available as a camping spot for thru hikers.
 - ii. They have a list of 20+ events that they're currently planning for 2026.
 - 1. They recently hosted a couple with CNAS at NMU (where they're also tapping trees and boiling sap at the Fireside Site).
 - 2. They will also be hosting a Stewardship Summit on May 22. The event will be invite only, with the purpose of bringing organizations together. It will be modeled after the Learning Circle Series.
- Jes Thompson, Sustainability Hub for Innovation and Environment - NMU
 - i. Campus Sustainability Summit will be taking place March 25 - 27 at NMU. This event will be in collaboration with the United Conference and PEAK Innovation Conference. This is open to anyone and completely free to attend.
 - 1. Key pieces:
 - a. Keynote Speaker: [Kathy Allen](#) who wrote a book on leadership (Lead from the Roots) about using nature to guide your leadership approach.
 - b. Free Lunch: all local indigenous food grown on campus.

- i. [Register ahead of time to attend.](#)
 - ii. Earth Week Programming: If you have anything you'd like to promote, please let Jes know.
 - h. **Upcoming Meetings**
 - Thursday, April 16 | 2:00 - 3:30 pm
 - Thursday, September 10 | 2:00 - 3:30 pm
 - Thursday, December 3 | 2:00 - 3:30 pm
 - i. **Adjournment @ 3:30 pm**