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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GREATER BRIDGMAN AREA COUNCIL FOR GROWTH & ADVANCEMENT ANNUAL MEETING

BRIDGMAN, MI – June 5, 2023 – The Greater Bridgman Area Council for Growth & Advancement (CGA) held its 2022 Annual Meeting on Tuesday, May 30, 2023, at 5 PM at Lake Township Park. The meeting highlighted the organization's accomplishments of the past year, while sharing its goals for 2023 and beyond.

CGA President John Bonkoske welcomed 40 attendees as he discussed the vision he had for the organization when he became president last year.

"One year ago, I spoke of three large planning initiatives for the CGA: Enhance, Grow and Thrive," said Bonkoske. "Enhance and re-evaluate what we're currently doing; make conditions ripe to grow new businesses in the Greater Bridgman Area; and strategize and envision how we can help the community thrive by 2030."

CGA Treasurer Bob Clark presented the 2022 Treasurer's Report, which highlighted the organization's previous reliance on major festivals for fundraising. The CGA was not able to host Makers Trail Festival in 2020 or 2021 due to Covid, which significantly impacted the organization's asset balance. With the return of Makers Trail Festival in 2022, the organization was able to increase net revenue but this led the Board of Directors to weigh options for future funding.

Clark also shared information on the economic development training initiatives that the board members have been attending, such as MichiganFirst seminars, Michigan Economic Development Association's online training, and working more closely with Cornerstone Alliance on economic development opportunities.

Julie Strating, the Vice President of CGA, emphasized the importance of diversifying the organization's funding for future growth. Traditionally, the CGA relied heavily on festivals to generate revenue. However, the decision was made to entrust the management of the Makers Trail Festival to St. Joseph Today, a team of professional event planners. Meanwhile, the CGA will focus on securing funds through grants, business sponsorships and municipal support.

Strating also shared exciting community engagement and placemaking initiatives that were launched last year, such as the Bridgman Courtyard transformation, Courtyard Concerts, Movies

in the Park, Makers Trail Festival, Bridgman Holiday Village and the new Business & Brews meetings.

CGA Secretary Tara Heiser shared the marketing initiatives that the organization has achieved in the past year (or is currently still in process). Heiser shared that the CGA's new focus on economic development drove the need for a new name, which included new branding and marketing materials. The Bridgman Visitor Guides were updated with QR codes that promote exclusive offers, events and general awareness. New tools, such as a website and presentation are in development that will establish the CGA as the go-to resource for industries and businesses looking to expand or relocate to the Greater Bridgman Area.

Looking ahead to 2023, Bonkoske shared that the CGA is committed to further bolstering the economic strength of the Greater Bridgman Area. The organizational goals for the year include establishing the CGA as the go-to economic development resource for the Greater Bridgman Area, strengthening and diversifying the local economy for year-round stability, reinforcing Bridgman as an outstanding place to live, work, and play, and becoming financially resilient through a variety of funding options.

Bonkoske also noted that all of the CGA board members are volunteers and the organization's success is dependent on the board's skill sets and commitment to the community.

Julie Strating was recognized as a CGA Outstanding Contributor for being a key player in many of the CGA initiatives and was the visionary behind the Courtyard Project and has been its champion through completion.

About the Greater Bridgman Area Council for Growth & Advancement
The Greater Bridgman Area Council for Growth & Advancement is a 501c3 organization with a mission to promote and grow the community through economic development in the City of Bridgman and Lake Charter Township. To learn more about the CGA, visit facebook.com/bridgmanarea.

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CGA Treasurer Bob Clark welcomes attendees to the 2022 Annual Meeting.

CGA President John Bonkoske discussing the vision and goals for the Bridgman CGA.

CGA Vice President Julie Strating was recognized as a CGA Outstanding Contributor.