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April 25, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BELL'S BREWERY, INC. SAYS "YESCANABA!"

Larry Bell, a leader in the craft beer industry for almost 30 years, will meet in special session with Escanaba City Council Thursday morning to discuss purchasing a 3.16 acre parcel in the city's Whitetail Industrial Park for the construction of a state of the art craft brewery and bottling facility. The proposed brewery plans to produce a variety of beers and ales to be distributed across the UP and adjacent northern states. In addition to the 3.16 acre parcel adjacent to Michigan Meats just off Danforth Road, Bell is also asking the council to give him the right of first refusal to purchase additional unplatted land next to the parcel if needed for future expansion, according to Escanaba City Manager Jim O'Toole. If approved by the council, a site plan review of the property development will take place before the Planning Commission so that land use requirements and zoning requirements can be reviewed and so that there is a public understanding of the project

Bell, along with children Laura and David, owns Bell's Brewery, Inc., based out of downstate Comstock, in the Kalamazoo area. The Escanaba project is part of an overall company planned \$15 million capital improvement investment. The craft brewery employs more than 200 people, and distributes beer over a territory that includes an 18-state area, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. Initial plans call for five employees at the Escanaba brewery. A native of Park Forest, Ill., Bell moved to Kalamazoo to attend and study history at Kalamazoo College as a young man. In 1983 with the help of a gift from his mom, Larry Bell founded the Kalamazoo Brewing company, a precursor to Bell's, as well as a home brewing supply shop. The brewery opened in 1985 and sold 135 barrels in its first year of production, starting with a 15 gallon soup kettle. Since that time, production has grown to a quarter of a million barrels annually with over 20 unique ales and beers available for regional distribution. Today Bell's is the oldest craft brewer east of Boulder, Colorado. In 2012, Bell's ranked seventh in the top 50 craft brewing companies in the nation with an annual production of 6 million barrels or less, and is the 14th largest brewery in the nation overall.

According to Bell, "Escanaba is the major metro center of the U.P. I pass through on a regular basis and the property there will be convenient for me and my staff to get to. Escanaba has all the resources anyone opening an industry would want to have. I see a lot of potential to continued development. It's a good place for Bell's to be," Bell said "Our ongoing goal is to brew thoughtfully, creatively and artistically. We strive to bring an authentic and pleasant experience to all of our customers through our unique ales and beers," He estimates the cost of construction and equipment to be \$2.5 million and expects to complete the project in 18 months. He intends to use local contractors and suppliers as much as possible during construction. Bell has been testing recipes for the Escanaba brewery at his Eccentric Café in Kalamazoo for several months.

Bell said he was drawn to the Escanaba area based on its central location and cooperation demonstrated by local units of government and business leaders. He visited the area last month to tour possible construction sites. He is no stranger to the U.P. as he owns two cottages, one in Curtis and the other in Gulliver. That's where he is currently in the process of refurbishing a family cottage that his grandmother built in 1949. Bell often promotes tourism and has sponsored and sailed in the Bayview Mackinac Sailboat Race. In addition to his philanthropic endeavors, Bell sits on the board for the Kalamazoo Institute for Arts.

Vicki Schwab, Delta County Economic Development director, said she started working with Bell last year, providing information about the community and possible building sites. "Brewing beer is part of Escanaba's proud history, and Bell's Brewery is part of our future. We couldn't agree more with Larry about the potential he sees in our community. This is a true collaborative partnership," Schwab said. In Escanaba, Bell's Brewery can build the exact facility that will meet their needs, making it environmentally sustainable.

Escanaba City Manager Jim O'Toole said the project will be a real plus for the area. "We are extremely proud and pleased that Bell's Brewery, Inc. chose to invest in our community. A craft brewery of Bell's caliber will not only be a great asset to the city of Escanaba, it will further aid in diversifying our regional manufacturing base,"

Escanaba Mayor Leo Evans also said this is great news for the region. "Bell's will be a natural fit in our emerging craft beer and winemaking culture, and reinforces the fact that Escanaba is a great place to do business."

State Sen. Tom Casperson, R-Escanaba, said this investment in Escanaba means a brighter future for the Central Upper Peninsula. "This represents good, solid growth for our area. Larry is willing to invest in our community. He's going to be here for the long haul," Casperson said. He added economic growth in communities like Escanaba will most likely come a few jobs at a time, and the actual impact will have a ripple effect throughout the area. "There's potential here for the local farming community to possibly provide resources to this local facility. There's also possible spinoff for other small businesses around here," Casperson added. He said local officials showed they were willing to assist the company in finding a perfect location, and that eventually led to Bell's decision to locate here. "He looked at other opportunities in the region, but they seemed to fall by the wayside as the company started working with Vicki, the city and county," Casperson said. "I'm personally excited by him coming here. He's well known as a person of integrity. We're extremely fortunate to have him come up here," he said.

Delta County Administrator Nora Viau also took part in the tour that introduced Bell to possible sites here. "If they need anything from the county, we'll be there. We look forward to working with them," she said. Viau said Bell has indicated he will use local contractors for the construction project, and is committed to the community. "This will help build our economy a little at a time. He's an established businessman, and he's not blowing in and blowing out. He's here for the long haul," she said.

The company also takes great pride in providing economic, environmental and social benefits to the communities they call home.

The Economic Development Alliance is part of the Delta County Commerce Center. Vickie Micheau is the commerce center's executive director. "This project is the result of an exhaustive effort by many leaders in our community. Everybody, from Vicki Schwab to city and county leaders, all did everything they could to show the

Bells that this was the best place to invest in," Micheau said.

Bell's Brewery products have been available locally for many years at such places as Walgreens, Citgo (Escanaba and Gladstone), Pioneer Motor Inn, Nano Seconds, Super One, Elmer's, Walmart, IGA, Ernie's, Crispigna's, Ludington Grill, Baron's Bar, Gary's South Side, Kobasic's Grocery, Hereford & Hops, Gust Asp, Quik Food Mart, Buck Inn, Perrault's Market, White's Grocery, Gladstone Super Valu, Breezy Point Bar and the Nahma Inn. Bell's is distributed locally by Pike's Distributing.