

ECDC: Economic & Community Development Committee

Tuesday April 4th, 2023, 5:00 PM

Committee Members Present: Don Griffin, Phil Lehmann, and Terry Schuster.

Also, present: City Administrator Darin DeHaan, Mike Delaney, Cheryl Hilton, Chris Manheim, and Mayor Ken Williams.

Present via Zoom: Erin Folk, Rebecca Hazzard, Tom Mahoney, and Randee Mennenga.

Absent: Mike Glenn.

Don Griffin called the meeting to order and called roll at 5:00 pm.

No public comment.

Phil Lehmann moved to approve March 7th, 2023 Minutes, Seconded by Tom Mahoney.

Motion carried. No nays.

County Broadband Update: Don Griffin stated Amit Patel was unable to attend the meeting tonight. He asked everyone to please complete the County broadband speed test. He stated that most of Ogle County is underserved. As they are going through the processes, they are finding the situation is much worse than what was previously presented. The county had previously applied for a grant which was denied. They are working with other counties on a new grant. Federal grants will be available soon. He said the federal grants are complicated and they are looking at grant writers to help with the process. He also said the grants are tied to farming communities. Commissioner Terry Schuster said a lot of farming equipment now needs broadband. Mike Delaney stated the older group of farmers is not far behind the younger farmers. He said the cost of tech upgrades has made them make do with what they have. Technology will make them more efficient. To make it more affordable they need to have more people subscribe to the service. Don Griffin said the more advanced the equipment becomes the more the farmers will need this service. Commissioner Terry Schuster asked what the benefit would be to the city or what the link is for the city. Don Griffin said in town there is sufficient service however they would like to make it more affordable, everyone could benefit with a higher volume of customers. He said typically cable companies are charging more for the service but if there were more subscribers to the service it could be more affordable for everyone. Mayor Ken Williams stated there will be competition between Comcast and Frontier since Frontier is installing fiber throughout the city. This may drive down the prices for people within the city. Rebecca Hazzard said the lack of internet service has become a huge issue in the real estate market, as more people are working from home. The options are extremely limited for someone who lives outside of the city. Mike Delaney said a presentation for the providers showing there is a proficient level of support across the entire geography would be helpful. Mike Delaney said the survey will be open for another twelve days.

Consulting Services-County ECDC-Manheim: Chris Manheim said a consultant group will be doing a presentation on Economic Development board training. This will be taking place on April 13th at 1 pm. This presentation will be an hour long. He also said DCO is proceeding to set

up the seventy-five-thousand-dollar economic development planning grant. There is a full page of instructions on where the money can be spent. He is also following up with the urgent care providers, who are asking for more information.

Update on Comprehensive Plan: City Administrator Darin DeHaan said the steering committee met via Zoom and are working on a Vision Statement. A meeting will be set up to start going through some recommendations.

TIF/Enterprise Zone Updates: Mayor Ken Williams said there are a couple of things being worked on with the enterprise zone. There are some DCEO sign offs for an expansion for Amboy. There is also a back to business grant, open from April 5th to May 10th. The Dixon Chamber and Sterling Mainstream are working to help the local businesses apply for these grants. This is similar to what the city did for businesses with the Covid grant. He believes that the city should also look into doing this for our local businesses. He said another big project is the new state solar bill as to what is allowed and where they are allowed to build. The issue with the solar bill and the enterprise zone is there are many areas that are carved out for factories that would employ hundreds of people. The new solar bill says that if a solar company wants to build in these areas, there is nothing to stop them from doing this. This would use up previously designated land for industrial development. Don Griffin said TIF and Enterprise Zone are the two programs that Illinois has that really help with economic development.

Chamber News/Oregon Together Report/Schools/Community Events: Randee Mennenga said the Mother's Day brunch is being held on May 14th from 9-12. The cost is thirty dollars per person, ten dollars for fifteen and under. Tom Mahoney said the school is preparing for state testing to begin. Commissioner Terry Schuster said Stronghold will be hosting a Comic-Con convention at the end of April. Mayor Ken Williams said Rock River Studios will be filming in the area. He said he will be meeting with them on April 7th to discuss locations. They are looking at the pharmacy and doctor's office in Mt. Morris. There will be approximately forty people here for the filming. Don Griffin said the county is looking at the public safety campus. They will be cleaning up the area and making repairs to the fence. He also stated that the campus plan includes the planting of a permanent Christmas tree on the courthouse lawn.

Meeting adjourned at 5:36 PM.

Submitted by City Clerk Cheryl Hilton