

ECDC: Economic & Community Development Committee

Tuesday May 2nd, 2023, 5:00 PM

Committee Members Present: Mike Glenn, Don Griffin, and Terry Schuster.

Present via Zoom: Phil Lehmann and Tom Mahoney.

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

Absent: Erin Folk, Rebecca Hazzard, and Randee Mennenga.

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

No public comment.

Tom Mahoney moved to approve April 4th, 2023 Minutes, Seconded by Phil Lehmann.

Motion carried. No nays.

Consulting Services-County ECDC-Manheim: Chris Manheim said the final grant agreement from the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs was signed by their grant manager. The grant amount is seventy-four thousand five hundred dollars. He said Mercy Health and OSF have both expressed they are not interested in providing an urgent care facility in the area. He said it is not unusual for economic developers or leading citizens to look at purchasing and developing properties for urgent care facilities. He stated staffing for the facility could be filled if someone else buys or leases the building for the provider, it is something that has been done before. Tom Suits has been preparing the corporate paperwork for the EDC and is making amendments to the bylaws. He said it is time to start thinking about what other businesses to consider marketing now. He provided a Next Site Study that was provided to the City of Byron just to give an idea of what the market area would be and the type of businesses to look to recruit. Mayor Ken Williams said to keep in mind when looking at the report, the timing of the report regarding the Covid pandemic.

Facade Grant for Topsy Hog: Mayor Ken Williams said Topsy Hog is making facade improvements including power washing, tuckpointing, and painting. The cost estimate is about nine thousand four hundred dollars. This would be just under the five thousand that is typically given. Tom Mahoney asked about the balance on the Facade Grant account. Mayor Ken Williams stated it is about fifteen thousand dollars. Typically, three facade grants are given but it depends on the amount of each request. He also said Topsy Hog received a facade grant last year. A facade grant can be applied for each fiscal year. This request would be the first in the new fiscal year. Terry Schuster stated some of the items requested on the application are just general cleaning of the building and maybe specific improvements requested should be looked at. Mayor Ken Williams said the power washing is a necessary process needed for the tuckpointing of the building. Don Griffin asked if there were any other potential requests coming up in the future the city knows about. Mayor Ken Williams said none that he knows of. Terry Schuster said he would not mind holding off on this for a while to see if there are other potential applicants.

Terry Schuster moved to table the facade grant for Topsy Hog for one quarter, Seconded by Mike Glenn.

Motion carried. No Nays.

Commercial Lease Subsidy Grant for Mobel Furnishings LLC: Mayor Ken Williams stated the Commercial Lease Subsidy Grant is for Mark Nehrkorn. He is the owner of Mobel Furnishings LLC. This is a new furniture business and they have previously been awarded TIF funds. They are asking for thirty-six hundred dollars in lease subsidy. The grant allows for up to seventy-two hundred dollars per business per year. Mark Nehrkorn is only asking for half of the available funds through the grant. Terry Schuster said he is currently completing the interior of the building while paying rent and not receiving any revenue. Tom Mahoney said the more we can support retail downtown, the more people will shop downtown.

Tom Mahoney moved to approve the Commercial Lease Subsidy Grant for Mobel Furnishings LLC, Seconded by Phil Lehmann.

Motion carried. No Nays.

Don Griffin asked if a budget report could be prepared for next month since this is the start of the new fiscal year. Terry Schuster said he would prepare a budget report for the committee quarterly.

Mayor Ken Williams said they are looking at the costs for planting this year. The funds for this come out of the Economic Development Fund and some TIF funds. The cost will run about forty-four thousand this year. The Oregon Park District pays for the plants. The plants still need to be planted and maintained. He said it is a large expense, but it does make the downtown look nice. He also said this may be a good year to take the videos on the website and the minute and a half video provided by the county and start marketing those videos. Possibly get a social media marketer and try to market to the east to bring in more tourism. A focus could be on eco-tourism. This may be a good time to roll this out and do a test to see what we learn. At least try to do something to market the City of Oregon.

Update on Comprehensive Plan: Mayor Ken Williams said this is still being worked on. Data from businesses and the people who live outside of city limits is still being collected.

TIF/Enterprise Zone Updates: Mayor Ken Williams stated there is nothing new for TIF. There are discussions about solar and wind farms in enterprise zones. They are looking to put amendments on the state legislation regarding the location of wind and solar farms. Don Griffin said he does not see any trailer bills regarding this legislation. Mayor Ken Williams said the new laws do not apply to anything within the city limits or within a mile and a half of the City of Oregon.

Chamber News/Oregon Together Report/Schools/Community Events: The Chamber of Commerce put out a notice about a grant program for businesses. There are two grants available, one for hotels and one for restaurants and bars. Mayor Ken Williams stated that they

are saying everyone who applies will receive money. The business will go online and apply for the grant and complete the requirements. This program ends on the tenth of May.

Tom Mahoney said the end of the school year is three weeks away.

Phil Lehmann said if the government runs out of money, that means SBA and FSA will shut down. So, if you are in the middle of one of these loans, they will close the file and walk away. Causing the potential of weeks of delays.

Don Griffin said he is impressed with how CMAAA is progressing. He would like to hold an ECDC meeting there in the future. Mike Glenn said they have an art exhibit of Harry Nurmet. They have a lot of the larger projects completed and are now working on the details, such as the galleries, hanging things on the walls and completing inventory. There will be many types of art available including music, theater, and native american presentations. CMAAA is looking at a possible opening date of mid to late July.

Don Griffin said the old county jail site has been seeded. The county also has two people who would like to have memorial benches in this area as well. They have planted new trees including a new pine tree on the courthouse lawn. All the plants that have been planted are native to the area. He also said there will be five towns participating in a broadband presentation on Thursday in Bloomington. Each town is giving a presentation on what they have done with their studies for broadband. Hopefully, this will put the county in a better position for the grant. They did receive the one hundred- and seventy-five-dollar grant from rural development through Blackhawk Hills. The funds will go toward finishing the parking lot where the old jail was and putting in sidewalks around the parking lot and the south side of the courthouse.

Mike Delaney stated there is an upcoming conference on May 11th about Accelerating Creatives and Entrepreneurs. It is being held in Rockford beginning at 8:30 am with multiple speakers. This will be geared toward the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the creative economy. The cost is twenty-five dollars per attendee and is organized by Empower and Transform Rockford. He will forward the information to the group.

Meeting adjourned at 5:41 PM.

Submitted by City Clerk Cheryl Hilton