

ECDC: Economic & Community Development Committee

Tuesday July 2nd, 2024 5:00 PM

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

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

Present via Zoom: PJ Caposey, Erin Folk, and Rebecca Hazzard.

Absent: Mike Glenn and Chance Munroe.

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

Don Griffin called roll call. A quorum was present.

No public comment.

Phil Lehmann moved to approve the June 4th, 2024 Minutes, Seconded by Terry Schuster.

Motion carried. No nays.

County ECDC: City Manager Darin DeHaan said Char Coulombe has been working on Rise Grants with many municipalities who have qualifying projects. The group also toured E.D. Etnyre. They are currently looking to hire about fifty new employees and plan to join the OCECDC.

Business Development Update: City Manager Darin DeHaan said he and Mayor Williams met with Lou, the owner of Conover Square Mall, and discussed ways the city could help. Lou said he has been working through structural issues with the building. They discussed providing help with marketing and encouraged Lou to meet with business owners within his building. City Manager Darin DeHaan said Lou provides affordable spaces, it's a good place for a business to start. A new jewelry store that will be focusing on custom jewelry and repair plans to open in October. Jen's Artisan Bread is opening a 2nd location at 410 W Washinton Street. There is also potential for a drive through coffee location on the east side of the river. City Manager Darin DeHaan is working with the owner of the location.

TIF and Enterprise Zone Updates: Mayor Ken Williams said a company from Ohio is planning on moving to the area. They are in the beginning stages of the project. He also spoke regarding TIF and available properties. He said rent is high for new businesses. He was wondering if there was something the city could do to help improve the locations that are available. The city could work with the owners of these properties and coach them on what normal rent prices are in the city. Also find out if they need help with remodeling the locations, especially the exterior. Terry Schuster said many owners can meet their costs due to the income from the apartments upstairs.

Strategic Planning for Economic Development Committee: City Manager Darin DeHaan said the group needs to work on the future vision of the committee. He asked if there were organizations or industries that needed additional focus from the group. Chris Manheim suggested business retention and workforce programs. He also said working from the Comprehensive Plan Economic Development section would be a good starting point. They also discussed the potential of adding a student representative from the school. Don Griffin suggested combining multiple organizations marketing efforts, creating one vision and not competing with each other.

Chamber News/Oregon Together Report/Schools/Community Events:

City Manager Darin DeHaan said Tony McCombie spoke at the Lunch and Learn event hosted by the Chamber of Commerce. There were approximately twenty in attendance. The current membership for the Chamber of Commerce is one hundred and sixty-five businesses and organizations. The annual Chamber dinner is also being held on August 15th at River's Edge Experience.

PJ Caposey said the Oregon School district is starting a feasibility project. He said we have underleveraged the fact that we are in district with four community colleges, this is a unique situation. They are launching a study next week to determine what it would take for the school district to offer an associate's degree in conjunction with a high school degree. The school district would be the only small school in the state of Illinois to be able to offer that without students needing to leave the campus. The district is also beginning a campaign to share the mission statement and core values with the community. There will also be communication from the school regarding the healthy financial position the school is in and how that has been created, as well as information to help people understand how and why the school taxes.

Rebecca Hazzard said there are plenty of people wanting to move to Oregon, there are just not enough homes.

Mike Delaney said on July 11th a regional planning workshop for the future of small growth/small communities is being held from 5:30 to 7 and on July 18th a virtual event is being held regarding evaluating business ventures, anyone considering starting a business would benefit from this event.

Meeting adjourned at 5:42 PM.

Submitted by City Clerk Cheryl Hilton