

## **Board Meeting Minutes of the Martin County EDA**

**September 5, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Martin County Economic Development Authority was called to order by Wes Anderson at 5:15 pm. Those present were: Wes Anderson, Elizabeth Miller and Steve Fosness. Absent were Brent Schultze, Tim Terfehr, Richard Koons and Jaime Bleess. Also present were Scott Higgins, County Coordinator, Amber Patten (CEDA Consultant), Joshua Schuetz (CEDA Consultant) and Ned Koppen, FEDA Director.

There was not a quorum present for the meeting.

### **Agenda**

Patten added one further item to the agenda: a review of a meeting with the Retail Coach regarding business attraction in Martin County.

### **Minutes**

Because there was not a quorum present, no action was taken on the minutes of the August 7th EDA Board Meeting.

### **Old Business**

There was no old business.

### **Client Report**

Schuetz and Patten reviewed the August 8, 2023-September 5, 2023 Client Report with the board. A total of eight clients were served in the month of August.

### **Other EDA Projects**

Schuetz and Patten reviewed the August 8, 2023-September 5, 2023 Other EDA Projects Report with the board. Work on a total of seven projects was done in the month of August.

### **New Business**

#### **Update on Federated ReConnect Application**

Schuetz updated the board on Federated Rural Electric Association's application for the United States Department of Agriculture's ReConnect 4 Program, which would have brought fiber to the premise broadband to most of Martin County.

Schuetz said that Federated's application was rejected, because the USDA classified areas for which some funding had been applied as already being served. Schuetz said he has spoken with Federated CEO Scott Reimer regarding the project and that other avenues for funding are being explored.

### **Placer.ai-Possible Resource for Data Collection and Business Attraction**

Schuetz reviewed a proposal from Placer.ai, a software-as-a-service firm specializing in data collection for business attraction and site selection.

Schuetz said the software would allow the EDA to gather data about specific properties, sites, areas and communities in Martin County. Included in this data would be the number of visits to a facility, income level, education level, residency of visitors to a specific business, and similar information. The software would also provide input on gaps where a business could fill in a need within the community.

Fosness asked how such information can be acquired. Schuetz said this is done through the collection of cellphone data.

Schuetz said the information can be used to attract businesses and assist entrepreneurs in selecting sites for their businesses. Schuetz presented a sample report on the Five Lakes Retail Centre in Fairmont. The cost for Placer.ai's services would be \$20,000 annually.

### **The Retail Coach-Resource for Data Collection**

Patten reviewed a proposal from the Retail Coach, a business attraction consulting firm specializing in retail attraction. Patten said the Retail Coach uses cell phone data and other economic data to identify gaps in business services in communities, and leverages relationships with national and regional retail firms to bring those businesses to said communities.

Patten presented a sample analysis from the Retail Coach on business in Fairmont. Patten said she is looking into ways to get similar data from free sources and has reached out to Greater Mankato Growth and Region Nine to determine if they have such data available.

Fosness asked if the consultants could be asked to target specific properties or spaces in the community.

Patten said the cost for the Retail Coach's services is \$38,000, but that this number could come down depending on how the work is targeted and if a partnership could be set up.

Koppen said he has had similar conversations with a firm called Retail Strategies, as well as Placer.ai. He said that he preferred Retail Strategies' approach to Placer.ai's. He said firms like the Retail Coach and Retail Strategies can be helpful in connecting local communities to

national chains. He said that a split of the costs between the organizations would be a viable path forward.

### **Bills**


Because there was not a quorum present, no action was taken on the bills from August 8, 2023-September 5, 2023

### **Financial Reports**

Because there was not a quorum present, no action was taken on the financial reports from August 8, 2023-September 5, 2023

The board meeting of the Martin County EDA was adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

  
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Tim Terfehr, Secretary-Treasurer

  
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Wes Anderson, Board President