

Board Meeting Minutes of the Martin County EDA

October 2nd, 2023

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

Agenda

Motion by Koons, seconded by Miller to approve the agenda as presented. Carried unanimously.

Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes of the August 7th EDA Board Meeting. Motion by Bleess, seconded by Miller to approve the minutes of the August 7 EDA Board Meeting. Carried unanimously.

Old Business

The board reviewed the bills to be paid from August 8th through September 5th. Motion by Koons, seconded by Bleess to approve the bills in the amount of __. Carried unanimously.

The board reviewed the EDA client report from August 8th through September 5th. Motion by Bleess, seconded by Miller to receive and file. Carried unanimously.

The board reviewed the Other EDA Projects Report from August 8th through September 5th.

Client Report

Schuetz and Patten reviewed the September 6, 2023-October 2, 2023 Client Report with the board. A total of 8 clients were served in the month of September.

Other EDA Projects

Schuetz and Patten reviewed the September 6, 2023-October 2, 2023 Other EDA Projects Report with the board. Work on a total of seven projects was done in the month of September.

New Business

Ag Producers Survey Results

Patten reviewed the results of the EDA's Agricultural Producers Survey with the board. This survey was sent to all farmers and agricultural producers in Martin County. A total of 77 responses were received by EDA staff, a response rate of 3 percent.

The most common economic concerns cited by farmers were road conditions, general costs, and finding workers. Among the kinds of businesses and services farmers wanted were manufacturing, agricultural equipment repair and storage facilities. The investments respondents reported wanting most were waste management for livestock, road repair and better internet. The most reported agriculture infrastructure needs were a packing plant for pork producers, transportation and roads.

Patten said the answers were in line with previous discussions held at board meetings and said the results would be uploaded to the EDA website.

Fox Lake Event Center Tax Abatement

Tom Finke and Michelle Anderson presented to the board regarding a tax abatement request for Fox Lake Event Center, an 11,000 square foot events center set to be built in the Fox Lake area near Sherburn. Finke and Anderson said the project would provide services for weddings and company meetings, along with other events. Their request was for a full tax abatement of county taxes for five years, up to \$82,500. Finke and Anderson presented their application to the board, along with designs and renderings of the property.

Fosness asked if the facility can be divided into smaller groups, which Finke confirmed. Finke said the capacity will be for 380 guests, with up to 10 staff.

Koons explained that property taxes still have to be paid upfront, then the abated amount would be given as a rebate. Koons said it could start so it would be payable in 2025, as the center's taxes will be lower during the construction phase.

Motion by Koons, seconded by Bleess to recommend county board consideration of the tax abatement. Carried unanimously.

Consider Approval of Contract with the Retail Coach.

Patten presented a contract from the Retail Coach, a site selection and business recruitment firm to the board. The Retail Coach provides assistance to communities seeking to attract retailers and restaurants. Patten proposed that the Martin County EDA and Fairmont EDA split the cost, which came to \$30,000, plus \$2,000 for travel expenses and miscellaneous expenses at \$16,000 each. The contract would cover services for the Fairmont area.

Miller asked if the company provides any guaranteed outcome. Patten said while they can't guarantee a retailer locating in Fairmont, they do have a 90 percent return rate of customers and similar communities, such as Spencer, IA have seen successful outcomes using their consulting services.

Koppen said an advantage of using the Retail Coach is that such firms have relationships with national retailers and a presence at national trade shows that EDA staff at the city and county level wouldn't be able to attend or develop on their own.

Koons asked if any other towns have provided references for the firm.

Ned said Spencer IA is a very similar community to Fairmont where the firm had success.

Fosness said \$16,000 is a small price to pay and would pay for itself even if it brought a single small business to Fairmont.

Motion by Bleess, seconded by Miller to approve the contract in the amount of \$16,000. Carried unanimously.

Approval of Application for MNHS Legacy Small Grant

Schuetz reviewed a request for EDA staff to pursue a Legacy Small Grant through the Minnesota Historical Society with the Board. The grant would fund a painting conservation assessment of the damaged paintings on the dome of the Martin County Courthouse.

Motion by Koons, seconded by Miller to approve moving forward with the application. Carried unanimously.

Approval of Contract for Interpreters on Retainer for EDA

Schuetz presented three quotes for having interpreters on retainer for the Martin County EDA. The low bid was MINT Translations, at \$80 per hour. Schuetz said this is part of the SMIF Inclusive and Equitable Communities Grant project and would cost \$2,000 from that pool of funding. Schuetz recommended moving forward with the contract with MINT.

Koons, seconded by Bleess to move forward with the contract with MINT in the amount of \$2,000.

Approval of Submission of Broadband Letters to State and Federal Legislators.

Schuetz presented template letters to the board, which are to be sent to legislators regarding the issue of federal funding for broadband in Martin County.

Motion by Bleess, seconded by Koons to approve sending the letters. Carried unanimously.

Bills

Higgins reviewed the bills from September, 2023-October 2, 2023 with the board. Motion by Koons, seconded by Bleess to approve the bills to be paid in the amount of \$8,283.81. Carried unanimously.

Financial Reports

Higgins reviewed the financial reports with the board. Patten asked if the EDA budget was cut in 2023. Koons said that it was not.

With no further business to wit

Motion by Bleess, Seconded by Koons to adjourn the meeting. Carried unanimously The board meeting of the Martin County EDA was adjourned at 6:22 p.m.



Tim Terfehr, Secretary-Treasurer



Wes Anderson, Board President