

COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee
CHAIRPERSON: Steve McIntyre
DATE/TIME: Monday, February 22, 2021 @ 4:00 PM

PRESENT:

☐ Beth Baranski
☐ Gary Diedrick
☐ Mike Dittmar
☐ Janelle Keeffer
☐ Jason Kevern

☒ Emily Legel
☒ Steve McIntyre
☐ Rose Noble
☒ Fran Peterson
☒ Hendrica Regez

☒ Don Schaible
☒ John Schultz
☒ Scott Toot
☒ Eric Tison
☐ Nick Tranel

Others: Dan Reimer, Diane Gallagher, Brandon Behlke, Joe Kratcha, David Schmit

1. Call to Order – Steve McIntyre called the meeting to order at ~ 4:04 PM

2. Roll Call – A quorum of members was present.

3. Introductions

4. Approval of Minutes

- a) Minutes of the November 30, 2020 Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee meeting
- b) Minutes of the January 25, 2021 Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee meeting

John Schultz moved to approve the minutes; Hendrica Regez seconded. Motion carried with Emily Legel abstaining.

5. Citizen's Comments – None

6. Unfinished Business

- c) Discussion of the items identified for business development from out last meeting:
 - i. Sites: Shovel ready sites for businesses, residences, and parks/recreation
Scott Toot stated he toured the new South Rodden Rd. park property, which is currently moving through the committee process. Steve Bard has been involved with the site, and there will be a Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation meeting in March to discuss plans. There have been reports of neighbor opposition.
Emily Legel stated the Northwest Illinois Economic Development (NWILED) website has a Site Property Search function for available sites, including those at the Local Redevelopment Authority in Savanna, and welcomes new site submissions.
Legel also stated NWILED recently received site inquiries from several retailers.
 - ii. Transportation: 4 lane highway, rail, river ports, and other infrastructures
Hendrica Regez stated Congresswomen Cheri Bustos has discussed a plan to rebuild US Highway 20 to improve turning lanes. Scott Toot was involved in that discussion.

Regez also stated the plan proposed by Quandel Consultants, LLC of Chicago for reengaging Amtrac service between Galena and Chicago is moving forward with focus group discussions.

Regez also stated Illinois Bill HB0720 to allow off-highway vehicles (ATVs/UTVs) on all roads except state and federal highways with a speed limit of 55 mph or less has been sent to the Rules Committee.

Representative Chesney is a co-sponsor. Once scheduled, stakeholders are encouraged to fill out a witness slip.

- iii. Connectivity: High Speed Internet/Cell coverage/and other connectivity needs
No Comments
- iv. Building Services: Utilities and other site infrastructure needs
Gary Diedrick presented a letter that will be sent to Jo Daviess County Township Supervisors and Road Commissioners requesting a listing of utilities. Don Schaible moved to approve the letter as presented; Hendrica Regez seconded. Motion carried with no objections.
- v. Workforce: Education, training, attracting outside and inside workers
Emily Legel stated there is a Blackhawk Hills Regional Council housing study materializing, and that she can present details of it in March.
- vi. Marketing: How to market our county being “ready”. Living Large in Rural America.
Emily Legel stated the Jo Daviess County Relocation Guide, which is being developed by the Galena Area Chamber of Commerce, Greater Galena Marketing Inc, and Northwest IL Economic Development (NWILED) has been shown to Diane Gallagher, and that the guide is in the final phase of development. Once released, the guide will live on the NWILED website.
- vii. Business Grants and other funding
Scott Toot stated another round of business stabilization grants are forthcoming.
- viii. Quality of Life – Amenities, Welcoming programs, etc.
Hendrica Regez stated the fees charged to farmers market vendors are being reimbursed back.
Regez also stated the Quality of Life Sub Committee is looking for ways to improve area trail maps (land and water), is exploring ways to reduce trash including a pay per pound approach, and plans to begin work on ways to increase diversity in the region.

7. New Business

- a. Steve McIntyre stated Beth Baranski has resigned from the As-Hoc Economic Development Board, and that her notification will be presented to the Jo Daviess County Board at their next meeting.

8. Staff Reports

a) NWILED

Emily Legel stated Northwest IL Economic Development (NWILED) received three new calls for business starts/expansions, and that her organization is working on a local food aggregation project.

Legel also started the Great River Market grocery is now open in Hanover, and NWILED is involved in the Blackhawk Hills Regional Council housing project.

Steve McIntyre asked Legel what affects Covid has had on area businesses, including closures. Legel responded by stating tourism has remained solid, and that more businesses have closed as the result of owner retirement than Covid. Legel also complimented the promotional work being done at Greater Galena Marketing, Inc to keep attention on area businesses and offerings.

b) Planning and Development

Eric Tison stated office activity over the winter season is on pace with last year, and that permitting for solar installations is growing, which may result in limitations. A touchpoint with Touch Stone Energy / Jo-Carroll Energy may be needed to address details, including permitting and hookup discounts.

John Schultz comments that solar installations can still proceed but may be limited to battery systems and not necessarily connected into the energy grid.

c) County Administrator

Dan Reimer presented a series of charts on sales tax, transfer declarations and real estate sales, and stated some communities are fairing better than others. The final December 2020 numbers are still needed to close the year. He stressed there was a decrease of -2.4% between July, August, and September 2020 is the number of taxpayer businesses.

Reimer also stated the County Board recently approved an electrical aggregation supplier agreement with AEP; a new electric supplier for the ComEd area of Jo Daviess County, the new agreement begins May of 2021.

Scott Toot stated the Jo Daviess County Health Department has opened a Covid call center to assist with vaccine scheduling. The center is being operated at the Emergency Planning Agency office at the County building in Hanover.

9. Citizens' Comments

None

10. Committee Concerns

John Schultz stated the Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee is not making much notable progress.

Steve McIntyre commented the committee serves as an information rollup group for the Jo Daviess County Board and works to remove obstacles for businesses.

Diane Gallagher comments the committee serves as a great networking and communication opportunity.

Steve McIntyre requests nominations to replace Beth Baranski be sent to Scott Toot.

11. Next regular meeting –

Monday, March 29, 2021 at 4:00 PM.

12. Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at ~ 4:53: PM following a motion by John Schultz and seconded by Emily Legel.