

COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee
CHAIRPERSON: Steve McIntyre
DATE/TIME: Monday, March 29, 2021 @ 4:00 PM

PRESENT:

☒ 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, Former Representative Dave Winters 68th District, David Schmit.

1. Call to Order – Steve McIntyre called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

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

3. Introductions - None

4. Approval of Minutes

- a) Minutes of the February 22, 2021 Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee meeting

Hendrica Regez moved to approve the minutes; Gary Diedrick seconded.
Motion carried.

5. Citizen's Comments – None

6. Unfinished Business

- a) Discussion of the items identified for business development from past meeting:

- i. Sites: Shovel ready sites for businesses, residences, and parks/recreation

1. Great River Trail Extension support

Scott Toot stated a letter of support was sent by Jo Daviess County to the US Park Service for extending the Great River Trail from Savanna to Galena. Blackhawk Hills Regional Council and the City of Galena are also proponents.

- ii. Transportation: 4 lane highway, rail, river ports, and other infrastructures

1. Update on passenger Rail:

Former Representative Winters provided background on the Highspeed Rail Alliance organization and stated a travel alignment should be chosen summer 2021. A determination between Amtrak and Metra should also be made by summer 2021 and he noted Metra could partner with IL Department of Transportation for service. Options to shorten train travel times are also being discussed, including vehicle/locomotive selection. Overall, Winters stated rail proponents are excited about growing connections throughout the region, including the Rockford-Dubuque corridor.

John Schultz asked Winters about travel conflicts with freight lines, including the Canadian National Line. Winters replied stating such conflicts are up for negotiation as both freight and passenger trains share the same lines, and that sighting may need to be addressed.

Steve McIntyre asked Winters how the Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee can show support. Winters replied asking the Committee to advocate for the Rockford-Dubuque-Waterloo corridor with the IL Department of Transportation, and to join the High-Speed Rail Alliance and sign their Black Hawk corridor petition at:
<https://www.hsrail.org/Blackhawk> .

John Schultz voiced concern over how station selection will work, the overall cost of the project, and ridership estimates.

Scott Toot asked Winters about the \$7.5 billion in Covid relief funds coming to Illinois and if any of those monies can be applied to rail. Winters replied the Biden Administration is proposing a new infrastructure bill and that rail funding will be included.

Hendrica Regez stated that Quandel Consultants, LLC of Chicago held the Stakeholder Kickoff Meeting on March 12th for the Rockford-Dubuque Passenger Rail Feasibility Study, which is evaluating three (3) routes, including the Canadian Northern. Station options and funding obstacles are also being studied, and community focus groups are being scheduled for May 2021. Regez also confirmed IL Bill HB0399 is advancing with the House in Springfield;
<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocNum=399&GAID=16&DocTypeID=HB&SessionID=110&GA=102> .

Both Regez and David Schmit, Northwest IL Economic Development, stated they provided Quandel with names of local stakeholders for the May focus groups.

Dan Reimer stated a letter of support was sent by Jo Daviess County to Quandel and then read the letter.

Scott Toot asked Winters if the State of Iowa was supportive of the corridor. Winters replied that the City of Dubuque and their local Ride the Rail group are, but that the State has hesitations. He then requested the committee to join the High-Speed Rail Alliance at a cost of \$250.00.

Rose Noble stated she is in support of the project noting it will better connect Jo Daviess County to the region.

Noble moved to have Jo Daviess County join the High-Speed Rail Alliance by advancing the the request to the Planning and Development Committee; Hendrica Regez seconded.

Motion carried with a 6-1-2 vote (Eric Tison abstaining, John Schultz and Gary Diedrick voting no).

- iii. Connectivity: High Speed Internet/Cell coverage/and other connectivity needs
Steve McIntyre stated that the Galena Territory and Apple Canyon Lake buildouts are progressing.
- iv. Building Services: Utilities and other site infrastructure needs
No comments.
- v. Workforce: Education, training, attracting outside and inside workers
Emily Legel stated she is working with a consultant on a possible workforce talent attraction project for 2022.
- vi. Marketing: How to market our county being “ready”. Living Large in Rural America.
Emily Legel stated the Jo Daviess County New Resident’s Welcome Kit that was assembled by Northwest IL Economic Development, the Galena Area Chamber of Commerce, and Galena Country Tourism is out and receiving attention. It lives on the NWILED website and was marketed via a press release and social media posts.

Rose Noble stated the kit is already being used and requested, and that she will have analytics at the end of 2021. It’s also available on the Galena County Tourism website.

[doc-jo-daviess-county-relocation-guide-1614896370.pdf \(nwiled.org\)](https://www.nwiled.org/doc-jo-daviess-county-relocation-guide-1614896370.pdf)

Mike Dittmar, Hendrica Regez, Steve McIntyre, Steve McIntyre, and John Schultz all voiced approval and excitement for the kit.

vii. Business/Residential/Community Impeding Ordinances.

1. Survey Update

John Schultz stated the survey is continuing throughout the county.

2. Discussion and possible action on Abandonment or Discontinuance with nonconforming use is discontinued or abandoned for a period of 12 months or more. *(possibly change to 60 months):*

Eric Tison reviewed the current Existing Nonconforming Uses language, discussed ways to make it more flexible along with rezoning options.

Mike Dittmar stated the language should be updated to better serve businesses and avoid/address properties that have falling into disrepair (Terrapin Ridge Motel, tire factory site, BP gas station site at Highway 20 and Rt 84).

Steve McIntyre stated more than 12 months are needed from a realtor standpoint to sell such properties.

3. Discussion and possible action: One (1) accessory building may be established on a lot prior to the establishment of the principal use, *provided that such building is used only for the storage of*

machinery and equipment necessary to maintain the otherwise vacant lot.

Mike Dittmar stated the current Accessory Uses language is restrictive and hurts people who play by the rules as it should not matter if someone builds a garage on their property before they construct their house as any new build means more tax revenue.

Eric Tison explained the current zoning language, including details on septic and intermodal shipping containers.

Steve McIntyre stated there are many properties in the country with items being stored outside that are not contained in a structure (cars, trailers, boats, machinery).

Dan Reimer stated Galena Territory, Apple Canyon Lake, and some subdivisions have covenants restricting open storage.

viii. Business Grants and other funding

1. Small Business Stabilization Grant Update

Scott Toot stated a press release was distributed, and that he and Emily Legel will be administrating Round 4 of the program. The deadline is April 5, 2021, and six (6) applications have been submitted thus far.

Emily Legel stated she spoke with three (3) people who intend to apply, and that her office has also sent a press release and done social media on the grant.

Mike Dittmar asked how utilities factored into the grant application.

ix. Quality of Life – Amenities, Welcoming programs, etc.

1. Relocation Guide presentation and possible action

a. See Point 6 – Marketing above.

Hendrica Regez stated that the Quality-of-Life sub committee will be discussing diversity and inclusion on April 14th.

David Schmit, Northwest IL Economic Development, stated the Adopt a Highway program may get relaunched pending committee work and discussion with Steve Keeffer.

7. New Business

Rose Noble stated Galena Country Tourism is working on drafting a tourism masterplan for Jo Daviess County.

Scott Toot stated he is working on a survey of businesses on how they work with Jo Daviess County.

8. Staff Reports

a) NWILED

Emily Legel presented her report.

b) Planning and Development

Eric Tison stated the Planning Office had a slow February compared to last year, and that he does not anticipate another record year of inquiries.

c) RE Sales Data YTD

Dan Reimer presented his charts.

Eric Tison stated strong existing home sale numbers may continue into 2021 because of high new construction costs.

Dan Reimer stated low housing supply in the resort communities along with high demand may drive new construction starts on low priced lots.

Steve McIntyre stated automobile and farm implement dealers are contending with low inventories and slow delivery times on new orders.

d) County Administrator reports

See c) comments above.

9. Citizens' Comments

Diane Gallagher stated county officials and leaders should consider staffing community tables at events to promote the area to visitors.

10. Committee Concerns - None

11. Next regular meeting –

Monday, April 26, 2021 at 4:00 PM.

12. Adjourn –

Meeting adjourned at 5:59 PM following a motion by Emily Legel; seconded by Hendrica Regez.