

COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee
CHAIRPERSON: Steve McIntyre
DATE/TIME: Monday, June 28, 2021 @ 4:00 PM

PRESENT:

☐ Nick Tranel
☒ Gary Diedrick
☐ Mike Dittmar
☐ Janelle Keeffer
☐ Jason Kevern

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

☒ Don Schaible
☒ John Schultz
☒ Eric Tison
☒ Darcy Wild

Others: Scott Toot, David Schmit (NWILED), Montana Bartell (JDC Fair)

1. Call to Order – Steve McIntyre called the meeting to order at 4:00.
2. Roll Call – A quorum of members was present.
3. Introductions - None
4. Approval of Minutes
 - a) Minutes of the April 26, 2021, Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee meeting
Gary Diedrick moved to approve the minutes; Hendrica Regez seconded.
Motion carried with Emily Legel abstaining.
5. Citizens' Comments - None
6. Unfinished Business
 - a) Discussion of the items identified for business development from past meetings:
 - i. Sites: Shovel ready sites for businesses, residences, and parks/recreation
 1. Update on JDC Park (Elizabeth)
Hendrica Regez stated the property's appraisal has been received and that a committee meeting needs to be scheduled to review.
 2. Advisory Group to Blackhawk Hills Regional trail plan updates
None
 - ii. Transportation: 4 lane highway, rail, river ports, and other infrastructures
Hendrica Regez stated the Rockford – Dubuque Passenger Rail Feasibility Study is progressing with Quandel Consultants, which recently held meeting #2 with the study's steering committee. Reported topics included feedback from May's community focus groups, cooperation efforts with railroad companies, the status of station selection (Warren, Galena, East Dubuque ((emergency egress stop)), and their initial field reports on the status of infrastructure, which overall is better than expected except for the county rail bridges.
 - iii. Connectivity: High Speed Internet/Cell coverage/and other connectivity needs
Steve McIntyre stated home internet buildouts in the Galena Territory and at Apple Canyon Lake are progressing.
Eric Tison stated no new cell towers are in production, but an application to repair/replace a 500-foot tower on Morseville Rd was received.
 - iv. Building Services: Utilities and other site infrastructure needs

Emily Legel stated Nicor Gas residential buildouts in the Galena Territory are progressing.

v. Workforce: Education, training, attracting outside and inside workers

1. Discussion on what JDC can do to get people back to work and help with the underemployment problem in our county.

Steve McIntyre stated he has spoken with many business owners that are struggling with staffing.

Emily Legel stated housing is barrier and stated the Jo Daviess County Workforce Housing Study with Blackhawk Hills Regional Council should complete in ~ 10 months. Legel also stated that unemployment rates are back to pre-Covid-19 numbers.

Scott Toot stated Covid-19 restrictions are impacting J-1 Visa hiring at Chestnut Mountain Resort and at Eagle Ridge Resort.

Rose Noble stated staffing is a statewide issue for leisure businesses, including at Galena Country Tourism where senior age hiring is down at their welcome center because of continued Covid-19 concerns.

2. Present Workforce Programs – Emily

None

vi. Marketing: How to market our county being “ready”. Living Large in Rural America

None

vii. Business/Residential/Community Impeding Ordinances

1. Survey Update –

John Schultz stated no update on the survey.

Steve McIntyre stated students of Loras College’s business analytics program may be of assistance.

2. Update on Amendments forwarded to Development Committee

John Schultz stated Planning and Development is adjusting nonconforming use language not to 60 months but 24 months.

Eric Tison stated “shall not exceed” language for accessory buildings language is to be voted on at Zoning Board’s July 28th meeting.

viii. Business Grants and other funding

1. Small Business Stabilization Grant Update

Scott Toot stated fewer and fewer requests are being submitted.

Eric Tison stated the grant had four rounds, and that federal monies may have offset the need for applications.

Hendrica Regez stated farmers market vendors were grateful for their funds.

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

1. Updates

Hendrica Regez stated the Adopt-A-Highway program is to be voted on at tonight’s Public Works meeting, that there is a new compost project beginning at the Local Redevelopment Authority, and that a mental health study is launching.

Emily Legel stated the local foods survey with Western Illinois University is progressing.

7. New Business –

a) Update on Hemp at the Depot – Rob Davies

(Rob Davies report tabled until July meeting)

Steve McIntyre stated there is a local need to educate people on the difference between marijuana and hemp, and that hurdles to the help the hemp market need to be addressed.

Emily Legel stated local hemp regulations are controlled by the United States Department of Agriculture and the State of Illinois.

John Schultz stated it is difficult to secure hemp processing resources, and that hemp was grown in Jo Daviess County through World Word 2.

8. Staff Reports

a) NWILED

Emily Legel presented her report, including details on the new Workforce Housing Study, efforts to recruit refugees to help fill workforce shortages, the announcement of Genz Memorial Investment Fund awards, and upcoming special events, including Manufacturing Day, the NWILED annual meeting, and the NWILED golf outing.

b) Planning and Development

Eric Tison stated new application numbers are steady with two months of 2021 comparison data in. Over the past 13 months there were 42 home permits issued with the average house valued at \$256,000.

Steve McIntyre commented on the need for construction workers.

c) County Administrator

Scott Toot presented his report, including tax figures on cannabis products, which topped \$1 million in sales resulting in \$33,000 for Jo Daviess County.

Hendrica Regez asked if cannabis-related crime has become an issue.

Scott Toot replied that meth continues to be a more pressing issue for law enforcement.

Rose Noble asked how the \$33,000 will be used.

Scott Toot replied there are restrictions on how cannabis tax revenue can be used, and John Schultz replied ambulance services are supposed to benefit.

d) RE Sales Data YTD

Steve McIntyre presented his Residential Properties Sold in Jo Daviess County report, including details on trends in the Galena Territory and Apple Canyon Lake.

Hendrica Regez asked if prices are increasing.

Steve McIntyre replied that prices are increasing around 5-7% because it is currently a seller's market.

9. Citizens Comments –

Montana Bartell, Jo Daviess County Fair Board, discussed the schedule for the August 5-8 fair, and stated there is a need for County funding and volunteers. Bartell continued stating the Jo Daviess County Fair Board intends to reestablish their non-for-profit status, and that having County

funding support would help facilitate that and make future grant applications easier.

Scott Toot asked how entrance fees are spent.

Bartell replied entrance fees typically are spent on operational expenses, including exhibits and tent rental.

Hendrica Regez asked to include fair funding as a line item on the County budget, and stated her and Diane Gallagher will staff a County booth at the event.

10. Committee Concerns –

Hendrica Regez stated the Jo Daviess County website refresh/update may be fundable via federal stimulus funds.

11. Next regular meeting – July 26, 2021 @ 4:00 PM

- a) Hemp update

12. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 5:14 PM following a motion by John Schultz; seconded by Rose Noble.