

Minutes of Meeting
Trail County Economic Development Commission
July 16, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.
Trail County EDC Conference Room & Zoom Video Conference Call

Present: Board members: Roxanne Phipps, Kurt Elliott, Rick Halvorson, Gary Nysveen, Tom Eblen, Sarah Lovas, Ben Hershey, David Knudsvig, Scott Hovde and Dr. Brian Van Horn. Also present: Jim Murphy – Executive Director, Alyssa Short – Project Coordinator, Cole Short – Hillsboro Banner, Jim Johnson – Traill County Tribune, Mike Beltz – District 20 legislative candidate, John Pederson – District 20 legislative candidate and Cassie Braaten – incoming TCEDC board member.

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. Chairwoman Phipps.

Introductions – Cassie Braaten, incoming Mayville rep to the board

Additions to Agenda

None

Secretary’s Report

Nysveen moved to accept the June 18, 2020 meeting minutes, seconded by Halvorson. Motion carried.

Treasurer’s Report

Short noted that a CD is up for renewal. Murphy will call around for rates but a better rate than the automatic renewal is unlikely due to extremely low interest rates. Elliott moved to accept the June 2020 treasurer’s report, seconded by Van Horn. Motion carried.

Short submitted the list of monthly papers, which included paper checks, scheduled Billpay payments and p-card payments. Halvorson moved to approve payment of checks as submitted, seconded by Nysveen. Motion carried.

The TCEDC office received a note from the auditor’s office regarding uncollected taxes. Eblen later explained that there always are a fair amount of unpaid taxes at this point in the year but those numbers were higher for 2019 taxes. It’s likely the money will come it, albeit later in the year.

Executive Director’s Report

Murphy said TCEDC was contacted by Express Services to ask HBA about providing welcome packet info to 80 seasonal workers at American Crystal. He and Short assisted in the grant paperwork for a local nonprofit, which would include the addition of an FTE in the county. They also provided assistance to Mayville and Buxton businesses on recruiting new employees.



Murphy talked to Dakota Natural Gas about potentially expanding its footprint in the Mayville area. A business is looking at setting up shop on the south side of Mayville just outside the planned service area. The office also has been fielding a lot of inquiries about the beautification and child care mini-grants. Murphy talked to Cass Housing authority representatives and local bankers about HUD money available for developers to create low-income housing, and the office has been in contact with many businesses regarding the upcoming ERG grants from the state.

Despite COVID-19, the office has been getting several inquiries from potential new businesses, and did some site search and consultation work for businesses interested in Buxton and Hillsboro. Murphy also has been involved in several meetings regarding a value-added ag business looking at Mayville.

TCEDC assisted a Buxton resident with a proposal and potential grant work for a new emergency siren (which is in a holding pattern). And after a relatively slow month as PIOs for Traill-Steele Unified Command, Murphy and Short will be ramping up some of their PR work for the group.

Jordahl update

Hillsboro's Planning & Zoning Commission approved the first set of building permits for three duplexes. The city also agreed to put in its portion of the infrastructure. The building permits are up for approval at the next city commission meeting.

Riverwalk update

Riverwalk seems to be on hold for this year. Trucks are rolling but they're for a different project.

Dakota Natural Gas update

Murphy shared some quotes aired by KNOX Radio, including positive comments from two of the three Public Service Commission members. The federal paperwork is going through at the same time. If all goes well DNG might look to lay some pipe yet this fall.

Online Lunch & Learn Event

TCEDC will host a virtual lunch & learn Tuesday, Aug. 11. AE2S will conduct a seminar on social media marketing. There will be no cost to attendees because we won't need to cover the cost of a lunch (and AE2S is providing their presenter at no charge). More info forthcoming.

Mini-grant applications

Applications are starting to flow in. Murphy urged board members to remind businesses and child care centers. Recipients will be notified by Aug. 15.

Economic Resiliency Grants (ERG) for COVID-19 mitigation

Information on these is starting to come together. Originally this sounded like it would help fund safety measures for employees but now it's looking like the grants will be to increase consumer confidence (customer safety measures). Anything that can help with social distancing – PPEs, outdoor eating areas, etc. – are on the table. Short said businesses can start preparing narratives for their grant applications, gather estimates and pull together receipts for retroactive reimbursements. The TCEDC office can help find answers to questions but is not allowed to submit grants on anyone's behalf.

Community updates

Lovas – The flags in Hillsboro looked great on July 4 and it sounds like the group sponsoring the event sold out of their flags. Dirt is being moved in Riverwalk for a DOT project. Rumor has it the old Banner building might be taken down and replaced with a brewery. TCEDC is doing a great job with its social media posts.

Hershey – Both the water and roads projects in Buxton are on track. A house for sale but there's not a lot going on business-wise. Central Valley School recently sent a survey to parents asking about their willingness to have their kids return to in-person learning. There are concerns that the before- and after-school program may be limiting its numbers due to COVID because this is a heavily used program. Sports received the green light for fall. Concrete has been poured for a new building east of town. Hershey is trying to spearhead the siren project, which has been tabled by the Buxton City Council. The Buxton Fire Department got a new truck this week.

Knudsvig – Concrete has been poured for a new building east of Buxton. Townships are taking care of rain-related issues. A new business coming to town was mentioned at Buxton City Council. Valley United Co-op is building a new fertilizer plant which hopefully will be open next spring. No one knows for sure what is going to happen with the schools; administrators are working on the best plan they can, and everyone hopes kids can return to school.

Eblen – The County Commission is working on budgets and is continuing its COVID-related discussions at the county level. Eblen recommends wearing masks at all times. Ben Gates is submitting reimbursement requests for CARES funds. Updates to 9-1-1 equipment are needed and the county will ask voters for a 50-cent increase on phone charges to help pay for the equipment and subscription fees so county funds don't have to be used.

Elliott – The County Commission continues to address road and bridge issues. The courthouse remains open by appointment only and work on the courthouse dome has commenced. Farm-wise, more planting has been done in the past three weeks than the entirety of spring.

Hovde – Not much going on in Portland. The bridge on Highway 18 is being worked on.

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Van Horn – The marketing committee brought together a good proposal to help build momentum with the mini-grants TCEDC is offering. Everyone’s lives are consumed with COVID. Mayville State staffers are spending most of their time preparing for fall. Athletes return to campus in mid-August with on-campus students returning a week or so later. The university is trying to set up mass COVID testing for students before classes resume, and hopefully faculty and staff, as well. International students are having challenges with border shutdowns and quarantines. Mayville State is among the top three for NDUS state funding and has requested \$1.2 million to convert its fuel burners to natural gas. They may be asking for TCEDC assistance to help push the issue.

Nysveen – HBA is discussing a mini Hillsboro Day in late summer. The sale of the day care building went through. A basketball camp in Hillsboro hosted 250 attendees. The Mayville State football team and coaches spent a lot of time helping a local resident with a large sale event.

Halvorson – The Galesburg bar may reopen in August. The city has a new mayor and board members – new people who moved to town and wanted to get involved. A house recently sold and is being remodeled.

Braaten – Houses are moving, so the housing market still is good. Most Summerfest activities were canceled, except for the tractor pull.

Phipps – The Hatton School Board met as a group for the first time in a long while. They’re surveying parents and trying to come up with the best plan. They want kids back in school but want them to be safe, and they’re not sure yet what sports will look like. Hatton Co-op is putting in a truck service bay, storage and office space.

Meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

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| Recording Secretary (printed name) | Signature | Date |
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