

Minutes of Meeting
Trail County Economic Development Commission
August 20, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.
Trail County EDC Conference Room & Zoom Video Conference Call

Present: Board members: Roxanne Phipps, Gary Nysveen, Kurt Elliott, Rick Halvorson, Cassie Braaten, Tom Eblen, Sarah Lovas, Scott Hovde, David Knudsvig, Ben Hershey: Jim Murphy – Executive Director, Alyssa Short – Project Coordinator, Cole Short – Hillsboro Banner, Jim Johnson – Traill County Tribune.

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

Additions to Agenda

None

Secretary's Report

Nysveen moved to accept the July 16, 2020 meeting minutes, seconded by Halvorson. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Lovas moved to accept the July 2020 treasurer's report, seconded by Halvorson. Motion carried. Nysveen asked what happened with the CD that was maturing. Short said they let it auto-renew because with the current interest rates, they couldn't find a better deal.

Short submitted the list of monthly payments, which included paper checks, scheduled Billpay payments and p-card payments. Lovas moved to approve payment of checks with a correction – that being the Billpay payment to Reardon Office Equipment in the amount of \$48.78 rather than \$478.78 – seconded by Elliott. Motion carried.

Executive Director's Report

Murphy noted there are a lot of job openings in the county right now, many of them seasonal. He and Short assisted several businesses planning to apply for the state's Economic Resiliency Grants, which provide up to \$50,000 for businesses making safety improvements to encourage consumer confidence. There were at least 8-10 Traill businesses who applied (we know because they contacted us) and there still are funds available from Commerce. Murphy also spoke with a local banker about a possible Flex PACE loan in Mayville.

Murphy and Short had several conversations regarding low-incoming housing in the county. The local housing authority is looking to divest itself of its existing inventory and reinvest that money in new low-income housing. Murphy also spoke with owners and buyers for a few commercial buildings in Hillsboro.

The office has continued its work with a potential Mayville agribusiness opportunity, which could mean 20 jobs in the area. They also spoke with a Hillsboro business regarding Flex PACE options for expansion. Murphy commented on TCEDC's growing social media audience, especially Instagram,



which is being run by the office's high school intern, Jenna Soine. Murphy said the office has been very happy with her work.

TCEDC still is spending a fair amount of time with emergency assistance for Traill-Steele Unified Command and have been attending weekly virtual EDND summer conference sessions. The office held an online lunch and learn; attendance was lower than the in-person lunch and learns. They also worked on recruiting a potential new TUG member.

Jordahl update

Dirt is moving on the Jordahl project in Hillsboro and culverts are going in. Short said the office has received quite a few calls from people interested in renting units. The Naastads plan to move dirt on Hatton's new development this fall and sought some marketing input from TCEDC.

Riverwalk update

Work has slowed down and the city is working on agreements with the water district.

Dakota Natural Gas update

Dakota Natural Gas recently met with the county water board. The state's Board of Higher Ed approved \$1.6 million for Mayville State's conversion to natural gas boilers; this project now needs legislative approval.

Mini-grant approvals

Murphy and Short presented the list of mini-grants that were awarded by the marketing committee and other grant reviewers. The final grant funds disbursed likely will be \$15,000-\$16,000, but the total estimated dollar amount of all the project work is nearly \$112,000 – and many projects are using local contractors. The TCEDC staffers reviewed the criteria that must be met before funds are disbursed and confirmed that projects do need to be completed to receive the funding.

Murphy requested approval to disburse payments via Billpay when the grant completion criteria have been met. Elliott moved to pay 50 percent of applicants' project costs, up to \$1,000, as long as all criteria are met, seconded by Knudsvig. Motion carried.

Main Street Summit/Scholarships

The state's Main Street Summit still is scheduled for October 6-7. Murphy said he's heard from others in the county who are interested in attending, whether in person or online. He asked if TCEDC could cover the cost of a limited number of registrations for EDC members, city council members and other interested residents on a first-come, first-served basis. Lovas moved to spend up to \$1,000 on registration costs, seconded by Knudsvig. Motion carried. Murphy will contact the area EDCs and councils.

Hershey joined the meeting at 7:41 p.m.

2021 Health Insurance

TCEDC once again is getting the boot from ND PERS' health insurance. Murphy and Short met with NDPHIT but other options might be more cost effective.

Murphy floated the idea of adding potential family coverage and wanted to gather feedback. Nysveen mentioned the City of Hillsboro recently added this as a benefit to keep employees who were looking at leaving. Elliott noted the county policy is to cover the employee's single portion; it gets to be a "big chunk of change" covering the family portion for all employees. Hershey said he saw no reason why TCEDC couldn't cover some of the family portion but all board members agreed they'd like to see numbers before the next meeting. Elliott noted that it's difficult if the rest of the county employees wouldn't receive the same benefit. He said Trails District Health receives paid family coverage but the remaining county-funded employees don't.

The board recommended not accepting the NDPHIT proposal unless we hear back additional information about it, and board members would like to see quotes before the next meeting.

Community updates

Knudsvig – Asked if, for the sake of those on the conference call, in-person attendees could raise their hand or indicate in some way that they're the one speaking. Not much going on in the townships. The Dufners' building just east of Buxton is up and looks awesome. Work has started on the fertilizer plant near Hatton. Read on Facebook that COVID will end after the election and he's very excited about that.

Hovde – Bridge is being installed on Highway 18. The MayPort Community Club held a limited Summerfest and the tractor pull was well attended.

Eblen – County is gearing up for the November election. Glenda is working on getting out info about ballots. Contractors have started painting the courthouse dome. There is too much water in the county. Ben Gates, the county's assistant emergency director, isn't sure when emergency reimbursement funding is coming in. Hopes to have questions about the impact of uncollected taxes by the next meeting. The county is adding a 50-cent 911 increase on the fall ballot to pay for equipment and associated fees to use the 911 system.

Elliott – County is working on COVID protocols, budgets, the dome, water, roads and bridges.

Lovas – Lots of mini-grant work being done in Hillsboro. The school had conversations about the logistics of the return to school plan. Grain harvest has begun and the humidity is posing challenges. Sugar beets are looking good and the county needs American Crystal to have a good year.

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Braaten – The new law firm building in downtown Mayville looks nice. The farmers market is being held every Wednesday night. Three new homes are being built in Riverwood. Housing inventory is low. MPCG started school.

Halvorson – The Galesburg park committee (not board) is having a pork butt contest/fundraiser Sept. 19. The bar may be open in time. Elliott encourages participation because he’s a pork butt judge and would like the food to be enjoyable.

Nysveen – Casey’s in Hillsboro is remodeling. They were anticipating being closed for fuel for a month but it’s looking like it will be longer. Hillsboro Community Foundation is having a burger feed next week. HEDC is proposing a half-cent sales tax to generate \$80,000-\$100,000 per year. (The group’s total annual budget now is \$30,000.) The City Commission received nine candidates for the auditor position and is doing background checks. The city also might have façade grants available for 2021. Asbestos is being abated in the former Banner building downtown and a contract for teardown has been signed. Sales tax revenues are up from last year. One new home is being built – a spec home that’s likely sold. Beet harvest started. H-CV has a large number of volleyball players this year and has to expand practices to the armory. I29 Outdoors will be selling Snobears and outdoor apparel.

Hershey – School started Tuesday at Central Valley. Digging for the drainage project has started in Buxton and there is a lot of “confusion and misunderstanding” with regard to street closures. There are a couple homes for sale but Buxton is a seller’s market. The boutique (Geneva’s) is open this weekend. A new Ice Dawgs hockey coach was hired Monday night. Discussions are ongoing about how to logistically handle hockey in light of COVID.

Phipps – Streets are being torn up and worked on again. Fall sports are up and running with the first football game tomorrow night. School starts in person Aug. 26. Knight’s Welding was sold to a private owner. Hatton EDC plans to meet soon.

Meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Officer (printed name & office)	Signature	Date
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Recording Secretary (printed name)	Signature	Date
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