

Minutes of Meeting
Trail County Economic Development Commission
September 17, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.
Trail County EDC Conference Room & Zoom Video Conference Call

Present: Board members: Roxanne Phipps, Gary Nysveen, Rick Halvorson, Kurt Elliott, Sarah Lovas, Tom Eblen, Cassie Braaten, David Knudsvig, Dr. Brian Van Horn, 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 7:04 p.m. Chairwoman Phipps.

Additions to Agenda

None

Secretary's Report

Nysveen moved to accept the August 20, 2020 meeting minutes, seconded by Lovas. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Short noted the office had started reimbursing for the child care and beautification mini-grants. Elliott moved to accept the August 2020 treasurer's report, seconded by Halvorson. Motion carried.

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

Van Horn joined the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Executive Director's Report

Murphy said he and Short have continued meetings with the housing authority, city officials and various investors regarding low-income housing in the county, which actually is an opportunity to add new low-income housing. They toured the natural gas buildout in progress in Drayton and worked with Dakota Natural Gas on possible ideas for a local service space. They also spoke with a party interested in pursuing a Flex PACE buydown for a building purchase in Hillsboro, which could result in additional rental housing units in the city.

They continued several meetings with a business looking to set up in Traill County, including various financial organizations, to try to find financing and capital for the venture. Murphy attended the state's PSC hearings on the Dakota Natural Gas permits and gave testimony regarding the impact of the project on Traill County.

The office continued working with AE2S on its social media campaign and made some tweaks based on recommendations. Murphy will include some of the analytics for next month's meeting.



He and Short have been busy helping Traill-Steele Unified Command as the groups public information officers and developed an S.O.S. (Save Our Seasons) campaign to increase mask awareness and usage among high school sports fans. They did S.W.A.T site visits of a few local cities similar to those in size to Traill County's to help determine selling points and areas of improvement in our local communities.

Through TUG, Murphy and Short have been working with HEDC on its half-cent sales tax campaign. They also attended several meetings and training sessions and are continuing to field questions about the 2019 audit.

Jordahl update

Murphy shared photos of the work in progress for the three duplexes currently under construction in northwest Hillsboro. He commended the board and previous director Melissa Beach for their continued work on bringing the project to fruition.

Health insurance

The TCEDC office received information from Deputy Auditor Heather Hovey and the N.D. Public Health Insurance Trust that the TCEDC office was eligible to receive health insurance as part of the county's pool, but with its own EIN number (so TCEDC will pay its own premiums directly rather than through the auditor's office). The premiums for the TCEDC office will be higher than if the office pursued private options, but will help keep the rest of the county's premiums lower overall, and will mean all county employees will utilize the same plan.

Dakota Natural Gas update

Murphy recapped a site visit to Drayton, where Dakota Natural Gas is starting the hookup to residences. He noted there is very little above-ground work and minimal ground disturbance overall. He said that during the PSC hearings one of the commissioners asked why gas wasn't being piped to every city in the county; Murphy affirmed his commitment that the TCEDC office will continue pushing toward that eventual goal. The PSC meets Wednesday to approve or deny the permits.

2020 committee meetings

Murphy noted that the Executive Committee typically conducts reviews in December, but he'd like the Nominating Committee to begin work on the officer nomination process, and he'd like the Marketing Committee to discuss plans for next year. Short will include the committee list for next month.

Board member terms

Halvorson is leaving the area and plans to leave the board after December; he has a few ideas for replacements. Phipps inquired as to whether she terms out after December; Short will include the term information in next month's packet, as well. Eblen rotates out as a Traill County Commission representative and Ken Nesvig will be rotating in.

FY 2021 budget

Murphy asked Eblen and Elliott if they had any idea where budgets were at; the budget for 2021 has not yet been formally approved but the commissioners didn't anticipate changes to TCEDC's budget.

Community updates

Knudsvig – Townships are pretty quiet. Culverts are being replaced. He reminded everyone to get their ditches mowed.

Eblen – The Trail County Commission approved the NDPHIT plan, which he said was an interesting process. The same single and family plans will be offered at the same rates. A fair amount of money was trimmed from the overall county budget. Only one polling location will be open for the Nov. 3 General Election. Auditor Glenda Haugen will send letters Sept. 24 so residents know when to vote, how to drop off ballots, etc. The county received a check in excess of \$300,000 in CARES money, which will be set aside for now. Belmont Park will close for the season later this month.

Van Horn – Mayville State is reporting a low number of positive COVID-19 cases on campus. In a recent testing even for both the university and the community, only 1 in 180 tests came back positive, and that was not an on-campus case. MSU plans to cap the number of fans attending Farmers Bowls. The 2020 graduates also will be recognized that weekend. The university presented a \$1.6 million capital request for natural gas conversion to the legislative committee.

Hershey joined the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Lovas – Trail County was at the blue (“new normal”) risk level for COVID-19, but she urged everyone to wear masks to sporting events. Updates at Casey's General Store in Hillsboro were almost done. The city is cleaning the drain on the east side of town, which is “good for people who like water to flow.” A killing frost last Tuesday impacted soybeans and corn but wasn't a disaster. Fields are drying out and the markets are up.

Elliott – No comments in addition to Eblen's.

Halvorson – Harvest Moon bar is up and running. A pork butt cookoff takes place in Galesburg Saturday.

Braaten – The Rexine eye clinic is moving to downtown Mayville next to Nilson Brand Law. (The previous location was rented from Hometown Inn.) The MayPort Community Club is moving forward with Winterfest planning, which may be pared down to accommodate social distancing. They still want some sort of event for the communities.

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Nysveen – A SnoBear dealership opened in the Smith & Abell building, which previously received assistance from TCEDC by way of a Flex PACE loan. The city of Hillsboro plans to install an EV charging station in the Subway parking lot. The city also reached a tentative water agreement with Traill Rural Water for the Riverwalk development. The Schwan’s building is for sale. The owner of some land just north of Hillsboro has settled on a price, and the land could be purchased for a housing project. Maerten’s Machine & Welding is closing because the family moved to Cooperstown. Mark Merck’s storage facility is in progress west of I-29. The city hired a new auditor, Ashley Frederick. The Stars & Stripes project put up flags for both Labor Day and Patriot Day. They may erect flags on Veterans Day, weather depending. Hillsboro EDC is launching a campaign for a half-cent sales tax to be used for business development. HEDC’s biggest success story, Nysveen feels, has been the Christmas Cash campaign; if the sales tax doesn’t go through it’s possible the Christmas Cash program will be discontinued.

Hershey – Work is moving forward with the water and drainage project in Buxton. The city also still plans to get roads repaired. A few homes are for sale in town. Beans and potatoes are moving. The Buxton Fire Department is planning a Harvest Feed in place of its usual events, due to COVID-19. The school year is going well at Central Valley, which hosts the H-CV homecoming game tomorrow night. Knudsvig added that Central Valley School had reported its first COVID-19 case but administrators are working hard to keep kids in school.

Phipps – Hatton Eielson School started with 14 kids doing distance learning, but that number has decreased to eight. Thunder homecoming is next week with the game in Hatton, although there will be no bonfire or dance. St. John Church is having a to-go meatball supper. Work continues to be done on the streets. Naastad Brothers has been busy so the work north of town has been pushed back. Hatton Prairie Village still has no positive COVID-19 cases.

Meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

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