

Minutes of Meeting
Trail County Economic Development Commission
October 15, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.
Trail County EDC Conference Room & Zoom Video Conference Call

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Chairwoman Phipps.

Additions to Agenda

None

Secretary’s Report

Nysveen moved to accept the September 17, 2020 meeting minutes, seconded by Braaten. Motion carried.

Treasurer’s Report

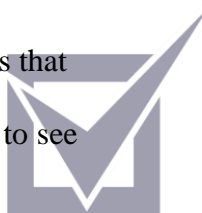
Short noted that six of the mini-grant reimbursements had been paid out and that the Hillsboro Café paid off its loan. She also asked Hovde to make a \$10,000 transfer from the general fund to the reserve fund. Van Horn moved to accept the September 2020 treasurer’s report, seconded by Hershey. Motion carried.

Short submitted the list of monthly payments, which included paper checks, scheduled Billpay payments and p-card payments. She said the reserve fund check was for 50 percent of the second installment of Heggy’s Flex PACE buydown through Hatton EDC. She also noted that the office was set to receive a stipend from the Department of Emergency Services to pay for the hotel rooms and some of the meal expenses related to the PIO training.

Executive Director’s Report

Murphy said the office has received quite a few mini-grant reimbursement requests and that Braaten took photos of some of the recent improvements in Mayville. The office also has been brainstorming with area principals about how to reformat the job fair/career expo due to COVID. Possible alternatives are tours at local manufacturers and something nursing-related for Sanford, leaning heavily on MSU.

Staffers met with Traill and Cass Housing to explore the divestiture of low-income housing property in the county. Murphy had meetings with city leaders and Traill Housing to try and come up with or be aware of the best solution to retain people and homes. He hopes to have more info available next month. Lake Agassiz Regional Council contacted TCED about brownfields prep assessment grants that are available to assess asbestos, fuel tanks, etc. They can also include environmental assessments. Murphy reached out to city and EDC leaders and will try to put together a group grant application to see if we can get some things paid for.



The office staff was involved in a series of meetings regarding value-added ag and involving several other local and state partners. Murphy said they've been working on this project for a while but he thinks they're starting to put train on the tracks in the right way. They're also working with internet providers in the area to put together a marketing piece regarding reliability and broadband capacity.

Murphy had a radio interview about Dakota Natural Gas, and said he was excited about a recent project he helped put together for Luther Memorial Home. After learning of residents struggling with a lack of tech devices and training – especially important during limited visitation because of COVID – Murphy spoke with AE2S Communications to see if they could help. The company has decided to make this its community outreach project for the year.

Murphy and Short also received FEMA G290 and G291 PIO certification, which can help both with the current pandemic and various situations in the future. They also have been working through TUG with Hillsboro EDC, assisting with the half-cent sales tax campaign.

Terms & committee assignments

Short said it appears that Nysveen, Hovde and Halvorson all are in their last terms; Phipps and Hershey both have an additional term left and all other board members are in their first term. Halvorson will be leaving at the end of the year. Board members were asked to contact Hershey if they are interested in serving in an office. Committees plan to meet at the end of the year.

Riverwalk development

Nysveen said the water agreement issues have been resolved for the upcoming development in Hillsboro; the city now is entering the negotiations phase for the developer's agreement.

Marketing report analytics

Murphy presented a slide show on the current analytics for the "Come Home to Trail" ad campaign. The campaign is approximately two-thirds of the way through and TCEDC has acquired 20 new followers on Facebook. The first sponsored post reached 24,680 people with 1,018 clicking the link, which Murphy said is a phenomenal conversion rate. The top audience was males ages 25-34, which was the primary workforce target. The first Instagram post had 156,714 impressions with 559 clicks and the same top audience. Overall, at the current point in the campaign, all the posts have a reach of 219,676, with 2,367 clicks. Murphy said it's difficult to say whether the campaign was "an unmitigated success," but the campaign reached the goals set out beforehand for conversions. Murphy added that getting people to uproot and move is a "deep seed to plant, not a spontaneous decision."

2021 budget approval

The 2021 budget was approved by the County Commission as it was submitted.

High school alumni mailing lists

Murphy asked if anyone knows of the availability of local high school alumni mailing lists. Missy Adams was mentioned as a possible contact for Central Valley. Murphy asked that any other recommendations be sent his way because they might be a good group on which to focus marketing efforts.

Training scholarship

Murphy said the office has been approached by a few primary sector businesses in the county requesting financial assistance with employee training costs. Murphy suggested starting a small grant pool – six grants of up to \$500 each – to help offset training costs. He noted employee training is key to retaining a stable and solid workforce. Elliott questioned whether this falls under the umbrella of economic development and Nysveen had questions about primary sector certification. Phipps tabled the issue for October. Murphy will send a list of primary sector businesses in the county, businesses that could potentially be eligible to be certified as primary sector and a list of the benefits of being certified primary sector business.

Strategic plan

Murphy asked what board members want to see done with regard to the office’s existing strategic plan. He noted that it has been a while since the plan was reviewed or updated. Murphy will send a copy of the strategic plan in its current form, as well as an executive summary. He’s requesting that each board member bring one update to the November meeting – a change, elimination, addition or new area of focus.

Board evaluations

Roxanne mentioned a form that Hatton Eielson School uses to do more regular performance evaluations by the full board. This would be helpful with annual reviews so it’s “not just the five members of the executive committee trying to remember.” Murphy and Phipps will tweak the form and bring it back for the November meeting. Murphy and Short also need to have their self-evaluations and evaluations of each other completed and sent to the Executive Committee by Dec. 1. Phipps also will select a date/time for Murphy’s annual review, likely via Zoom.

Community updates

Van Horn – Mayville State made a \$1.6 million capital project request to the Office of Management and Budget for natural gas burners to replace fuel oil. The conversion would save the college a significant amount of money. Mayville State also was measured recently against other universities in the state for COVID testing efforts; MSU has the highest testing rate and the lowest positivity rate. The university is starting a new agribusiness program.

Knudsvig – Nothing to discuss.

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Hershey – Buxton finished its water mitigation project but will hold off until next spring for street repaving. The tax assessment committee met and all assessment have been approved. The Buxton Fire Department held its Harvest Feed the first weekend of October and also found a way to hold socially distanced, drive-in turkey bingo. School at Central Valley continues in person although there is another confirmed case at the school. Admins and teachers working hard to keep in-person learning as much as possible. Beet harvest finished quickly. Hershey will not be at the November meeting.

Hovde – Things are going well farming-wise. SRS is doing another expansion/buildout on its Portland facility. The big bridge project is done and a county bridge is getting installed west of Portland.

Elliott – The bar in Galesburg is open and the pork butt feed was a success. In Clifford an open house for a new salon and Midwest Supply will be held Oct. 30 from 4-7 p.m.

Eblen – Election ballots were sent out and quite a few have been returned. The county auditor’s office is hoping everyone can stay COVID-free so they can have a smooth election. The county commission approved all budgets for the county at its last meeting after knocking off about 10 mills. Regarding roads and bridges, crews are working hard to get projects cleaned up.

Nysveen – The Jordahl project is moving forward and working with city to hook in infrastructure. The Learning Circle poured the concrete slab for its new expansion. Paul Geray’s flag group is hoping to get flags out for Veterans Day. HEDC is doing its usual 10 percent Christmas Cash contribution with HBA. They’re also hoping the half-cent sales tax passes so HEDC can keep doing that.

Braaten – Corner Nutrition is a new juice bar opening in Mayville right next to the VFW. Rexine’s new building on Main Street is coming along. The Pizza Shop and Stub’s look nice. MPEDC isn’t going along with traditional Christmas Cash but still will help businesses do something and offer a kickback. There’s a case of COVID at MPCG high school and the football team is quarantined.

Phipps – COVID is a bummer and is at Hatton’s school, too. Volleyball and football currently are shut down. Untamed Boutique is opening in Heggy’s building.

Meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

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