

**CITY OF MASCOUTAH
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

MAY 4, 2021

The minutes of the Regular Combined (In-Person and Virtual) Meeting of the Economic Development Commission of the City of Mascoutah.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Donna Mae Schlueter called the meeting to start at 6:10 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Donna Mae Schlueter, Keith Cook, Tim Boyce, Tony Sax, Brent Bergheger, and Bill Millikin. Charles Jefferson attended virtually.

Absent: None.

Other Staff Present: Assistant City Manager Kari Speir, Executive Assistant Tiffany Barrows, and Mayor Pat McMahan.

There was a quorum of commission members.

MINUTES

The minutes of the March 31, 2021 Economic Development Commission meeting were presented and approved as presented.

BOARD BUSINESS

Donna Mae Schlueter welcomed and congratulated, new mayor, Pat McMahan to the meeting.

Review of Current Businesses:

Per Schlueter, Nick Walters spoke and did a “spotlight” on Motto Mortgage business relocating to Mascoutah. The business group consists of Connie Kappert and Steve Bennett and the business will be located where Fred’s Hardware used to be. The group has been planning and coming up with some designs. They would like to do some things inside as well as outside. The group will be working with mortgages, first time buyers, and assisting people that need help with working with financial institutions. They will be keeping the EDC in the loop with what is happening there.

Per Schlueter, there is no new reports regarding the burger place. Assistant City Manager stated the City Manager has been updating the interested burger business that the former Jefferson’s building is available. The listed selling real estate agent is Barber Murphy.

In regards to the airport expansion project, Schlueter stated that there was vendor interest. Assistant City Manager stated there is no update and will check with the MidAmerica Airport engineer for an update.

Review of Old Items:

Assistant City Manager confirmed the city brochure and planning maps are on their list of items to execute as soon as Tiffany Barrows can get up to speed on training. Incentive packets have been emailed out to the EDC for their review and will provide a hard copy to anyone interested.

Schlueter referenced the 2003 Strategic Planning Session. She asked if there has been a similar planning session or survey since then. The 2003 session went over what Mascoutah had and what was thought to be needed. The results included Metro Link location, Interstate access, small town feel, and education. Shopping Mascoutah was a point of review. It also cited why residents shopped within/outside of Mascoutah. Schlueter suggested that they review the findings to compare whether the goals were accomplished.

Bill Millikin updated EDC on the planter project. Everything has been ordered and payments have been made. The planter project ended up having additional funds from City Manager's office to increase the number of planters. There are approximately 36-40 planters ordered with a 3-4-week estimated delivery when payment is received. He expects them to arrive the end of May. They expect approximately 40 planters, which include the newly ordered planters and existing metal planters. They need volunteers to go through and redo all the planters. EDC is looking into a planting party. The only thing that was not purchased were the actual plants. Millikin made a request to the Chamber for \$1,000 because they typically provide about \$500. Schlueter reached out to the garden club that serves 5-6 communities. Wilma, of the garden club, stated they would assist with planting and would be willing to help out with watering needs. Millikin stated that they would like advice on what should be planted. The goal is to have perennials that will look great and flower or green all year round, not just seasonally. The garden club and/or Paul Shorr will hopefully provide their expertise/consultation in what to plant. Additional funding will be needed because \$1,000 will not be enough to cover all the perennials that will be needed for this project. The garden club needs to be notified when and where to assist. Trinity is also able to assist with planting. City Manager mentioned at the last meeting that there might be some part-time employees that could help with watering and upkeep. Each planter would take approximately 20 gallons of water. A large transportable tank with a hose was purchased, in this budget, for watering purposes. The tank can be hauled on the back of a trailer. The design of the planters includes a buffer between soil and water so the roots will stay moist, as well as a large reservoir at the bottom for water.

Schlueter found a banner used 20 years ago on Main St. as a reference and presented to the group. She suggests that we use something similar to this and possibly incorporate the city flag. The banners could be placed at the four way, at Jefferson and Route 4. Placement options were discussed. Brent Bergher will look into where to get banners made.

Schlueter asked Charles Jefferson to bring a budget for approval before they can move forward on the business incubator project. Jefferson explained the business incubator idea. He stated an incubator used to be an office where people could sit down and get mentoring, education, training, and sometimes funding. According to Jefferson, 60% of all new startup businesses fail whereas 60% of startups that use an incubator succeed and thrive. Due to the

pandemic, brick and mortar incubators became virtual and people were working out of their homes, starting businesses. This proves there is no need for an office expense. Within the last couple of years, Fairview Heights/O'Fallon/Swansea joined a cooperative agreement that shared services. There are now established hubs that have information to help entrepreneurs get started. Jefferson would not project any costs for a couple of months. He would like to gather all of the local and regional resources that could help Mascoutah based entrepreneurs get started and start to develop a survey that they could use on Facebook. Three years ago, he was told he could not use social media because, at that time, the city did not use Facebook to deliver/gather information. He believes that is the reason there was little response or interest in the project. Jefferson also stated that the Great Streets project response was low because we did not utilize Facebook. He referenced different Facebook groups that prove his point that the Facebook survey would receive a wider response than not using it. He provided a list of different Facebook groups and how many subscribers each had. Jefferson would like to research the local resources, draft a survey that would go to the commission to review and give feedback/edits before submitting anything. He does not want to spend any money. Jefferson will email a copy of the drafts, keep the commission aware of what his findings, and will remain open minded with commission responses and feedback. He referenced the YMCA project, which took one year to create the survey and he would like to do the same thing with this survey with many of the same YMCA project contributors. Jefferson stated that the only groups that he would consider reaching out to would be buzzworthy Mascoutah groups, when the survey is completed. Jefferson stated he would focus on the incubator research and survey. He promised to email EDC members so that they can provide comments and adjustments where needed. Tony Sax thanked Charles Jefferson for his taking on this project. The commission motioned the approval for Jefferson to do research and put this project together. All approved.

Schlueter updated on a house on Main Street between 6th and 7th; they have moved out and a "flipper" has taken over. There is no updated news or contact information on the Smith building on Main Street. There was an inquiry on Patterson and Jefferson, which is in foreclosure and has wildlife taking over. The house in the 300 Block of North Jefferson is also in foreclosure.

Mayor is in charge of Light the Park at Christmas time. Schlueter inquired about the EDC sponsoring a small pavilion to decorate. Assistant City Manager suggested the EDC wait and see the business response. Mayor stated there was some response/interest from businesses. There are 10-12 total units/sections to decorate as well as ball fields. There will be a posted criteria and possibly an incentive contest. Criteria would include rules and restitution. Contest would be for local businesses and the goal is to create civic engagement.

Schluter mentioned that Tim Boyce has previously suggested contacting businesses on Main Street to spruce up. She stated that the town previously had a program or announcement that "this month is clean up month". She was unsure of laws, etc. Millikin brought up the residential/ business appreciation notice program of houses/businesses that cleaned up. The program would not celebrate who spends the most but who puts in the most effort. Suggestions include signage in yards – we noticed, thank you, or maybe a simple signage program during the summer. He also suggested reaching out to Greg at the Herald to create a

weekly article in the paper to drum up publicity and recognition to promote and maybe even help sponsor. Millikin suggested a residential and business version.

Keith Cook arrived, physically, at 6:44 p.m.

Mayor received a suggestion from a local resident about the Paducah project. The project involved assigning and expanding grants to particular businesses that would be used to enhance renovations, roof improvements, etc. He suggested incorporating this with the Great Streets Initiative and improve the grant money. Assistant City Manager stated that the only grant money the City has now is within the TIF 2B District fund. She stated at most, there is \$25,000, so Mayor stated we need to start applying for more. Assistant City Manager agreed and stated from what they currently have will support approximately three projects at most. Mayor stated at a council meeting they discussed trying to expand the TIF west, down Main Street, but it has to meet approval from TIF experts. Assistant City Manager mentioned the discussion of extending the TIF that is currently in place for another 10-12 years. There is only 2 years on the current TIF. Per Millikin, the TIF district would be parallel to the Great Streets plan as well so he thinks they can tie it all together.

Schlueter asked for a review of all the city ordinance for weeds, etc. Assistant City Manager stated police give violators a 5 days' notice to obey it, if they do not comply the city will cut and send bill. If the owners do not pay, the city will then have to put a lien on the property. Many of these issues are complaint driven. Schlueter mentioned the local scouting groups or sports team volunteering to assist with community cleanup coordination. Jefferson spoke with Mayor about the Neighbors Helping Neighbors Facebook group, approximately 900 people. He suggested possibly reaching out to them if they would want to be involved in helping out with a Mascoutah citywide clean up. Jefferson also discovered that New Baden had a similar cleanup project. He suggested that we organize a Mascoutah citywide cleanup that would occur within 3-4 scheduled weekends that would involve Facebook groups and local organizations. Schlueter mentioned previous events of Main Street clean up days and how difficult it was to get people interested and did not want to offend anyone. Tony Sax suggested a canvas idea through neighborhoods. Mayor agreed that it would be a wise idea to put something out on Facebook and/or in the newspaper. The notification would be an announcement of a community assistance program/clean-up project with the goal of a community volunteer program. Jefferson liked the idea of targeting assisting senior citizens with property upkeep.

Millikin proposed to access a city grant writer which would be available to search and research grants. If we do not have someone on staff that could chase grant access full time, he suggested that we possibly hire someone. Schlueter suggested a new hire be given these tasks. Millikin suggested that we outsource someone with expertise and experience in grant writing and researching; there is significant money coming that will target small businesses and communities. Assistant City Manager stated the city is expecting to get approximately \$900,000-\$1,000,000 million from the Americans Recovery Plan. The city is still waiting on details and restrictions from the Treasury department. Assistant City Manager also mentioned that there would be money coming with restrictions from MFT but her office has not received information on it yet.

Next meeting was agreed to be scheduled June 29th. Bergheger expressed that he would be unable to meet every month. Millikin suggested a meeting in combination with the planting project.

The next regular meeting will be on June 29, 2021 at 6 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

MISCELLANEOUS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 7:02 p.m. All were in favor.

Tiffany Barrows, Executive Assistant