Economic Development Advisory Board
April 6, 2021 Meeting Minutes

I. Call to order

Chair Chuck Goad called to order the regular meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Board at 3:30 PM on April 6, 2021, at Memorial Hall and via conference call.

II. Roll call

The following members were present:

Chair Chuck Goad (11-0)
Vice-Chair Wayne Stephany (11-0)
Secretary Tony Royse (11-0)
Jason Curtis (11-0)
Brian Hight (3-1)
Paul Yaroslaski (8-3)
Lori Kelley (10-1)
Trisha Purdon (Ex-Officio)
Lisa Wilson (Ex-Officio)
Tabitha Snodgrass (Ex-Officio)
April Nutt (Ex-Officio)

The following members were absent:

None

The following staff were present:

Finance Director Lacey Lies
Administrative Aide Lydia Collins

The following visitors were present:

None

III. Approval of Minutes from January 5, 2021

A motion was made by Tony Royse to approve the minutes from the March 2, 2021 meeting, which was seconded by Jason Curtis. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Items Requiring Action

A. Set goals for 2021

Brian Hight suggested there be a City person whose job it is to be a new business navigator. He said it would be nice to have someone a new business could go to, to get all the information they need to go into business.

Chuck Goad said Brian's story was shared with the group a while back and it was taken to heart. There is a set-up of the Chamber and the City guiding people on starting a new business. It does not go as deep as you are saying but we could set up a further refinement.

Lisa Wilson said the Chamber has put together a team of 10 and it's called BEST. We have been doing it for 4 or 5 months and we've been able to walk people through starting a business. We have reached out to businesses and people wanting to start a business. We have not marketed this yet.

Brian Hight said maybe this is the next step to take, marketing the team.

Lisa Wilson said when someone reaches out the team gets on it. They meet 2 hours twice a month. In another 30 to 60 days, we'll be able to market it to the public.

Chuck Goad said the process is in the Beta Phase and when you feel confident you will go public.

Tony Royse asked what the holdup is getting it out to the public?

Lisa Wilson said there are so many people in the pipeline that we've been busy with it and haven't thought about reaching out yet. I talked to Chuck about possibly bringing it to this group.

Lori Kelley questioned who was going to own the marketing piece? Whose website will it be on?

Lacey Lies stated that it's owned by the Chamber, but the City will put it on their website.

Chuck Goad said it's a joint effort being led by the Chamber.

Lisa Wilson said that it should be a one-page market tool.

Lori Kelley said it would be great for First Friday.

Tabitha Snodgrass said the first meeting they have that is not packed they can look at putting together marketing.

Lacey Lies said they should get forms together that everyone will need.

Trisha Purdon felt the team should put that together themselves.

April Nutt said the information should be put together and get it out to all the realtors to help get the information out.

Chuck Goad said the City has a vested interest in the team succeeding as they usually get the blame for information not going anywhere.

Tabitha Snodgrass feels like one goal could be to have the whole grant for the outside of the buildings downtown be used.

Lacey Lies said the measure of success would be to use the entire grant in one year.

Chuck Goad said the goal would be to spend the full $50,000.

Lacey Lies said she thought Joanne Smith had put something on the City's website about the grant.

Lori Kelley said she could see something as simple as a postcard going to the downtown building owners. Also communicating the grant to contractors would be a good idea.

Lacey Lies said it would be a good idea to send the information to all the licensed contractors.

Chuck Goad said that they could be sent to realtors as well as contractors.

Wayne Stephany felt there should be a scoreboard of how much money there is and where it is spent and how much is left over.

Lacey Lies said she could provide reports, but this board does not dictate where the money goes.

Wayne Stephany said with the hospital we recommended the amount of money without knowing what funding there is.

Chuck Goad said for this board to set meaningful policy we could use a paper, a one-page document, with totals that would be helpful. It would give the board an idea of where they should concentrate their efforts.

Lori Kelley said with the building enhancements, if we can track what funds went out and what is left.

Lacey Lies said she has a list of all City funded projects and that would be a good list to have along with the financial statements.

Lori Kelley said she is passionate about livability scores. Things like that I feel like that the younger generation looks at things like that.

Wayne Stephany said maybe a goal should be to find out more about livability scores.

Brian Hight said that he spent a few hours online boosting his business. He began by verifying his company on Google.

Chuck Goad said having new blood moving into the area is important and young people are looking at these scores and statistics.

Lori Kelley said it boils down to improving digital responses. When people look for places to live, we want to make sure Independence comes up in searches. The idea is the references in articles help with the Google search scores.

Chuck Goad said the issue would be our ability to upload the data source and having accurate and timely information.

Lacey Lies said if all of our businesses have a presence online will it raise the score.

Trisha Purdon said a postcard is sent out when a business verification is made through Google.

Chuck Goad asked what benefit would the City receive?

Lori Kelley said increased population and tax revenue.

Lacey Lies has a goal of having licensed companies to be on the City's website and where the public could click on them and get their information.

Chuck Goad said being the Economic Development Advisory we have to make sure we are benefiting the City in economic development. How can this be put into a goal for this board?

Paul Yaroslaski said we should work on any webpage for businesses, the City and County to bring the count up.

Chuck Goad said we have to be able to put it into a statement as a goal that is relevant to our committee. Why would this be a goal for EDAB or would it be a goal for another entity.

April Nutt thought it would be a great ICC class.

Chuck Goad asked what the City could benefit by identifying who uploads the data and how that benefits us. Maybe we take it on as a policy for another group to take on.

Lori Kelley asked if it is identifying datapoints that are impeding our economic growth.

Chuck Goad asked how we can prove that impedes the economic growth.

Brian Hight said they work hard to keep their Trip Advisor presence up to give them a higher rating. You claim it just like you claim your Google business.

Chuck Goad said our goal should be to better understand the digital role for economic development and show how it benefits the City. If there was a regular follow-up with businesses to get their business a higher rating more people would see Independence more on Google.

Brian Hight said if it were done collectively within three months every business would see an uptick. This is destination marketing.

Chuck Goad said all this data serves many masters. We have retail sales, people looking for a place to live, businesses looking at property.

Wayne Stephany said we could recommend a mentoring or coaching like having a meeting and offering this information to the public.

Lacey Lies said we should start with the AARP article, study it and get information.

Chuck Goad suggested there be a small work group to study where the data comes from, making sure we have the right data and help businesses to populate their business. The goal would be to help develop a digital dissemination plan.

Lori Kelley said that for a fee AARP will help you through the process.

Chuck Goad asked if someone would volunteer to collect data and then we could develop a goal from there.

Lori Kelley, Brian Hight and Paul Yaroslaski said they would like to work on this small group. Trisha Purdon said she could get them some information.

Chuck Goad said we should think on what the goal should be called.

Lori Kelley said we have the best tennis place online because we told them we did so we should get people to promote what they have digitally.

Three goals were decided on:

1. Spend the $50,000
2. Develop the Dashboard
3. Data Collection

Chuck Goad said the board would work on the best way to label the goals so everyone can understand them.

Wayne Stephany said we should use "SMART" goals.

Chuck Goad asked if Wayne could email an explanation of SMART goals out to everyone.

V. Items for Discussion

A. Status of Company "X" project.

Trisha Purdon has not heard back from them.

B. Other Items for Discussion

Lacey Lies presented the financial reports: 1) year end 2020 and end of March 2021 showing all revenue and expenditures, 2) detailed breakdown of the budget with all commitments and total spending authority. Fund 25 is for the City's grant programs.

Chuck thought if we had Fund 6 balance and Fund 26 balance that's all we would really need.

Chuck Goad recommends that Lacey put the Budget Summary Reports along with the Fund 6 and Fund 26 balances together for the board at each meeting. This report would show everyone the numbers they need to see.

Lacey Lies said she would do budget and year-to-date. She also stated that The Neighborhood Exterior Grant Program began accepting applications and four houses have participated with the City matching $14,000 of the $50,000. There has been a lot of attention. Part of the program is to take after-pictures and we'll send a before and after picture to the homeowners with a thank you note for participating.

April Nutt said there is a downtown business interested in doing some tuck pointing which will come to about $40,000.

VI. Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn by Brian Hight, seconded by Tony Royse. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes approved by:

Chuck Goad, Chair

Tony Royse, Secretary