

COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee
CHAIRPERSON: Steve McIntyre
DATE/TIME: August 3, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Beth Baranski	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emily Legel	<input type="checkbox"/> Don Schaible
<input type="checkbox"/> Rod Brandt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve McIntyre	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> John Schultz
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gary Diedrick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rose Noble	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scott Toot
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Dittmar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fran Peterson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eric Tison
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janelle Keeffer	<input type="checkbox"/> Wayne Raisbeck	<input type="checkbox"/> Nick Tranel
<input type="checkbox"/> Jason Kevern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hendrica Regez	

Others: Dan Reimer, Diane Gallagher

1. **Call to Order** – Steve McIntyre called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.
2. **Roll Call** – A quorum of members was present.
3. **Introductions**
4. **Approval of Minutes**
 - a) **Review and approve minutes for the July 6, 2020 Ad-Hoc Economic Development Committee meeting** –
John Schultz moved to approve the minutes; Eric Tison seconded. Motion carried.
5. **Citizen’s Comments** – None
6. **Unfinished Business**
 - a) Discussion of the items identified for business development from our last meeting:
 - i. **Sites:** Shovel ready sites needed
Emily Legel sent out a handout on how to look for properties. Janelle Keefer noted the comprehensiveness of the website and Legel asked that people go through her website and to pass new sites her way.
 - ii. **Transportation:** 4 lane highway, rail, river ports, and other infrastructures
John Schultz had no report and requested that someone else help with the project. Hendrica Regez volunteered to be added to that committee
 - iii. **Connectivity:** High Speed Internet/Cell coverage/and other connectivity needs
McIntyre has reached out to several service providers and will be meeting with them to discuss their plans in Jo Daviess County in the next month. He also requested that anyone with a cell contact send them his way, noting Elizabeth as an area lacking in cell service, with several other sites as well, such as Stagecoach Road, that are critical to travel and emergency services.
He also reached out to the Galena Territory and Apple Canyon Lake, with buildout occurring rapidly.
Eric Tison noted that a new tower install application was going through his office for the south side of Apple Canyon Lake.
 - iv. **Building Services:** Utilities and other site infrastructure needs

No champion and no report. McIntyre requested utility and infrastructure needs. Gary Diedrick volunteered to look into this.

- v. Workforce: Education, training, attracting outside and inside workers
Emily Legel had no report but will send one in September.

- vi. Marketing: How to market our county being “ready”. Living Large in Rural America

Rose Noble noted that she would be willing to assist and noted several conversations surrounding the committee, regarding destination master planning.

Emily Legel reported that there would be a relocation guide for workers coming by the end of the month, a collaboration between GGMI, NWILED, the city of Galena, and the Galena Chamber.

McIntyre noted an increase in property transfers and people wanting to leave the cities. Scott Toot reported that people were likely moving due to safety after the riots had spread to the suburbs. Fran Peterson spoke on the rise in working from home and the workers moving due to not being tied to the office anymore. Noble said that our county needs infrastructure to support this, and Keefer had a contact looking for a two-day-a-week workspace. Legel spoke about two companies looking to launch remote work initiatives. Dittmar noted a space for a business incubator, with the village willing to put in \$25,000 to support the incubator, with up to 5 offices.

Reimer noted 110 deed transfers in the month of July, 22% more than 2019, with the office looking to analyze where the people are coming from, with Toot noting the low property taxes in our region.

For missing infrastructure, Rose noted the lack of fiber in buying a house and the lack of cell service in downtown Galena. There needs to be a communications campaign around tapping into fiber – the benefits as well as asking getting it to the places without it. She also noted the importance of transportation connectivity – roads and bike paths – as well as shovel-ready public art spaces that younger people are looking for.

McIntyre said that these things take money and time and require many appeals to businesses.

- vii. Business impeding Ordinances

Mike Dittmar and John came up with a list of impeding ordinances, met with Eric, and reduced the number to six.

Dittmar noted the main issue with the county RLF being the variable interest rate (2% below prime and variable) with the recommendation to make it 2% fixed.

Dan noted that there’s only about \$400,000 left in the fund and stated that demand has been lower due to the low interest rates.

An action item was requested to be put on the agenda for the next month’s Ad Hoc Committee Meeting.

The other issue they found was the reversion of commercial property in the county reverting back to agriculture, with the recommendation to not make the new property owner. Eric specified that it was a nonconforming use that would require a text amendment to be sent to the zoning committee specific to the commercial property. Schultz noted that the process would be cumbersome and resulted in the properties falling derelict and out of use.

- viii. Business Grants available

Legel noted that an overview of financing programs was included in the packet. McIntyre requested that this be used in the marketing packet

7. New Business

a. Discussion and possible action on Small Business Stabilization Grant for small business relief within the county.

Tison reported that 3 rounds of the program had been assembled with input from himself, Toot, Stacy Duer, LaDon Trost, Dan Reimer, and Melissa Hammer, pulling from the program used by the city of Dixon. Over three rounds, over \$80,000 had been allocated to approximately 40 applicants. There were diminishing returns with each round, with the third round awarding fewer than 10 grants. Scott Toot reported that the committee would revisit the program in October. The committee will also be looking at eligibility, including home-based businesses (added in Round 2) and the businesses receiving other funding up to \$5,000 (Round 3).

b. Discussion and possible action on CURES grant program.

Legel reported that this was a program for governments to use to pay for pandemic related expenses,

Keefer reported that she and the city of Galena were working on a campaign to increase mask wearing and even purchase and distribute masks to businesses, as well as to make a list of PPE equipment for the first responders.

Keefer also reported that a committee was meeting, and that Rose Noble would be distributing the information to cities and businesses to get signage, sanitizer, and masks. Reimer reported that the CURES funds are based on population, from federal to state to local, Jo Daviess County getting \$400,000, Galena getting \$100,000, and Elizabeth also getting ~\$40,000. The county is using CURES funds as the match for the FEMA grant, temperature scanners, Chlorox disinfecting stands and more.

Toot noted that it was state restrictions that made things complicated, and that Congresswoman Bustos took note.

McIntyre requested that the CURES funds be spent in the area.

8. Staff Reports

a) NWILED – Legel gave an update on activities during COVID-19 including various communications, noting activity in the small business grants, new board members, and a suspension of in-person meeting.

b) Planning and Development –

Tison noted 12.4 million in new permits since March, including 15 new homes. The department is on pace to issue the highest number of permits since 2005. There is a new addition to East Dubuque Nitrogen, and a new solar plant on the east side of Stockton. A second solar plant is being constructed on the west side of Apple Canyon Road. Permits are being issued around the area, and building has been steady throughout the area.

9. Citizens' Comments

Diane Gallagher noted that the census data had been moved back to September 30th, with the county losing out on \$1800 per person not counted. Both the internet and the phone line options are available, and people can check their reporting status online to avoid a knock on the door.

10. Committee Concerns

Scott Toot noted that the county was placed on a warning list on Friday for COVID. The main problem is folks not wearing masks and someone not complying with a quarantine request. Our region is also next to Dubuque, one of the federal government's hotspot. The health department received a \$800,000 grant to hire 2 contact tracers to bump this from 2 to 4 people. The existing statute makes violating quarantine a misdemeanor, and the county attorney is working on an ordinance to require quarantine with a confirmed covid case, with a fine of up to \$750 per day of violation. Both the sheriff and the board of health are in agreement with this new ordinance. The county is also creating a Facebook page and will be starting Facebook ads. The two main components are 1) health and safety and 2) an economic component when people can't go to work. The county wants to avoid a shutdown, but some people are not wearing or complying with the mandate.

Rose Noble mentioned some new messaging regarding social distancing and mask requirements, and the city of Galena will be working on signage in collaboration with the chamber and NWILED to help get other villages on board. Mark Moran will be working on getting signage.

Gary Diedrick noted a tri-state test for COVID through Hartig Drug, available at the Galena location in Jo Daviess County.

11. Next regular meeting – Schultz moved to move the next meeting to September 14th at 4 PM due to the Labor Day holiday. Regez seconded. Motion carried.

12. Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m. following a motion by Beth Baranski and seconded by John Schultz.