

Meeting of the Koochiching Economic Development Authority

Wednesday, March 15th, 2017
County Boardroom

Board Members Present: Bob Anderson, Allen Rasmussen, Harley Droba, Wade Pavleck, Jerry Struss (Alternate), Ron Nordby (Alternate)

Members Absent: Brian McBride, Mike Hanson

Staff Present: Paul Nevanen, Kyra Hasbargen, JoAnn Smith

Others Attending: Laurel Beager (The Journal), Crystal Clance, Dan McCarthy, Gary Kaunonen (KCC-TV), Ken Anderson, Randy Thoms, and Jono Cowgill, Kadence Hampton and Antonio Rosell with Community Design Group (CDG)

Meeting called to order at 12:00 p.m. by Chairman Rasmussen.

- 01 Approve agenda – **Motion by Anderson, a second by Pavleck to accept the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 02 Approve minutes from 2/22/17 – **Motion by Droba, a second by Norby to approve the 2/22/17 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 03 Public Comment – Introductions of everyone in the room.
- 04 Treasurer's Report – Chairman Rasmussen presented the CWT financial reports in Treasurer McBride's absence for February and monthly bills for March in the amount of \$17,119.04 and \$3,250 for JLR. Rasmussen noted a transfer of \$18,000 from JLR account to CWT and \$5,000 from JLR to KEDA. **Motion by Pavleck, a second by Droba to approve the February CWT financial reports and bills for March in the amount of \$17,119.04 and a \$18,000 transfer from the JLR account to the CWT account and \$5,000 transfer from JLR to KEDA. Motion carried unanimously.** Rasmussen presented the KEDA financials for February and bills for March in the amount of \$13,480.51. **Motion by Anderson, a second by Struss to approve the February KEDA financial reports and bills for March in the amount of \$13,211.59. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 05 Introduce JoAnn Smith – New SBDC Business Consultant – Rasmussen introduced JoAnn Smith as the new SBDC Business Consultant. The Board welcomed Smith. Nevanen stated Smith started on February 24th and things are going well so far, noting the process that was followed in the interim and that Smith is slowly taking over those clients and assessing their needs. Smith gave a brief explanation of her background, how she came to International Falls and her practical experiences with owning two local small businesses. Rasmussen questioned Smith and what she sees as the greatest challenge in the position. Smith replied the training and amount of learning that is required. Short discussion on Smith, the resources available and taking a while to learn it all. Anderson referenced an Economic Indicators report created by Herman and stated he would like to see it continue with Smith updating it, along with quarterly updates.
- 06 Community Design Group – International Falls Comprehensive Plan – Ken Anderson introduced the Community Design Group and explained how they were selected out of the companies who responded to a Request for Proposals (RFP). K. Anderson stated the last plan dates back to 1966 with the Zoning Regulation Subdivision dating back to 1978, adding their hope is to engage the citizens while updating the plan. Antonio Rosell thanked the Board explained the purpose of the

Comprehensive Plan, noting most cities update their plan every 10-years and is for a 20-year period. Rosell stated the plan is in its very early stages and hope to have it completed in November, noting some of their focus for the plan. Rosell explained Community Design Group, what they do and gave some examples of the work they have completed in the past. Kadence Hampton stated her focus is on Community Engagement. Jono Cowgill stated he is the Data Project Lead and wants to recognize that Int'l Falls is a much larger community than just within City limits. Rosell questioned the Board on what they would like to see in the plan for the next 20 years. Rasmussen stated education and healthcare are the top two concerns, along with challenges with Post-Secondary schooling and they are very important to sustaining the community. Pavleck referenced timber, tourism and transportation. Discussion on tourism and technology. Struss noted the declining population and older demographic, adding there should be a process on how to attract more families, but the struggle is how to pay for doing the process. Discussion on what Community Design Group has done so far and who they have met with in the community. Discussion on other parts of the county and how to involve all other communities. The Board thanked them for attending the meeting and giving an update.

- 07 Schedule Planning Meeting – Nevanen explained the purpose of the meeting to focus on marketing, funding, initiatives, meeting structure etc. and asked Struss to help facilitate the meeting. Struss agreed. Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 10th at 10:00am in the County Boardroom.
- 08 Director's Report – Nevanen reported on Granite Digital and presenting a Developers Agreement to the County Board earlier in the month to acquire the former Armory Building and adjacent property for the Data Center project. Nevanen reported on the proposed third cold box to support JLR and the next 5-year lease that is continuing to move forward, adding the KEDA board previously agreed to lease the property adjacent to the parking lot at the test building and the agreement needs to be formalized with the Airport Commission with a signed lease. **Motion by Pavleck, a second by Anderson to authorize the Chairman to sign the lease and formalize an agreement with the Airport Commission and begin making payments for the property. Motion carried unanimously.** Nevanen reported on a site visit at Green Forest Inc. with new owner, Brandon Anderson who is the owner of Lonesome Cottage Furniture Company and Fire Side Lodge Furniture in Pequot Lakes. Nevanen stated NHED President Bill Maki recently met with the RRCC Foundation Board to provide an update and referenced a bill introduced by Senator Michelle Fischbach to provide supplemental funding for the rural, two-year MNSCU colleges with includes RRCC. Discussion on the bill and sending a letter of support. Short discussion on the funding structure and universities. **Motion by Anderson, a second by Struss to authorize the KEDA Director to send a letter of support for Senator Fischbach's bill and CC Senator Bakk and Representative Ecklund. Motion carried unanimously.** Nevanen referenced articles in the packets on Digi-Key expanding and small town Fosston, Minnesota's growth.
- 09 Other (City/County Updates) – Anderson stated he received a call yesterday from a firm in Bemidji who is looking to hire people to inspect for invasive species 3 days/week beginning in May to September and pays \$12/hr. Short discussion on the lack of resources to have at every landing in the area for inspections. Norby stated a public hearing for Granite Digital will take place on Monday, March 20th at 6:30pm. Short discussion on the Island View Sewer Project.
- 10 Public Comment Period – Dan McCarthy introduced himself and questioned how Community Design Group does their planning and what their goals are along with what they have accomplished in the past. Anderson responded and explained who they are and their purpose. K. Anderson explained in more detail. Short discussion on Community Design Group and the Comprehensive Plan.
- 11 The next board meeting was scheduled for Monday, April 10th at 12:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers. **Meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.**