

Meeting of the Koochiching Economic Development Authority

Wednesday, October 18th, 2017
County Boardroom

Board Members Present: Bob Anderson, Harley Droba, Allen Rasmussen, Mike Hanson
Members Absent: Wade Pavleck, Brian McBride
Staff Present: Paul Nevanen, Kyra Hasbargen
Others Attending: Laurel Beager (The Journal), JoAnn Smith, Crystal Clance, Dan McCarthy, Cheyanne Farmer (KCC-TV)

Meeting called to order at 1:10 p.m. by Chairman Rasmussen.

- 01 Approve agenda – **Motion by Hanson, a second by Droba to accept the agenda with a correction to the date of #2 to Approve Minutes from 9/20/17. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 02 Approve minutes from 9/20/17 – **Motion by Droba, a second by Anderson to approve the 9/20/17 meeting minutes with a correction to the location being at City Council Chambers. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 03 Public Comment – None
- 04 Treasurer’s Report – Nevanen presented the CWT financial reports in Treasurer McBride’s absence for September and monthly bills for October in the amount of \$8,977.55, JLR bills of \$11,380.00 and New Cold Box bills of \$32,655.00, along with a transfer of \$41,000 to KEDA and explained in details. **Motion by Anderson, a second by Hanson to approve the September CWT financial reports and bills for October with a total of \$8,977.55, JLR bills of \$11,380.00 and New Cold Box bills of \$32,655.00, along with a transfer of \$41,000 to KEDA. Motion carried unanimously.** Nevanen presented the KEDA financials for September and bills for October in the amount of \$27,840.07. **Motion by Anderson, a second by Hanson to approve the September KEDA financial reports and bills for October in the amount of \$27,840.07. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 05 SBDC Update – JoAnn Smith – Smith handed out a document and gave an update on 3rd Quarter activity, noting she has worked with 13 unique clients, and had 6 industry requests for data, referenced her Professional Development hours, gearing up for Junior Achievement and training on Social Media, adding there is a lot of interest in Social Media workshops and looking to partner with Community Education to put a couple workshops together. Smith noted some upcoming 4th Quarter events, a Small Business Conference in Ely on November 2nd and a 2-day Profit Mastery Workshop on November 8th - 9th, adding there are 11 people registered so far. Anderson questioned the tactical social media. Smith responded it is how to help people with marketing and is the reason she wants to do a workshop, while giving some examples. Short discussion on businesses and social media sites. Droba referenced an app that has all area businesses and contacts for the City and County, giving some examples and explaining in more detail. Discussion on the Profit Mastery workshop and additional discussion on social media.

- 06 Director's Report – Nevanen referenced cold weather testing, noting JLR management was here last week to check on the progress of the 3rd cold box and other projects in preparation for the 2017-18 testing season, which is scheduled to begin next month. Nevanen stated JLR has requested a formal ceremony to recognize the achievement in January, adding the project will be completed on time and is tracking right on budget and invited board members out to view the new cold box after the meeting. Nevanen stated he has been working with a local group that is developing a plan for siting a distillery and real estate project in the City of Ranier, noting the group has secured two locations and has been developing a comprehensive business plan around the project, adding he has engaged Kari Howe from DEED and Bob Palmquist from ARDC to identify potential programs to support the project. Rasmussen explained a little more detail on other distilleries and passed around a copy of the rendered building drawings. Nevanen stated they have a strong entrepreneurial team and a passion to pull this off. Nevanen went on to report that after a meeting between him, Hanson, and Brandon Andersen, the new owner of Green Forest in Littlefork, Andersen applied to North Star Electric Coop's revolving loan fund to help support his continued investment in the facility, adding the understanding is from Hanson the loan was approved. Nevanen added they have already added jobs and made the building more efficient. Hanson explained further, adding they raised wages on the 1st day and provided access to benefits, noting the mill is currently down for expansion purposes, and expects to increase productivity by 30%. Hanson referenced a few of Andersen's other businesses, noting he purchased product from Green Forest in the past for his business in Pequot Lakes, MN. Nevanen referenced Kootasca and the Backus Community Center are hosting a meeting with MHP and the Koochiching County Housing Collaborative to discuss current housing issues with various stakeholders next Monday, the 23rd at Backus. Nevanen noted Arik Foresman of Minnesota Power has invited a number of community leaders for an informal meeting and luncheon to discuss a variety of MN Power's programs, initiatives and developments on Wednesday, November 1st from 9-12 at Lenard's, adding Foresman will be arriving a day early to visit with some businesses and discuss local economic development efforts. Nevanen touched on the City of International Falls Comprehensive Plan, noting he will be participating in a review of the plan, Zoning, and Land Use Regulations next week with the City's consultants and the Highway 53 Public Meeting scheduled for Thursday, October 26th at 6:30pm at Lenard's. Nevanen stated he visited the Grand Mound yesterday on an update of where the MN Historical Society is going with the building. Hanson explained further and gave a brief history of the Grand Mound, noting it is the largest in North America. Discussion on the Grand Mound and MN Historical Society.
- 07 Other (City/County Updates) – Anderson noted on November 1st there will be a zoning meeting regarding a variance for Granite Digital. Anderson handed out a Rotary presentation and explained its detail, referencing infrastructure improvements and how the City hopes to get the infrastructure up to date, adding the challenge is how to pay for the much needed improvements. Short discussion on Hwy 53, investments and clean up.
- 08 Public Comment Period – Dan McCarthy questioned what RRCC is doing to accommodate the needs of the community and to help business with needs. Rasmussen responded the college is working on programs, and trying to identify the needs locally, and explained the challenges of starting new program. Additional discussion on the programs they are attempting to start.
- 09 The next board meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, November 22nd at 1:00 p.m. at the City Council Chambers. **Meeting adjourned at 2:24 p.m.**