

Meeting of the Koochiching Economic Development Authority

Friday, June 22nd, 2018
City Council Chambers

Board Members Present: Allen Rasmussen, Mike Hanson, Brian McBride, Wade Pavleck, Representative Rob Ecklund

Members Absent: Harley Droba, Bob Anderson

Staff Present: Paul Nevanen, Kyra Hasbargen

Others Attending: JoAnn Smith, Darci Sullivan (KCC-TV), Whitney Jackson (The Journal) Crystal Clance, Joe Mershon

Meeting called to order at 9:58 a.m. by Chairman Rasmussen.

- 01 Approve agenda –**Motion by Pavleck, a second by McBride to accept the agenda. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 02 Approve minutes from 5/23/18 – **Motion by McBride, a second by Pavleck to approve the 5/23/2018 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 03 Public Comment – None
- 04 Treasurer’s Report – McBride presented the CWT financial reports for May and monthly bills for June in the amount of \$6,822.54, JLR bills in the amount of \$7,978.40 and a transfer from JLR to KEDA in the amount of \$15,000, while explaining the details. Nevanen explained the Jackson Electric bill for JLR fast charge trailers and JLR will reimburse for the work completed. Nevanen noted the annual JLR lease payment should be received around the end of June and then will be making the annual payment to the City and County. Short discussion on electric vehicles. **Motion by McBride, a second by Hanson to approve the May CWT financial reports and bills for June with a total of \$6,822.54, JLR bills in the amount of \$7,978.40 and a transfer of \$15,000 from JLR to KEDA. Motion carried unanimously.** McBride presented the KEDA financials for May and bills for June in the amount of \$19,113.58. **Motion by McBride, a second by Pavleck to approve the May KEDA financial reports and bills for June in the amount of \$19,113.58. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 05 Granite Digital Update – Joe Mershon gave a brief update, noting they are very close to beginning the next step. Mershon added International Falls as become a designated priority site to get up and running, noting EYP and HP executives will be in town soon to view the site for Phase I. Mershon explained the fundraising they have done, adding there is roughly \$100,000 left to fundraise of the \$500,000 needed to begin Phase I, and noted all funds so far have come from local funding. Mershon stated the project has been in process for 10 years and it is so close to completion, adding he hopes to see it started in the next 18-24 months. Discussion on some of the specifics of the project. McBride questioned the developers agreement with the County and if the project timeline is still within the dates required or if an extension will be needed. Mershon responded they are tracking the project very closely and may need to ask for an extension, but is unsure at this time. Mershon talked more detail about the fundraising, noting the first phase is the most difficult and the remaining funds needed are already in place awaiting Phase I funding. McBride noted the amount of investment currently happening within the community and in the next 5 years. Discussion on projects and community investment. Mershon stated they will likely see an increase in customer needs/wants once Phase I is complete. Mershon mentioned he has also been contacted by several young folks who want to come back to the area and have the technology degrees required, adding

there is also space reserved in Phase II for a lab and the possibility of working with RRCC on a program for the technology degree. Discussion on power and technology.

- 06 Director's Report – *Cantilever Bridge Distillery & Hotel* – Nevanen stated the City of Ranier held their public hearing on Tuesday for the Cantilever Bridge Distillery's request for tax abatement, adding the project has been delayed a little but construction is expected to begin in July. Nevanen noted Cantilever revised their Developers' Abatement agreement with the County and will re-submit it for review and allow the County to re-post their public hearing. *International Falls Business Park/Northland Counseling Center* – Nevanen mentioned he was approached by Allison O'Hara and after several meetings with representatives from Northland Counseling Center (NLC), they have submitted a letter requesting property in the expanded business park to construct a new facility to meet their growing needs, adding they currently have a lease with Backus and it will take some time to put things together. Discussion on NLC being a key tenant for Backus and NLC's growth. Nevanen stated he is working with the City of International Falls to identify neighbors of the Business Park to notify them regarding the expansion and plan for a public meeting in the next month before moving forward with the platting process. *Koochiching Housing Study* – Nevanen mentioned Steve Griesert of Community Partners Research will be here on Monday, June 25th to meet with the Koochiching Housing Collaborative and formally begin the county-wide housing study, adding a list of contacts throughout the county was given to him to help set-up in-person and phone interview as part of the information gathering process. Nevanen touched on a few other things in the community, noting Dave Goode, a Northome native and one of the founders of an Executive Search firm, G-PAC, based in Sioux Falls, SD contacted him regarding trying to recruit potential employees from Koochiching County and explained further details. Nevanen stated he learned earlier this month that Bergstrom Wood Products would be shutting down production of pallets on June 15th, noting the family run business has supplied Boise/PCA with pallets for over 30 years. Nevanen explained a Blandin Broadband Community Program the KEDA has been selected into, noting, he and Councilor Droba met to discuss the creation of a technology committee based on the discussion at the last KEDA meeting. Nevanen noted it is time to go through annual personnel review process, adding he will be conducting Kyra and JoAnn's next week and then will work with the Personnel Committee. Nevanen mentioned the KEDA e-newsletter is getting the finishing touches for the release next week. Hanson questioned if the Directors Report could be sent out to the small cities in the county each month. Nevanen replied yes, it can be sent out with the agenda and minutes going forward.
- 07 Other (City/County Updates) – Hanson referenced the 2018 Birchdale America's Parade and explained the day's events to take place. Hanson stated fiber will be extended from Baudette to Franz Jevne Park, and gave a brief update on things happening in Big Falls with a DNR grant and Northome apartment building breaking ground this fall. Short discussion on the Birchdale parade. McBride thanked Representative Ecklund for being here today and referenced the Lunch & Learn that will take place after the KEDA meeting in Ranier at 12pm. McBride referenced all the construction happening all over in the county and the high truck traffic coming through the city due to Hwy 332 being shut down, and noted the Airport FAA/MnDOT meeting that recently took place and their willingness to participate in upcoming projects. Short discussion on the Airport and projects. Ecklund stated the investment is great in the area, referencing the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office and explained their process with the Big Falls grant. Nevanen stated they toured the site last month after the KEDA meeting, adding it is a great site. JoAnn Smith mentioned she has been chosen to be on the Board of Trustees for the Northland Foundation and explained their mission, adding her term will begin in August. Short discussion on the Foundation and what they do, other funding agencies and helping communities.
- 08 Public Comment Period – None.
- 09 The next board meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, July 18th at 1:00pm in the County Boardroom. **Meeting adjourned at 11:26a.m.**