

VENANGO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Meeting Minutes

August 21, 2018

Courthouse Annex Room 100

1174 Elk Street

Franklin, PA

Present:

Rod Griffin

Bill Moon

Tim Brooks

Vince Witherup

Chip Abramovic

John Stiller

Staff: Emily Lewis

Guests:

Jason Ruggiero, VCRPC

Ashley Smith, VCRPC

Rich Winkler, Solicitor

Jim Meyer, News Herald

Deb Eckelberger, FICDA

Bob Cranmer, VCEDA Consultant

Excused:

Bonnie Summers

- I. Call to Order – Commissioner Brooks
Monthly board meeting called to order by Tim Brooks at 10:02 A.M.
- II. Approval of Minutes
7/17/2018 Regular Meeting Minutes
Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Bill Moon; seconded by Rod Griffin.
So moved.
- III. Public Comment on Agenda Items
None. So moved.
- IV. Special Purpose Matters
 - a. Presentation by Bob Cranmer, Economic Development Consultant
 - a. Consultant firm team made of Bob Cranmer, Owner, and Dr. Mulu Birru, Economic Development Career. The consultant firm was retained by the county a year ago in September to analyze, make recommendations, and move forward with the county in developing a plan for economic development and the implementation of that strategy. Bob was happy to say that he feels satisfied with the accomplishments and work that have happened in the past year; also, the idea of sitting with the board speaks a positive nature of the county engagement.
The first several months of their contract, Bob and Mulu spend their time in Venango County getting a feel for the economy. They researched both the successes and downturns: Applefest and other

attractions, successful businesses, vacant building with their challenges, and more. They produced a fifty page report on Venango County on the state of the economy to understand where we stand competitively with surrounding counties; tax bases, businesses, positive and negative factors, and challenges in the county. Recommendations by consultants that have been discussed: Repurposing of Cranberry Mall, Outline of shovel ready sites in and around the airport, RFP air cargo logistics, arranged the meeting with PNC Bank executives for new market financing, organized meetings in Harrisburg with PFHA for tax credits, RCAP application progress with the Governor, and provided contacts with funding sources that they used for projects in Pittsburgh. Bob and Mulu have a weekly conference call with Emily and Jason for updates on projects. Bob's recommendation is that we are focused on the creation of economic activity and job creation, but it has been demonstrated that a great asset of the county is tourism and there are ways to encourage tourist attractions. Bob recommended looking closely at money being dedicated to tourism like hotel/motel tax. Members of the board recommended researching the existing tourism reports done by ORA and the State.

- b. Utility Contract for Cornplanter Square
 - a. Emily was contacted by the City of Oil City regarding utility contract for Cornplanter Square. While we are not utilizing water and sewage at the facility right now, the city is requesting to fill out the contract since we have access to those services. Base rate charge of \$24 a month. \$9.50 for sewage and \$14.50 for water.
- c. Option Agreement with Hudson Group
 - a. The dollar figure will be transferred to Cranberry Township less all attorney fees and other fees. Once the agreement is signed, Hudson Group they can then pursue grants to construct the facility. To be a viable project, a percentage of rentals will be LMI and another percentage will be rented at full price.
Motion to approve the option agreement with Hudson Group by Vince Witherup; Seconded by Bill Moon. So moved.
- d. Cornplanter Square Insurance
 - a. Currently the facility has general liability slip and fall coverage. Emily asked the board for comment on the idea of wanting additional insurance for the cost of the building. The quote was approx. \$2800 for coverage of the actual cash value of the purchase price. Once construction starts, the authority will carry full coverage and at each phase the insurance will be reevaluated.
Motion to approve the liability policy in the Authority's name by Rod Griffin; Seconded by Bill Moon.

e. Letter of Intent

- a. An agreement that was suggested by consultant Mulu Birru to show potential investors intentions between both parties to enter an agreement with one another. It would not be binding on either side, but would show documentation of an agreement to prove legitimacy of anchor tenants to help get funding.

Motion to approve letter of intent by Bill Moon; Seconded by Rod Griffin.

Emily asked if publicizing the business partners we have an agreement with would be helpful with the ability to gain clarity and credibility with the public. The board recommended waiting to announce until the public can see physical changes to the building.

V. Authority Treasurers Report

- i. Chip informed the board that we are at 62% of the budget at 9 months into the year. Vince asked the board is there is anything missing or would like to see moving forward or to agree on using this format as the base budget form for next year.

Motion to accept treasurer's report by Rod Griffin; Seconded by Bill Moon.

Emily requested the board to establish a process for signing on behalf of the authority for driving mileage reimbursements.

Motion to approve the Treasurer to sign mileage reimbursement requests when driving outside of the county by Rod Griffin; Seconded by Bill Moon.

VI. Ongoing Projects

a. Cornplanter Square Project

i. Partnership discussion

1. Emily spoke at the work session about the idea of augmenting the way we divide resources and funds looking at the partnership contributing to the cost of construction of the first floor to get them into the facility sooner. This would be to overcome the immediate hurdle to fundraiser for that section.

ii. Cornplanter Square Façade

1. Utilizing the screen that wraps around the Seneca Street side that used to say the date and temperature. Emily spoke about the idea to update the sign to something more sophisticated to inform the public about current phases through renderings. We could possibly utilize it in the future to display pictures of the inside spaces.

Emily will look at pricing options and funding with RCAP.

b. Senior Housing Center – Cranberry Township

i. Project Presentation

1. At the Cranberry Economic Development meeting, Chad Findlay presented the Hudson Senior Housing project component and what they intend to do overall with that project. Emily showed the board a very preliminary layout of what the full scope of the project contains. The township delivered the deed to Rich Winkler for the Authority to own the 3.82 acres only to execute and option of sale with Hudson then turn around and pass through back to the township.

c. eAcademy

i. Grant submission update

1. Emily is working with the state to get \$150,000 of ARC area development funds. DCED forwarded our application to ARC and they are in the review process. This would pay for staff salary for the first few years for the eAcademy Director. The ARC application is currently in the county's name, but if awarded it will be transferred to the Authority.

VII. Staff Report

- i. Site Selection Software Services: Emily spoke with ED from Lawrence County about the possibility of getting involved in Lawrence County's regional effort to buy this service. This service looks at underutilize sites and looks at sites that would be appropriate for specific industries. The price would about \$300,000 and Lawrence County is looking at applying for EDA and NRC funds to absorb the majority of that cost. The cost to the counties would be \$60,000 divided by however many counties buy in. Potentially, the cost would be around \$7,000. After the initial database creation and analyzation it is important to keep up that database to keep its value. The GIS planner in the Planning Commission would handle the upkeep of this service. The plan to have this service available to all county entities to utilize. Emily intends on contacting counties that have used this service to review its value.
- ii. Emily will attend the PEDAs conference in Erie. Deb facilitated the advertisement with Holly Gibbons and ORA, FICDA, and VCEDA will share the costs of the ad.

VIII. Public Comment – General

- i. Deb added that the PEDAs conference ad will have the ability to be used for multiple different instances.

IX. Adjournment to Executive Session Regarding Personnel Matter

Tim Brooks requested a motion at 11:32 AM to adjourn into executive session. Motioned to adjourn into executive session by Rod Griffin; Bill Moon seconded

the motion, which passed unanimously. Adjourned out of executive session at 12:06 PM.

X. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Rod Griffin; Seconded by John Stiller at 12:06 PM. So moved.