

VENANGO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Meeting Minutes

May 16, 2018

Courthouse Annex Room 100

1174 Elk Street

Franklin, PA

Present:

Bonnie Summers

Bill Moon

Tim Brooks

Vince Witherup

Rod Griffin

Chip Abramovic

Staff: Emily Lewis

Guests:

Jason Ruggiero, VCRPC

Hilary Buchanan, VCRPC

Rich Winkler, Solicitor

Dr. Jim Knarr, Guest

Excused: John Stiller

- I. Call to Order – Commissioner Brooks
 - a. Monthly board meeting called to order by Tim Brooks at 10:01 A.M.
- II. Approval of Minutes
 - a. 4/17/2018 Regular Meeting Minutes
 - b. Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Bonnie Summers; seconded by Bill Moon. So moved.
- III. Public Comment on Agenda Items
 - a. Dr. Knarr inquired as to why a financial report wasn't on the agenda. Tim explained that the county is the fiscal agent for the Authority. Dr. Knarr stated that he would like to know how much money the Authority currently has available, as the flow of funds is important to know. Emily stated that there is an operating budget of \$130,000.
- IV. Special Purpose Matters
 - a. Approval of Cooperation Agreement
 - i. The agreement has been approved by Cranberry Township. Motion to approve the agreement by Vince Witherup; seconded by Bill Moon. So moved.
 - b. Approval of Engage Contract
 - i. Motion to approve the contract by Bonnie Summers; seconded by Bill Moon. So moved.

V. Ongoing Projects

a. Cornplanter Square Project

i. Project Presentation

1. Jason and Emily presented the project renderings, overall cost, and planned phases. The first floor will house a brew pub, tasting room, and retail area. Remaining marble in the building will be repurposed where possible. The second floor plans to feature a 120 seat banquet hall, stage, and two private dining areas. A cantilever, which will likely be enclosed for year-round use, will be located on the second floor. The top three floors will be the location of the business incubator, which will include 30,000 square feet of flexible space that includes open and closed office spaces, makerspaces, and meeting areas. They have also met with a developer who may be interested in becoming a tenant if their business takes off.

The front exterior of the building will remain the same to preserve the historical integrity. The back will be quite different, adding windows, the cantilever, and the Oil City signage.

Rod asked if the brew pub tenant was involved with the design, as the tanks will need to be enclosed. Jason and Emily stated that they were involved. Vince stated that the architects have done similar projects and are very familiar with the requirements. Jason also stated that the subcontractor hired by the architect is very familiar with the codes.

Tim asked if this was the original proposed layout. Jason stated that three were proposed initially, and the one in the renderings was the chosen layout.

Dr. Knarr asked what the total project cost would be. Emily provided an estimate of \$14 to \$16 million, which as phased, would be more easily accomplished. Dr. Knarr reiterated that transparency of fund movement is essential.

ii. Bid Package Preparation

1. Mary Ann from designLAB Architects visited the site two weeks ago to finalize prepping the bid package for the roof, demolition, and abatement.

iii. Funding

1. The funds for the abatement and demolition have been acquired. Funding for the roof, windows, and doors has been applied for through CDBG, PHMC, and the PNC Charitable Trust. Emily and Jason will be meeting with Trenton at Bridge Builders Community Foundations to coordinate a plan to begin to solicit other foundations.

2. Dr. Knarr questioned whether the money for the roof (if realized) would go to the County or the Authority. Emily stated that although the PHMC grant was written by the County, she is working with the solicitor to determine how to best transfer the funds to the Authority. Further, all funds would be spent directly on the roof, and there would be no excess to account for. Vince also explained that the timing of the project is directly tied to funding, and there is no intent to spend money out of the General Fund. Tim elaborated that the General Fund is equivalent to tax payer money.
3. Emily has been in contact with the Green Building Council as a possible funding source and was referred to the DCED Clean Energy Grant program. Their funds are only available for government entities or a nonprofit Economic Development Corporation. Since the Authority owns the building, they would not be eligible for the grant. She asked if it would make any difference if the funds were run through the County, but it would not. Tim asked if developing an Economic Development Corporation could be researched. Emily said that she is reaching out to Lawrence County and Jim Becker to see how they have handled this.

iv. Additional Input

1. Bill asked if this project could be presented at an Oil City Council Meeting. Jason said that it could. Bonnie asked if it had ever been presented to Oil City's Council, and Emily responded that it had when in the initial stages.
2. Rod inquired about the status of the business plan. Emily expects it to be completed within the next couple of weeks.

b. eAcademy

i. Staff Update

1. An ARC POWER grant in the amount of \$422,500 has been applied for and is expected to be announced in July. Clarion University- Venango Campus supplied the majority of the match for this grant. ARC helped to fund part of the Hermitage branch. The director of the eAcademy, who would be an employee of the Authority, would spend half their time at the eAcademy and the other half managing the Cornplanter Square business incubator. The current timeline is to hire the director this year so they can train at the Lindenpointe location in the fall of 2018. This will allow students to start during the 2019-2020 school year. Tim also noted that the Senior Manager of Regional Community Relations and Marketing Operations for UPMC Heath Plan is

involved with the Lindenpointe location in Hermitage and had very positive feedback of the program.

- c. Senior Housing Center – Cranberry Township
 - i. Staff Update
 - 1. The Cooperation Agreement between the Township and the Authority and has been approved.
- d. Fuchs Property Update
 - 1. Emily, Chip, and Jason attended the Emlenton Town Hall to address the resident's concerns regarding the Hudson Group's interest in the Fuchs property. The mayor called this meeting, and invited only residents. Chip and the mayor of Emlenton fielded questions from residents, some of whom vocalized that they did not want the property to be bought by the Hudson Group. Emily and the Commissioners have also met with the Oil Region Alliance, who owns the property. The ORA is interested in the project if the residents are interested as well. Rod stressed the importance of working together with the ORA. Emily has also asked Nancy Marano to bring the project to Borough Council; however it has not yet been discussed or voted upon at the Council meeting.

VI. Staff Report

- a. The County has been awarded a \$1 million TAP grant to match the \$2.6 million in TIP funding to be provided by PennDOT for Allegheny Boulevard safety improvements, including a multi-use trail from Liberty Street in Franklin to Front Street in Sugarcreek. PennDOT will be providing all engineering and construction services. The County will be providing maintenance, and will be contacting local businesses along the corridor to inquire about possible financial assistance. Emily stated that this multi-use trail will benefit businesses and enhance economic development along this corridor by providing easier access by both employees and potential shoppers.
- b. Emily, Jason, and the Commissioners met with Cranberry Township and Schneider's Dairy to discuss possible options for a location that would utilize their excess fluid milk. They plan to continue conversations to see if there are any options.
- c. Emily provided a snapshot of the new Authority website. Josh Sterling from the Planning Department will be taking photographs to use on the website. The Authority's website will be linked from the County's website, and vice versa. The Authority website will also provide links to the ORA, FICDA, both Chambers of Commerce, and the Be Here Initiative.

VII. Other Business

- a. Tim informed everyone that the Venango Regional Airport's EAS designation is up, and that we will need a waiver to renew the designation since we don't have enough enplanements. In addition, three different airlines are bidding on providing airline service from Franklin. Southern (the current service provider) is one of the bidders, and is considering the option of providing service to the Baltimore/ Washington D.C. (BWI) airport. The idea is that many people simply drive to Pittsburgh rather than fly, so they're not capturing that market. There will be a meeting with ORA in two weeks to discuss the options.

Dr. Knarr stated that although he's been writing letters of support for the airport for 35 years, he hasn't noticed any lost or retained local businesses due to airline service at the county.

Vince explained that representatives from foreign companies often don't drive in the U.S., so if they need to travel to Franklin, and fly into Pittsburgh to get here, without any public transportation, flying is the best option. Dr. Knarr questioned why there is such low ridership if the service is needed. Vince responded that historically, the service hasn't been dependable, there have been schedule conflicts, and no interline service, so bags need to be rechecked. Currently, Southern is 98% on-time.

Vince also noted that the airport isn't funded by tax money, rather by overflight fees for foreign flights.

VIII. Public Comment – General

- a. None.

IX. Adjournment

- a. Motion to adjourn by Vince Witherup; Seconded by Rod Griffin at 11:03 AM. So moved.