

Board Meeting Minutes for the January 2025 Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

Monthly board meeting called to order by Maureen James, at 10:42 AM. Those present at the public meeting of the Venango County Economic Development Authority on 1/21/2025, held in person at 100 Seneca Street, Oil City PA (Fifth Floor Conference Room):

Members Present:

- ☒ Sam Breene, *Chair*
- ☒ Maureen James, *Vice-Chair*
- ☒ Bonnie Summers, *Secretary/Treasurer*
- ☒ Ken Bryan
- ☐ Chip Abramovic
- ☒ Alan Schiller
- ☐ Rod Griffin

Staff Present:

- ☒ Emily Lewis, *Executive Director*
- ☒ Rich Winkler, *County Solicitor*
- ☒ Diona Brick, *Finance Director*

Guests Present (List):

- Jessica Carroll, City of Franklin
- Ashley Zaccari, Venango Chamber
- Susan Williams, Venango Chamber
- Marcy Hall, Maker Space
- Rafi Perez, Maker Space

Quorum Present: ☒ Yes ☐ No

The attendance of 5 board members (of the 7 current appointees) was accounted for by Ashley Zaccari.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. 12/17/2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

- ✓ Motion to approve the minutes made by Ken Bryan; Seconded by Bonnie Summers. All approved.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

- None.

IV. SPECIAL PURPOSE MATTERS

- a. **Election of Officers** – Emily Lewis noted that at the beginning of each year we elected new board leadership, and in the bylaws the chair of the commissioner board is the chair of the Authority board. Nominations to maintain current leadership was discussed.
 - ✓ Motion to approve Sam Breene as chair made by Ken Bryan, seconded by Bonnie Summers. All approved.
 - ✓ Motion to approve Maureen James as vice-chair made by Ken Bryan, seconded by Alan Schiller. All approved.
 - ✓ Motion to approve Bonnie Summers as secretary treasurer made by Ken Bryan, seconded by Maureen James. All approved.
- b. **Approval of Balmaghie Artisanal Spirits Loan** – Emily reminded the board that VCEDA received a USDA grant in the amount of \$99,500 to create a revolving loan fund with the first loan going to the first floor brewery and distillery. There is an existing agreement with the Northwest Commission to administer that loan on VCEDA's behalf. The NW Commission loan review committee makes recommendation to the VCEDA board, and VCEDA board makes the final approval. Emily presented their recommendation to make the loan with a 60 month term with a 4.25 interest rate.
 - ✓ Motion to approve the Northwest Commission's recommendation to provide a loan to Balmaghie Artisanal Spirits by Ken Bryan, seconded by Alan Schiller. All approved.
- c. **Package D** – A proposed change order in the amount of \$12,212.46 was presented for the first-floor phase (Package D) of the 100 Seneca project. The revisions include three items: replacing a broken water meter, installing

additional fire extinguisher cabinets, and addressing a spring floor line as needed. The city originally provided a free water meter, which subsequently broke. A new meter was purchased, and the project must now cover the labor costs for installation. VCEDA engineers have reviewed the change order and raised no concerns. Following discussion regarding cost concerns, Emily recommended approving up to \$5,300 for the water meter replacement to prevent delays in work before the next board meeting.

- ✓ Motion to approve change order D with up to \$5300 for water meter swap made by Bonnie Summers, seconded by Ken Bryan. All approved.

V. FINANCIAL REPORT

- a. **Financial Report:** Diona Brick, *Venango County Fiscal Director* – presented the financial report to the Board which summarized all accounts and budget items for the month of December. There were forty-six (46) invoices paid during the month mostly focus on construction in progress. Diona noted that moving forward the report will see construction in progress decrease and building improvements increase with depreciation.
 - ✓ Motion to approve made by Bonnie Summers; seconded by Ken Bryan. All approved.

VI. ONGOING PROJECTS

- a. **100 Seneca at Cornplanter Square** – Staff updated the board with information about funding across all projects. The grant tracker was reviewed. It was noted that the Bridge Builders Community Foundation grant application for the MakerSpace was denied. A letter of interest was submitted to the McElhattan Foundation for capacity building, and the organization has been invited to submit a full application, which will be completed in the next two weeks. All other grant applications are still pending responses.

The board meeting covered updates on the Maker Space with program coordinators Marcy Hall and Rafi Perez, including a printed schedule of upcoming events. Marcy discussed the current limitations and potential expansion into the fifth-floor storage area to accommodate new equipment like 3D printers and laser engravers. While this expansion could allow for 24/7 membership access, some members raised concerns about reserving the space for rentals. The third floor was discussed as an alternative and the board asked staff to turn their focus to fitting out the third floor. Financial sustainability was also discussed, with a proposed membership structure.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

- Emily Lewis, *Executive Director* – shared that she has been working with the Lyrics Theater to see how VCEDA can be in assistance and are continuing to work with Cranberry Rec Center on their feasibility study.

VIII. AROUND-THE-TABLE REPORT

- Maureen James, *Oil Region Alliance* – shared that Main Street will be hosting First Fridays for music on the square and will be introducing an artist festival on September 13th in Justic Park. She noted that the Oil Region Campus is moving forward and the new facility director is encouraged looking forward.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL

- Jessica Carroll, *City of Franklin* – sent out a survey with FICDA and the City of Franklin to assess business community needs and received a lot of feedback and am now planning various initiatives, including CPR training and addressing supply chain issues. They are organizing free trainings and events to support businesses, recognizing that many don't know what they need until challenges arise. As new topics come up, she will refer to relevant resources and leadership insights working collaboratively.
- Susan Williams, *Venango Chamber of Commerce* – noted that February 6th will be the Justus Park feasibility study public meeting to review around 450 survey responses with the consultant.
- Ashley Smith, *Venango Chamber of Commerce* – mentioned that she is working on a new community calendar to better showcase events happening in the area.

X. ADJOURNMENT

- ✓ Motion to adjourn by Alan Schiller, seconded by Sam Breene. All approved at 11:46 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Zaccari, Venango Area Chamber of Commerce