

## Harmony EDA Minutes

January 5, 2023  
7:30 AM

Community Center  
Council Room

Present: Kerry Kingsley, Steve Donney, and Greg Schieber

Also Present: Amy Bishop, Allan Dahl, Michael Himlie, Erica Thilges, Allison Whalen, Samantha Grabau, and Chris Giesen

The annual and regular meeting was called to order at 7:31 AM by Kerry Kingsley.

### **Election of Officers**

The board discussed election of officers for 2023. Motion by Donney, second by Schieber to keep the board officers the same as in 2022. Motion carried unanimously. Officers for 2023 are Kerry Kingsley, President; Steve Donney, Vice President; Andy Batstone, Treasurer; and Greg Schieber, Secretary.

### **Committee Appointments**

Kingsley appointed the following members to serve on standing committees for 2023: Batstone and Donney to the loan committee and Batstone and Schieber to the trail committee.

### **Annual Report**

Giesen presented the 2022 annual EDA activity report. The board reviewed and discussed. Schieber recommended changing the wording regarding an industrial lot sale. Motion by Donney, second by Schieber to approve the report as corrected. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Annual Program Review**

The board reviewed the business subsidy policy and the program guidelines for the revolving loan fund, commercial rehab loan fund, new home/rehab rebate program, and downtown revitalization programs. Giesen recommended that no changes be made to the guidelines for these programs at this time but suggested the board possibly consider updates to the downtown revitalization program to make it more useful at a later meeting. The board concurred.

Schieber suggested additional marketing or updates to current marketing materials to promote the available programs would be beneficial. The board concurred. Giesen will update marketing materials and efforts for 2023.

Kingsley closed the annual meeting.

### **Minutes**

The board reviewed the minutes of the December 1, 2022 and December 8, 2022 meetings. Motion by Schieber, second by Kingsley to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Financial Reports & Claims**

The board reviewed the loan portfolio. Giesen will contact a past due borrower. There were no payment claims. Motion by Donney, second by Schieber to approve the financial report. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Chamber of Commerce Report**

Allison Whalen was present to give the chamber report. She recapped the very successful December events including Santa Day and Holidays in Harmony. The board praised Whalen's work to make those events so successful. It was reported that the chamber continues to work on a refresh of their brand, are working with representatives from CEDA to host a marketing training event in March, and that the visitors center is temporarily under construction as the light fixtures are replaced.

Chamber board member Erica Thilges was present to give an update on the chamber's downtown wayfinding signage project. The board reviewed the latest project details including renderings drawn by Thilges. Thilges requested that the board consider a \$2,500 contribution to the project. The total project cost is about \$13,500. They have raised \$3,000 in private donations to date and will be asking other organization for contributions too. Thilges noted that the contents, location, and positioning of the signage are controlled by MnDOT given their proximity to state highways but that they have designed the project according to MnDOT specifications with the help and approval of MnDOT right of way staff. The board was very impressed and discussed using funds from its marketing budget to assist the project. Motion by Donney, second by Schieber to approve the \$2,500 contribution to the Harmony Area Chamber of Commerce as requested. Motion carried unanimously. The board thanked Thilges and the project committee for their work.

### **Development Agreement Status Check**

Giesen presented a spreadsheet of all development agreements the board is currently engaged with. He noted that it would be good practice for the board to make a point to specifically review the status of all agreements at least twice a year to ensure compliance with all requirements. The board concurred.

The board reviewed the status of development agreements. It was noted that all were current with all obligations except On the Crunchy Side (Miles Petree & Lisa Miller). On the Crunchy Side was not current on its property taxes as required. Giesen reported that he had spoken to the owner about the issue two weeks ago and was promised a resolution but the issue had not been corrected. The board discussed at length. It was noted that several members of the public have also questioned the noncompliant status of this project, directly asking how it will be resolved. Several options were discussed. Consensus of the board was to have staff contact the owners again in an effort to resolve compliance. If that did not solve the issue, further action would be considered. Several members agreed that property taxes must remain current throughout the duration of the agreement as it states, and that there may be little tolerance for repeated noncompliance.

### **Bike Trail Project**

Giesen gave a report on the status of the bike trail project. He said that the commissioner of the DNR had requested our 2018 bonding funds not be cancelled and that the commissioner of MMB granted a one year extension before canceling as required by law, something Giesen was told hadn't been done before for a project. Because of this, at least for the next year, the city won't need to assume management of the bike trail construction project as discussed at the last meeting.

Based on the four bids received in December (for the town to county road 30 segment), the DNR is projecting a current cost of about \$4.2 million to build the entire trail, with engineering and funds for amenities. The board discussed at length the amount that the board should request in additional state funding to complete the project as discussed with Senator Jeremy Miller and Representative Greg Davids in November. Consensus of the board was to request that our local legislators introduce legislation to fund the remainder of the project utilizing the DNR's current construction cost estimates, minus the funds on hand for the project, but adding in inflation too. Consensus of the board was to have staff discuss this update and the new cost estimates with our local legislators, asking for their support and advice on the appropriate funding level given the new information and any political considerations.

The board discussed that utilizing a similar lobbying strategy as the prior funding request was appropriate to start. Giesen said he would talk with our local legislators and once they give their support, he will set up meetings with bonding committee members. He noted that he will create some project handouts and be looking for volunteers to help make the visits.

### **2023 Goals & Objectives**

The board discussed goals and objectives for the upcoming year, reviewing current and past goals throughout the discussion. Consensus was to do a third iteration of the Experience Harmony place making discussions sometime later this spring or summer – holding community meetings, getting community feedback and input. The board also agreed to talk with members of the historical society in regards to the status of the elevator project and if there was any cross-collaboration that could be helpful. Giesen will follow up with both items. It was also discussed that additional focus should be given to attract an auto parts store.

### **Prospects/Community Update**

Giesen gave an update on prospects.

There was no other business.

Hearing no objections, Kingsley adjourned the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:50 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for February 2, 2023 at 7:30 AM at the Community Center.