

Harmony EDA Minutes

February 1, 2018
7:30 AM

Council Room
Community Center

Present: Steve Donney, Andy Batstone, and Kerry Kingsley

Also Present: Roxanne Johnson, Kelsey Bergey, Marty Walsh, Becky Hoff, Jerome Illg, and Chris Giesen

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:30 AM by Steve Donney

Minutes

Motion by Swenson, second by Batstone to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2018 meeting as corrected. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports & Claims

The board reviewed the loan schedule, all loans were current. Giesen asked for clarification on the \$10,000 forgivable loan for Harmony Spirits; the board reaffirmed that the funds for this loan would be drawn from the housing rebate program as originally intended. Motion by Donney, second by Kingsley to approve the financial report as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Fillmore County EDA Update: Marty Walsh

Marty Walsh, the new staff for the Fillmore County EDA introduced himself and gave a brief presentation. Walsh is also with CEDA. He gave the board an update on projects that the Fillmore County EDA are currently working on. He reported that they are creating a county tourism and amenity map, are working on supporting broadband internet projects throughout the county, and are promoting workforce development with a regional career day for high school seniors.

Harmony Real Estate Market

Roxanne Johnson and Kelsey Bergey were present to give the board an update on trends in the Harmony real estate market. Distributing a detailed report, Johnson and Bergey reported that overall the trends have been good. It was noted that in 2017, 19 houses were sold with an average days on the market of 80, and at an average sale price of \$82,363. While Harmony's numbers were just slightly less than last year, Johnson explained that the data is still well within what is considered to be "good" in the real estate industry and that with such a small market, fluctuations from year to year can tend to be larger as well as the over-influence of outlier data. It was mentioned that she is seeing an uptick of interest in downtown commercial property across the region and that increasingly buyers are wanting to know what kind of cell phone reception and/or internet connection is available in specific locations. The board discussed the impacts of the region growing and how that might affect future home sales or growth, and that as the region continues to grow Harmony has a strong, positive lifestyle to sell to prospective residents. The board agreed that this was excellent information to have and thanked Johnson and Bergey for attending and their report.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Becky Hoff gave the annual report for the Chamber of Commerce. It was reported that 2017 was a good year with 112 members, 12 events, 17,769 guidebooks distributed, and increased web traffic and social media interaction. It was also reported that the Chamber continues to be involved with the Root River Trail Towns organization which promotes communities and activities that are tied to the trail system. The board thanked Hoff for her work and her report. Consensus was that the activities continued to be successful and benefit the community.

Experience Harmony II Community Survey Results

The board discussed the results of the Experience Harmony II community survey, at length. While no decisions were made, the board agreed that when more members are present, the board should identify the major potential projects identified through the survey and put those ideas forward to the public for input on priority and how to solve or move those projects forward. Major topics identified by the board from the survey were housing, commuter bus, perception of the cost of living in Harmony, dentist attraction, technology, recreation amenities, dismissing “myths” about the community, and hospitality/B&B/campgrounds. Staff will include this discussion at the next meeting.

2018 Joint Board Meeting

The board reviewed the proposed agenda for the joint school, council, and EDA meeting to be held on February 13, 2018. The format was the same as prior years with the addition of the ten-minute public forum at the end of the meeting. Consensus of the board was to utilize the agenda as proposed.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen reported that he will be setting up meetings with the state House and Senate bonding committee members for 10 minute meetings to discuss the trail project and encourage their support. The board agreed that Giesen should keep everyone posted as meetings are scheduled so that those interested can join if their schedules allow.

The trail committee reported that it had discussed ancillary projects that were mentioned as possible ad-ons to the current project. The committee recommended that the board stay on track with the current process and not add additional amenities at this time and instead wait to add additional amenities until the trail project is funded. The board concurred.

Giesen reported that after the last meeting, he had reached out to Rochester City Lines about commuter transportation. He is trying to set up a meeting with them to discuss options in Harmony and will keep the board posted.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Hearing no objection, Donney adjourned the meeting at 9:20 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 1, 2018 at 7:30 AM, at the Community Center.