

## **Harmony EDA Minutes**

March 1, 2018  
7:30 AM

Council Room  
Community Center

Present: Chris Skaalen, Deb Swenson, Andy Batstone, and Kerry Kingsley

Also Present: Roxanne Johnson, Becky Hoff, Jerome Illg, and Chris Giesen

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:31 AM by Chris Skaalen

### **Minutes**

Motion by Batstone, second by Swenson to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2018 meeting as presented and the minutes of the February 13, 2018 special joint meeting as corrected. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Financial Reports & Claims**

The board reviewed the loan schedule, all loans were current. There were no claims for payment.

### **Live2Lead Leadership Seminar**

Skaalen introduced Roxanne Johnson regarding a community learning opportunity she had been presented with. She said that there was an opportunity for Harmony to host a leadership seminar entitled “Live2Lead” to help local leaders and future leaders create synergy in the community. She said that she had been through a previous seminar and thought the material was very helpful and it would be a great way to get different leaders from the community together and give them resources to be even more successful. She said that the program is available through the end of March and costs \$3,000 which includes food and snacks for the day. She had personally committed \$500 to the event and asked the EDA if they would sponsor the event as well. She would also be asking the Harmony Area Community Foundation and other local businesses if they would sponsor the event too so that Harmony community members could attend the event for free. Normally admission would be about \$100. The board discussed. Illg mentioned that this item was not on originally on the agenda and that the board should take that into consideration before deciding to allocate funds. Consensus was that this would be a good opportunity for the community. Motion by Swenson, second by Batstone, to contribute \$500 towards the event. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Housing Rebate Question: Bunge Project**

Giesen presented a question related to the Andy Bunge housing rebate application, on behalf of the applicant. He reported that Mr. Bunge had informed him that the house’s exterior was nearly complete except for one strip of siding which was completed later that day and the north side of the roof. Mr. Bunge said that with the recent freezing rain and being the unfinished portion of the roof was on the north side of the building, he wasn’t sure when he would be able to finish the roof. Mr. Bunge was hoping that he wouldn’t have to wait until the next EDA meeting to get his rebate check approved because of the weather related issues. Giesen said that while the program guidelines say the home’s exterior must be 100% complete he wanted the board’s input because of the uniqueness of the question. The board discussed. Motion by Skaalen, second by

Swenson to approve payment of the rebate claim totaling \$12,000 so that Mr. Bunge wouldn't need to wait until the next EDA meeting, but to hold the check until the building is 100% complete. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Joint Meeting Recap: Next Steps?**

The board discussed the special joint meeting that occurred in February with the Fillmore Central school board and Harmony city council. Consensus was that it was a good meeting and a great way to better understand what the other boards are working on; as well as discussing ways to work together. Consensus was that EDA staff should contact the high school to see if another career fair should be held in the fall of 2018 or 2019.

### **Experience Harmony II Community Survey Results**

The board discussed the community survey results. Consensus was that the themes identified and planned next steps to assemble a public input meeting made sense, the board decided to not take action to finalize the results so that they could wait for a full board. The board added housing rehab to the list of possible projects/goals that should be discussed at the public input meeting.

The board discussed the survey comments received about residents wanting better internet services. Skaalen said he would bring those survey responses to the attention of the phone company.

The board also discussed at length the issue of residences located in the main floor of commercially-zoned buildings, which is not allowed by ordinance. It was discussed that other cities have looked at the issue recently and that there may be some insight from them on how they solved it. Illg mentioned that it was an issue that the planning and zoning board and city council reviewed a short while ago and decided to keep the current ordinance and complaint process. Swenson suggested that perhaps the council could revisit the question. Consensus of the board was that this really wasn't an EDA issue to discuss but that perhaps a revisit by the council could address the question.

### **Bike Trail Extension: Update**

Giesen reported that Vicky Tribon, Illg, and himself had already made one trip to the Capitol in St. Paul to meet with members of the House and Senate capital investment committees to talk about the bike trail project. The report so far was positive from legislators. Giesen said that Representative Nels Pierson of Stewartville signed on to our bill as a co-author, which was great because it shows regional support for the project. It was mentioned that there are still several meetings ahead and that volunteers are needed to help out. Giesen would keep the board posted. The goal is to meet with every committee member possible and for those that we aren't able to meet with, to make sure they get our project materials.

### **Chamber of Commerce Report**

Becky Hoff gave the chamber report. She said that the 2018 visitor guide books are in and are currently being distributed. She also reported that Harmonopoly is in production and should be ready this fall as anticipated. Hoff also distributed a list of upcoming promotions and events. Swenson said the new format looked really nice and asked if this could be posted in businesses around town.

### **Prospects/Community Update**

Giesen reported that a meeting with Rochester City Lines had been scheduled for March 22 at their office in Rochester to discuss possible commuter bus service to Harmony. Giese said that they have been very helpful and are open to working with the city if there is a way to make bus service to Harmony feasible. Giesen said that board members are welcome to join the meeting if they are interested and able. He will report back at the next meeting on the discussion.

Giesen reported that the new federal tax overhaul legislation included a provision that might help Harmony, called Opportunity Zones. He said that while a lot is still unknown about the program certain “distressed” census tracts could become zones where certain tax breaks are given, primarily breaks on capital gains tax. The purpose of the program was to help attract investments to lower income areas in the nation. Each Governor can appoint 25% of qualifying census tracts in the state to take advantage of the program. However, the program is a long way from being implemented. Governor Dayton, through the Department of Employment and Economic Development, would be reviewing applications that are due March 8, 2018. Giesen noted they had only received notice of the applications about two weeks ago. He also noted that the state is requesting that counties apply on behalf of local census tracts. While Harmony isn’t the most distressed tract, it may have some opportunity to actually benefit more from the program than other more remote areas of Minnesota. He said that Fillmore County was putting together an application on Harmony’s behalf; which would include areas near Preston, Lanesboro, and Mabel too. Giesen said he would be collecting letters of support from the community for the county to include in their application.

#### **Other Business**

There was no other business.

Hearing no objection, Skaalen adjourned the meeting at 9:15 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 5, 2018 at 7:30 AM, at the Community Center.