

Harmony EDA Minutes

April 12, 2018
7:30 AM

Council Room
Community Center

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

Also Present: Steve Cremer, Becky Hoff, Jerome Illg, and Chris Giesen

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:32 AM by Chris Skaalen

Minutes

Motion by Donney, second by Swenson to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2018 as corrected. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports & Claims

The status of the loan portfolio was discussed. All loans were current. It was mentioned that Wildcat Properties had paid their loan in full since the last meeting. There were two claims presented for payment; to the Harmony Area Chamber of Commerce in the amount of \$13,250 for 1st half 2018 general operating support and to Community and Economic Development Associates for 2nd quarter 2018 economic development staffing services. Motion by Kingsley, second by Swenson to approve the financial report and claims as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Housing Rebate Question: Cremer Project

Giesen presented a question on the housing rebate program that was forwarded from the loan committee. Hammel House & Co constructed a new house on 3rd Ave that was just recently completed. Fillmore county has assessed the property at \$215,000 which would normally qualify the property for a \$10,000 rebate through the program. The program does require that all approvals for the program are given before construction begins. Hammel House & Co. also has a development agreement with the city to construct additional houses in an adjoining but separate subdivision and received assistance with construction of the roadway which made those lots in the adjoining subdivision not eligible for the housing rebate. The lot the house in question was built on was eligible for the rebate. Giesen explained that due to a technical administrative error with all of the other moving parts of this and related projects the developer thought the rebate had been approved and staff thought the developer chose not to apply for the rebate. Since no application was received prior to construction, Giesen said he forwarded the question to the loan committee for resolution of whether or not a rebate could be retroactively approved because of the administrative error.

The loan committee reported it had discussed the issue and because it was technical in nature, they recommended that the EDA approve the rebate retroactively. The loan committee did want the full board to discuss and wanted to be clear that they made their recommendation to approve it in this instance because it was a technicality and that the project was still in motion.

The board discussed. Steve Cremer, one of the owners of Hammel House & Co. was present to discuss the situation as well. Kingsley asked staff if rebate applications were given at the time zoning permits are requested. Currently rebate applications were only given if requested. Consensus of the board was to have applications given at the time zoning permit applications are requested.

Giesen mentioned that the county's assessed value was \$215,000 for the new building and the appraisal came back at \$315,000. He wanted to confirm that the board would utilize the county's appraised value because of the discrepancy, which he explained hadn't happened to that extent yet in the program. The board confirmed they would utilize the county's assessed value.

Consensus was that this was a technical administrative error. Motion by Swenson, second by Kingsley to approve the new home rebate application to Hammel House & Co. in the amount of \$10,000. Motion carried unanimously.

The board wanted the minutes to clearly reflect this was a one-time deviation from the program guidelines because of the extenuating circumstances of the administrative error and that future precedence would not be set by this situation. In this situation it was assumed that the rebate application was already approved by the owner and it was assumed by staff that the owner did not intend to apply.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Becky Hoff was present to give the Chamber report. She said that the Harmony-opoly game was coming along well and that the Visitor's Center is now open. It will be open six days per week starting in May. At the Visitor's Center the Chamber has put up a new station where visitors can watch videos about the Driftless Area, Harmony Enterprises, and their fossil display.

Experience Harmony II Community Survey Results

The board finalized the results of the Experience Harmony II community survey. The board identified eleven themes that came forward from the survey; the selected themes were: housing, commuter bus, perception of the cost of living in Harmony, environment and sustainability, energy, dentist attraction, technology, recreation amenities, dispelling "myths" about the community, and housing rehabilitation. Consensus of the board was to take these themes forward to a community input meeting where community members could discuss project ideas and other ways to address the issues the themes raise. Participants would also identify potential project champions, discuss feasibility, and priority. Ultimately, the EDA would assess the input received and identify 3-6 priorities that could be set as community development goals. It is not the intention that priorities need to be solved within a certain timeline, some priorities may be quick to resolve and others may be longer term. The purpose of setting the priorities is to identify, create, and then execute plans that will make Harmony a better place to live, work, and play.

Consensus was to hold the meeting on May 16, 2018 at 5:30 PM at the Harmony Golf Club, and to have light appetizers. It was suggested a brief social time be held first to warm up the crowd. Giesen said he would reserve the space and publicize the event.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen reported that at the last meeting the board inquired about the next career fair with Fillmore Central High School. He said he reached out to the school and that they would

like to keep the event on the four-year schedule. They anticipated having the next career fair in the fall of 2019. Giesen said he would meet with the school in the upcoming months to begin the event planning.

Illg and Giesen briefly mentioned that they had been contacted by the Fillmore County EDA about participating in a county wide housing market study. More details were coming from the county but staff wanted the board to be aware of the project.

The board discussed the proposed state veteran's home which Fillmore County recently announced would be built in Preston, if the state awarded the project. There was concern from the board about the potential negative impacts such a large project could have on employment for existing Harmony employers.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Hearing no objection, Skaalen adjourned the meeting at 9:13 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 3, 2018 at 7:30 AM, at the Community Center.