

Harmony EDA Minutes

August 9, 2018
7:30 AM

Council Room
Community Center

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

Also Present: Jill Fishbaugher, Jerome Illg, and Chris Giesen

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:34 AM by Chris Skaalen

Minutes

Motion by Donney, second by Kingsley to approve the minutes of the July 12, 2018 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports & Claims

The status of the loan portfolio and past due loans were discussed. The new home rebate ledger was also reviewed; consensus of the board was to remove the expired program application from the ledger. There were no claims for payment. Motion by Batstone, second by Skaalen to approve the financial report as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Update from Harmony Telephone Company

Jill Fishbaugher was present to inform the board that Harmony Telephone Company had approved installing fiber optic service to the Harmony Industrial Park and Harmony Enterprises. Construction would begin and finish this fall. Next spring, they will likely install fiber optic service to a section of southeast Harmony where internet has had issues in the past as well as the new subdivision where it does not make sense to install the old wiring technology. She mentioned that they are working with the City to potentially install conduit this fall in conjunction with the City's electric line extension which is also related to the new subdivision. She said that the plan, depending on many factors including financing, would be to have the entire city built out on a fiber optic network in 3-5 years. The board was very excited to hear this announcement as improved internet service has been a continued priority for many years. Consensus was that the board would help where possible. Kingsley asked what a customer might notice after the project is completed. Fishbaugher said that this project will allow for faster internet speed packages, which at first maybe only a few customers will want the fastest packages but that all fiber customers will have access to faster speeds, fiber users won't have a need for a separate phone line to use internet, and customers on fiber will have differences in how their phones work in power outage situations because of how traditional phones and phones using fiber are powered. This last point, she mentioned, would be something the telephone company will need to work with customers on to make sure they understand the differences because fiber optic powered phones won't work in power outages without backup battery systems, which will be provided but may not always be sized appropriately for the need. The board thanked Fishbaugher for her work on this and for announcing the project with the EDA first. Consensus of the board was to place "Fiber Ready" signage on the industrial park sign once the project was completed.

SMIF Small Town Grant Opportunity

Giesen reviewed a grant opportunity that was brought forward by Skaalen and Donney, as well as Roxanne Johnson. Through the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's Small Town grant program, grants up to \$10,000 are available for collaborative projects that leverage leadership and creates opportunities for cities with populations less than 5,000. The board immediately thought of the Freenotes project Becky Hoff is leading with other community volunteers. Giesen said he would submit an application on behalf of the Freenotes project.

2019 EDA Budget

The board reviewed the proposed 2019 EDA budget. Illg said that he would suggest the board keep the same budget parameters as last year. He said there will likely be projects coming forward related to infrastructure in the industrial park and some of the budgeted funds would build a balance to help cover those future capital expenses. The total budgeted amount in 2018 was \$119,118.00. The board discussed and concurred with Illg's report. Motion by Skaalen, second by Batstone to approve and recommend that the city council adopt the 2019 EDA budget with the same parameters as in 2018. Motion carried unanimously.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Chamber Director Becky Hoff submitted the Chamber's 2019 budget request of \$26,500 which was the same as 2018. She also submitted the Chamber's 2018 budget an update on programming and advertising. The board discussed. It was mentioned that technically the chamber budget request had been approved in the previous motion but that the board wanted to also consider this request specifically. Motion by Kingsley, second by Donney to approve the 2019 Chamber budget request as proposed. Motion carried unanimously.

Experience Harmony II – Public Input Meeting Results

Consensus of the board was to delay discussion on this topic until the next scheduled meeting.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen reported that the trail committee had met with the county engineer and that other than reviewing existing agreements, it should not be a big hurdle to route trail traffic from the Visitor Center to the south end of town, along 1st Ave NW/SW. The county would likely allow placement of the appropriate street signage and possibly painted markings on the pavement. However, a maintenance and cost agreement would need to be negotiated for the painting and signage. It was assumed those costs would be the city's.

Giesen reported that the trail committee had met with the DNR about the bike trail extension project. It was anticipated that in the fall 2018 an update to the Harmony trail master plan may be needed, but DNR staff was not completely sure yet. This would not affect the project negatively but would require a meeting or two. Actual project engineering would not likely begin until spring 2019 and construction would not begin until 2020. Construction would likely finish in late 2020. It was also mentioned that depending on project funding and the status of the Iowa connection, the state may not complete the section of trail between Niagara Cave and the Iowa border until a connection was in the near future. The land would still be purchased/owned by the state via LCCMR funding to the city, but the preference and hope was that the city could

convince the DNR to complete the entire project as planned and promised to the legislature.

Giesen mentioned that he had connected a local business to a potential client for an ongoing production contract through connections made with CEDA. He also mentioned that he had been asked to join a regional steering committee MnDOT was funding that was looking at transportation access in southeast Minnesota and that he was working with a group to develop an economic development loan fund for the region as well.

Other Business

Hearing no objection, Skaalen adjourned the meeting at 8:55 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 6, 2018 at 7:30 AM, at the Community Center.