

Harmony EDA Minutes

May 2, 2019
7:30 AM

Council Room
Community Center

Present: Chris Skaalen, Steve Donney, Andy Batstone, and Steve Sagen

Also Present: Jim Wolter, Becky Hoff, Jerome Illg, and Chris Giesen

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:33 AM by Chris Skaalen

Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes of the April 4, 2019 meeting. Motion by Donney, second by Sagen to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports & Claims

The status of the loan portfolio and new home rebate program were reviewed. All loans were current. There was a payment claim for \$13,250 from the Harmony Area Chamber of Commerce for first half 2019 funding support.

Becky Hoff gave a follow up report on recent Chamber of Commerce activity to the funding request. She said that their new staff is being trained in and that she has been busy recruiting volunteers to star in the community and tourism videos. The promotions committee is very active right now working on the 4th of July and 2020 celebrations. The chamber switched to Constant Contact for email newsletters, they continue a great relationship with Root River Trail Towns, and was interested in knowing what discussion the city council had in relation to the trash and treasure day event as the chamber would likely plan the city wide garage sale in conjunction with it.

Motion by Batstone, second by Donney to approve the financial report and claim as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Housing Discussion

Giesen discussed several housing issues with the board. He reported that he had been in contact with a prospective new resident who was having a very difficult time finding a lot to purchase and build a new home on. He has already designed the home but that owners of the lots of his preferred location would not sell to him because he wasn't going to also purchase all building materials from them. Giesen and Illg thought that the board should know about this incident as it may occur more often based on the current inventory of lots in the community.

Illg also mentioned that the poor condition of several properties continues to be discussed in several circles and was also an issue brought up in the Experience Harmony program as a goal. He proposed to work with the city attorney to review the current ordinance and determine if there are any ways to either strengthen it or better enforce it to help improve the condition and aesthetics of the properties at issue. The board concurred that this was a goal of the Experience Harmony project and while the board doesn't have an enforcement role for this particular issue they can help facilitate the desire to see action occur.

Experience Harmony Projects/Goals

The board discussed several Experience Harmony project goals.

Jim Wolter of SEMCAC's Rolling Hills Transit was present to discuss options available through his service to provide transportation in Harmony. He said that they are able to provide curb to curb service to all Harmony residents who wish to use the service. He explained that SEMCAC provides a cost share for capital and operational costs. The city's cost share is roughly \$15,000 per year which can be offset by rider fares. The program is made available through a grant from MnDOT and as a state program there currently is not an ability to provide this service across state lines. However Wolter noted if there was an interest from the city, he would be willing to investigate how that issue could be resolved. The board noted that issue could be a problem for Harmony as residents may want to travel to destinations in Iowa. Wolter said that if there was an interest in moving forward the first step would be to conduct a survey to determine interest. Wolter noted that it is a call ahead/scheduled service so riders call in advance to request a ride and SEMCAC staff coordinate the request. He said it does require some getting used to the system but it has been successful in places such as Kasson, Dover, Eyota, St. Charles, Lewiston, and other cities. The board discussed at length. Overall the consensus was that it would be a good service to have but there were many questions around the logistics of the program and level of use by residents. It was determined that a survey would likely gather useful information on how to best proceed but before a survey was conducted the board wished to discuss alternatives and next steps further.

The environmental sustainability and telling our story goals were also discussed by the board. The board asked if there was any discussion at the council level in regards to the trash and treasure day event. There had not been any discussion at the council. The board recommended for a third time that the city council discuss establishing a trash and treasure day.

Giesen and Hoff reported that the community marketing video would be filmed in Harmony at the end of May and that everything is moving forward well to stay on schedule.

Dairyland Project Update

Giesen and Illg updated the board on the Dairyland project. They reported that they were meeting with representatives of Dairyland shortly after today's meeting to discuss an alternative site location. Dairyland had recently notified staff that they were again interested in locating on the east side of the city, along highway 52, past the golf course/Nutrien. Illg mentioned that this site would need extensions of water and sewer to serve the business' needs. In order to determine how the alternate site should be served with utilities, the city engineer would likely need to conduct a feasibility study which would carry a cost of at least a few thousand dollars. Illg mentioned that he felt that because this was a special request for a specific project by the prospect that the prospect should carry most if not all the cost of the feasibility study, especially as this alternate site was still only under possible consideration. The board agreed. Consensus of the board was that depending on the discussion at today's meeting with Dairyland and the needs they mention, that the EDA could consider participating in the cost of an engineering feasibility study if it was to the city's benefit for additional development and confirmed that the project would move forward.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen reported that he was working with a commercial prospect on a loan application and that the veterinary clinic's option contract for three lots in the industrial park will expire on May 15, 2019. The board agreed that they would be willing to extend the option contract with the same terms and cost. They also agreed that if the clinic was going to move forward with purchase in the next 30-60 days that they would consider waiving the option contract fee.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Hearing no objections, Skaalen adjourned the meeting at 9:35 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 6, 2019 at 7:30 AM, at the Community Center.