

Harmony EDA Minutes

March 5, 2020
7:30 AM

Council Room
Community Center

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

Also Present: Melissa Vander Plas, Joel Dhein, and Chris Giesen

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:30 AM by Chris Skaalen

Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes of the February 6, 2020 meeting. Motion by Batstone, second by Sagen to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Kingsley entered the meeting at 7:31 AM.

Financial Reports & Claims

The board reviewed the loan portfolio. All loans were current but Giesen mentioned that the Bishops might not need to utilize their loan. The board agreed that if the loan isn't disbursed and no expenses are incurred for the closing, a refund of the application fee could be issued. Giesen said that if the borrowers wish to draw on the loan after April 1, 2020 that the board may want to consider reviewing the application again. The board agreed.

Giesen reported that there were no updates to the new home rebate program ledger this month. The board also considered an opportunity to advertise in the Rochester Area Builders membership directory. Consensus was to pass on the opportunity this year.

There were two claims for payment, one from David Drown Associates in the amount of \$5,762.64 for establishing the tax increment financing (TIF) district for the Dairyland project and the second was from the Harmony Area Chamber of Commerce in the amount of \$13,250 for the first half 2020 funding support. Motion by Sagen, second by Kingsley to approve the financial report and claims as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Dairyland Project Update

Giesen gave an update on the Dairyland project. He said that there was no new progress since the last meeting. He did mention that Dairyland will keep the city updated on any major items that come forward. Giesen said that he will keep in touch with Dairyland and report to the board as needed but that the project is still planned for construction in 2021.

52 Speed Limit Discussion

The board reviewed information Giesen presented from MnDOT in regards to changing the speed limit on Highway 52 along the northern edge of the city. Giesen said that he had not been able to have a detailed discussion yet, but from the preliminary message it seemed that MnDOT could establish a "transition speed zone" between the 60 and 30 mile per hour zones. Discussion occurred on whether or not a speed study would be required to establish a transitional speed zone as it was not clear from the message from MnDOT. Dhein suggested that a study would likely be required for any proposed

changes. Consensus of the board was to have staff follow up with MnDOT to get clarification on the process, that a transitional speed zone would be desirable, and if a speed study is required, the city council should consider passing a resolution to request such a study.

Experience Harmony Projects/Goals

The board reviewed the Experience Harmony project goals. Giesen explained that he also included the community project goals from 1989 as general information for the board.

Skaalen asked if the recycling containers had been placed on Main Street yet. Giesen replied that he believed the former city administrator had ordered them but that the receptacles might be in storage for the winter, which is the common practice for public works. Dhein said he would check on the status.

Giesen reviewed information he had gathered on electric vehicle charging stations per the discussion at the last meeting. The board discussed at length. Giesen reported that he had contacted representatives from MiEnergy to get additional information and insight on vendors and possible grants. Consensus of the board was that the technology and idea was very good and interesting, especially from a community marketing perspective. However, given the costs, potential use, and potential changing or new technologies, it was decided to not pursue installing a charging station in the community at this time.

The board also reviewed the first community marketing video monthly report which covered activity between February 1 and March 1, 2020. There were three variations of the video serving as ads on Facebook and one ad on YouTube. It was reported that one of the three Facebook ads was “paused” by Facebook because it was considered miscategorized and too similar to an employment ad. Overall, the Facebook ads reached 10,496 people and resulted in 257 clicks to the landing page on the chamber website. The YouTube ad reached 29,101 people, was viewed 13,323 times, and resulted in 107 clicks to the landing page on the chamber website. Vander Plas noted that while she can’t be sure of a connection, she did see additional interest in the Chamber Facebook page and requests for visitor guides this past month.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Vander Plas was present to give the chamber report. She said that work on the 125th Anniversary is well underway, the Visitor Center opens April 1st, the chamber is in the process of hiring a new assistant, and there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony for Crate & Barrel on March 27th. In addition, the board reviewed the following report submitted from the chamber:

Harmony Area Chamber of Commerce Director’s Report ~ March 2020

February events

~ Annual meeting – We had 34 individuals attend our annual meeting at the Harmony Golf Course on Wednesday, Feb. 12. We had a great discussion about what is happening in Harmony - highlighting the Harmony EDA activities, bike trail extension, Harmony Area Historical Society’s elevator project, the splash pad and the upcoming 125th anniversary celebration during this year’s Fourth of July. During the chamber business meeting, Andy Batstone and Jan Bigalk were reelected to their terms on the board. They join board members Jill Huffman, Deb Skaalen, Bonnie Fisher, Nicole Johnson and Lisa Kingsley.

January and February activities

~ The visitor center is officially closed until April weekends, but I do keep the door open when I am in the office and check email and phone messages daily through the week. The number of requests for guidebooks and other information is rising as the weather improves and travel season nears.

~ I continue to work on membership renewals and guidebook advertising, design and content.

~ Completed Explore Minnesota marketing grant paperwork/reports and received \$5,942 in advertisement reimbursements for out-of-state marketing.

~ I've been working on coordinating several "cooperative" ads for regional and out-of-state publications such as the Rochester Visitor, Inspire(d) and the La Crosse guide. Being able to feature several businesses on a full-page ad in these publications gives us greater impact and also makes it more affordable for the Chamber and the businesses.

~ Created newsletters to promote local news and events. I did miss a few weeks in January and February as there was little new content and few "coming events" to highlight. I think next year I will formally plan to reduce the number of newsletters in the winter months. However, in January and February, the newsletter subscriptions through the website have grown by seven.

~ Worked with Threads Custom Apparel in Chatfield to create Fourth of July t-shirts. Finalized design and placed order for 1,000 shirts to sell as a fundraiser for the chamber.

~ Sent deposits and contracts for Fourth of July vendors and entertainment.

~ Worked with the Promotions and 125th Celebration committees. Developed the list of events for sponsorship letter and worked with committee members to confirm and solicit events for the Fourth of July poster.

March tasks

~ Finalize guide book design and work with printer for early April delivery.

~ Mail out promotional letter (going out this week) and prepare Fourth of July sponsorship letter to mail at the end of the month.

~ Continue booking Fourth of July events and entertainment – complete event poster.

~ Advertise and interview candidates to fill open position for chamber assistant, created when Sydnie Huffman was hired at Harmony Telephone Company.

~ Send invoices/reminders to members who have not yet renewed membership or paid for cooperative ads.

~ Create social media posts for upcoming 2020 events.

~ Work with ECFE staff to plan and promote Easter Egg Hunt on April 11 at community center.

~ Work with Fillmore Central students to design a child's button for Fourth of July. The adult button will feature the 125th anniversary logo.

~ Start recruiting/confirming volunteers for the Visitor Center and work with Annette to set up training for volunteers.

~ Start visiting members and non-member businesses to discuss Chamber benefits, learn concerns and share ideas.

Contact me

As always, feel free to contact me in the office on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, as well as additional hours on some Wednesdays and Fridays. My office number is 507-886-2469 and my cell is 507-450-5971.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen gave an update on prospects. He mentioned that a recent industrial park project had gone quiet and that a prospective loan applicant had decided to withdraw their application.

Other Business

Skaalen mentioned that he, Giesen, and Steve Cremer had been interviewed by a reporter from the Wall Street Journal in regards to the Harmony Kids Learning Center project. Giesen mentioned that on a similar note, he had recently been interviewed by LendingTree.com in regards to the new home rebate program.

Hearing no objections, Skaalen adjourned the meeting at 8:47 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 2, 2020 at 7:30 AM, at the Community Center. The annual joint board workshop meeting between the EDA, city council, and Fillmore Central school board will take place on March 17, 2020 at 6:00 PM, at the Community Center.