

Harmony EDA Minutes

November 4, 2021
7:30 AM

Community Center
Council Room

Present: Kerry Kingsley, Steve Donney, and Greg Schieber

Also Present: Cindy Ofstedal, Melissa Vander Plas, Devin Swanberg, and Chris Giesen

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:32 AM by Kerry Kingsley.

Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes of the October 7, 2021 meeting. Motion by Schieber, second by Donney to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports & Claims

The board reviewed the loan portfolio and home rebate ledger. Two past due loans was discussed. Giesen will contact the borrowers and provide updates to the board.

The annual contract for economic development staffing services from CEDA was reviewed. Giesen noted that the annual contract rate of \$33,102 would provide the same level of service and same terms as prior years and was a 3% increase from the 2021 rate. Motion by Donney, second by Schieber to approve the contract renewal. Motion carried unanimously.

There were no claims for payment. Motion by Schieber, second by Donney to approve the financial report. Motion carried unanimously.

Downtown Revitalization Program Proposals

The board reviewed three proposals that were submitted for the new downtown revitalization program at length. Proposals were received from Becky Hoff to restore façade of the current Bee Balm building, Miles Petree and Lisa Miller to restore the façade of the On the Crunchy Side building, and Amy and Aaron Bishop to restore the façade of their commercial building. It was determined that all three of the proposals were good project ideas and met the goals of the program. It was also determined that only the Hoff and Petree proposals were complete for consideration at this time.

In discussions, it was noted that in addition to the \$40,000 funding set aside in the 2022 budget and future years, that the same level of funding was available for the 2021 budget year. It was noted that while the Petree proposal was requesting \$40,000 plus a \$15,000 EDA loan to cover the \$55,000 project, only half of the south facing wall would be repaired and the windows would remain as-is in poor shape. Estimates for an entire repair of the brick on the east and south walls was about \$103,000. Further discussion noted that the goal of the program was to fix buildings that needed once in a lifetime fixes, check them off the list, and move on to the next building preserving the unique character of the core downtown. Along that line of logic, the board wondered if additional funding was made available, could the entirety of the brickwork for the On the Crunchy Side building be completed. If the board were to consider increasing the funding amount, they would also want to see an increase in the owner's match that was pledged in the proposal, as well as require the five large windows on the south wall be restored with appropriate windows. Consensus of the board was that because of the current potential availability of

extra funding and the size, scope, and visibility of the Crunchy Side building, additional funding for a total of \$80,000 would be considered provided the entire south and east walls were tuckpointed and the windows on the south wall were replaced. In order for consideration, the windows must be replaced with windows that fit the original openings, including the arched tops. It was also agreed that the board would also consider a traditional EDA loan of up to \$35,000 for this project, but that all costs beyond that would be the owner's responsibility to finance. The board agreed that this would complete the once in a lifetime needs of this building's exterior, provide an excellent poster project to promote the program, and meet the goals of the program to preserve and promote the downtown core. The board directed Giesen to talk with the owners of the Crunchy Side building to see if they were agreeable with the additional project elements, cost, and funding.

Consensus was to continue the discussion at the December meeting and consider a formal recommendation to the city council for an award at that time. The board agreed that all of the proposals were excellent projects and that they hoped that whichever projects are not awarded this year are resubmitted for consideration in the future and that as these projects are completed the entire downtown core could be restored.

Trail Project: Bishop Approval Process

Giesen reported that three stands of unique, mature oak trees were identified along the proposed bike trail extension route, located on the former Harvey Benson farm now owned by Aaron and Amy Bishop. The trees were identified because they are in the way of the trail construction. As currently proposed on the property owned by the city for the trail, these trees would need to be removed. However, they are the only such unique mature oak trees on the route. Both the Bishops and the DNR independently and without the other knowing, approached the city to see if there was anything that could be done to protect these trees. The solution to saving the trees is to route the trail around them, but additional land would need to be controlled in order to do so. The landowners have generously offered to donate the needed land to route the trail safely around the trees, provided that the transactional costs, such as a land survey and expenses related to the deed transfer, are covered by the city. Such expenses are estimated at about \$2,000. Giesen noted that the DNR is not able to accept land donations from private parties and so the land would be donated to the city, to be then donated again by the city to the DNR with the remainder of the trail corridor property. The board reviewed the proposed route to avoid the trees. Giesen suggested applying for a grant from the Harmony Area Community Foundation to offset half of the estimated transactional costs and to have the board fund the remainder of the cost from their unspent marketing budget. Motion by Donney, second by Schieber to fund the transactional costs to route the trail around the oak trees and apply for a grant from the Harmony Area Community Foundation for half of the anticipated expense. Motion carried unanimously.

Industrial Park 2nd Addition Plat Discussion

The board again reviewed the layout of the lots in the industrial park. It was noted that after working on the documents for a potential lot sale, it was suggested that it would be more efficient, clean, and proper to plat the recently purchased industrial park property and remainder of the original industrial park. This would better facilitate future development and sales. The board discussed the potential layout and agreed that the recently purchased property should be divided into three lots, one of which would be combined with an existing lot in the 1st Addition to help facilitate a current prospective sale, and that the undeveloped area to the north could be platted as a large outlot for now. Swanberg and Giesen would work with the city engineer to finalize a preliminary plat.

Motion by Donney, second by Schieber to move forward to plat the Harmony Industrial Park 2nd Addition. Motion carried unanimously.

Potential Land Opportunity

As an update to the brief discussion at the last meeting, it was reported that Schieber and Giesen were going to meet with a landowner that was potentially interested in selling their property. It was still unclear whether or not the owner was interested in selling, what an actual purchase price would be, or whether or not the board would be able to afford the purchase price once it was decided. But consensus of the board remained that the opportunity should at least be explored.

Experience Harmony Goals

Giesen reported that the new goals discussed at prior meetings, which included several new business types that are needed in the community, were added to the Experience Harmony goals.

Joint Board Meeting Update

Giesen reported that a date had not yet been scheduled for the annual joint board meeting with the school and city council, but that he would continue attempts to schedule it.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Melissa Vander Plas was present to give the chamber report. She reported that 1,124 visitors were recorded in October, which was the second best monthly count behind July this year. July saw about 1,300 visitors. The chamber is working to finalize the visitor guide with design firm Perfectly Glossy, is planning fall and winter events, and were excited to see such great turnout for Haunted Harmony this year. The annual craft show, small business Saturday, Breakfast with Santa, and community tree lighting are up next over the next several weekends. Finally, it was noted that 2022 membership renewals had been sent out.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen gave a brief update on prospects noting that the Reicks intended to sign a purchase agreement for a lot in the industrial park for their trucking headquarters and storage facility, per the discussion at the last meeting. He noted that it was anticipated the offer would come forward in time to review the offer at the December EDA meeting.

There was no other business.

Hearing no objections, Kingsley adjourned the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:29 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for December 2, 2021 at 7:30 AM at the Community Center.