

Harmony EDA Minutes

April 1, 2021
7:30 AM

Community Center
Council Room

Present: Kerry Kingsley, Steve Donney, Andy Batstone, Steve Sagen, and Greg Schieber

Also Present: Julie Lange, Melissa Vander Plas, Devin Swanberg, and Chris Giesen

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:30 AM by Kerry Kingsley.

Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes of the March 4, 2021 meeting. Motion by Batstone, second by Schieber to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports & Claims

There were no claims for payment.

Giesen stated that the board approved a loan for Becky Hoff/Bee Balm at the last meeting but since then, the owner made a request for the first six month of the payments to be interest only. The owners have to let their existing lease run its course and the interest only payments would provide flexibility. Motion by Sagen, second by Batstone to grant six months of interest only payments to Becky Hoff/Bee Balm. Motion carried unanimously.

Giesen presented information that was received on joining Historic Bluff Country for marketing purposes. The board reviewed and requested to discuss the matter with the Chamber.

Offer to Purchase Industrial Park Lot

Giesen introduced Julie Lange and her offer to purchase approximately 2.45 acres of land in the industrial park for the purpose of building a “micro” hotel for \$80,000. The lot of interest was Block 2 Lot 2 in the Industrial Park First Addition and the additional acreage immediately to the east of the lot in a portion of the area commonly referred to as Phase III of the industrial park. Giesen noted that other than an EDA loan, no other financial assistance is requested. The loan application is forthcoming. Giesen reported that like at the last meeting the purpose of this offer was to provide a lot for Lange’s “micro” hotel project and provide for possible future expansion.

Lange discussed her project and said that several lots were considered but this particular lot provided the best option for her business. She said that she hopes to start construction in July of 2021. The board discussed. Schieber mentioned that the land would likely need to be platted prior to selling. Donney asked if utility easements or other access easements would be included in the plat. It was agreed that the city engineer should include easements in the plat as he sees a need for.

Motion by Sagen, second by Donney to call for the required public hearing to consider the sale of land at the May 6, 2021 meeting, direct staff and the city attorney to assemble a purchase agreement with the typical EDA sale terms conforming with Mrs. Lange’s offer, and to direct staff to start the process to plat as discussed the area of the industrial park to be sold. Motion carried unanimously.

2021 Goals and Objectives

The board continued the discussion of 2021 project goals and objectives. They reviewed the projects discussed at the last meeting as well as the Experience Harmony II goals and objectives. The board discussed a coworking space project, possibly located at the community center. Consensus of the board was that this would be a unique and useful project for the space and community. Staff will do further research on the coworking space concept and report back.

Giesen reported that in addition to new goals and objectives discussed, there is still work to do to complete the bike trail project and Dairyland expansion project.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

Giesen reported that MiEnergy is placing a bulk order of car charging stations and that they will then send the city the cost of purchasing two 80-amp, 4-adapter, chargers. This would allow for the simultaneous charging of four vehicles. The purchase price would also include the credit for the basic charger promised by MiEnergy.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Melissa Vander Plas was present to give the chamber report. She said that the annual visitor's guide was still in production as the printer ran into issues, but that printing should be back on track. She is busy recruiting new members, including new businesses in the area. The chamber is utilizing the special Explore Minnesota marketing grant and has about \$2,000 left in the first bucket; the grant is allowing the chamber to place ads they have not tried before. The Easter egg hunt is scheduled for this upcoming Saturday and plans for the 4th of July celebration continue. The general feeling of members is that events should no longer be cancelled due to the pandemic. Vander Plas also reported that the visitor's center will be closed next week for annual deep cleaning and then open for the summer season. The board thanked Vander Plas for her report.

The board asked if the Historic Bluff Country membership was something the chamber should consider for this year. Consensus was that this membership might not fit within the budget and goals right now. No action was taken.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen reported on various project updates. The Dairyland project was still moving forward; he said that the council approved all of the recommendations made by the board but because of increasing construction and material costs caused by the pandemic, additional internal approvals were needed by the developer. These approvals should be completed on or by April 6, 2021. Giesen said that the council approved the board's recommendations contingent upon the developer executing the subsidy agreement and development agreement.

Giesen mentioned that Swanberg, Donney, and he submitted an Outdoor Recreation Grant application to the Minnesota DNR for a picnic shelter and restroom facility at the new splash pad. The grant request was for \$75,000.

It was also reported that the joint school, city, and EDA meeting was still tentatively scheduled for June or July this year. Giesen noted that SEMCAC's Rolling Hills Transit was now providing bus service to Harmony for local and regional rides. Anyone can ride for a small fare. He will work with Rolling Hills to help best utilize the service for the community and keep the board informed.

Kingsley asked the board if anyone had heard news about wind turbines being planned for the area along county road 44. He had heard reports that a wind energy company was prospecting tower locations. Sagen said he had heard of this about one year ago, but had no additional news. The board discussed if this was something to be supportive or concerned about. No thoughts materialized on the merits of such a project outside of the city limits and no decisions or action was taken, although the board did discuss the positive benefits of having the maintenance and operations crews for a potential wind or solar farm located within the city.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Hearing no objections, Kingsley adjourned the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:34 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 6, 2021 at 7:30 AM at the Community Center.