

Harmony EDA Minutes

October 6, 2022
7:30 AM

Community Center
Council Room

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

Also Present: Jeff O'Connor, Amy Bishop, Aaron Bishop, Erica Thilges, Cindy Ofstedal, Allison Whalen, Devin Swanberg, and Chris Giesen

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:31 AM by Kerry Kingsley.

Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes of the September 1, 2022 meeting. Motion by Donney, second by Batstone to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports & Claims

The board reviewed the loan portfolio. All loans were current. Giesen noted that one new home rebate was recently awarded to Allan Dahl in the amount of \$12,000 for a new twin home on 5th Ave SE. There was one claim for payment for the annual \$35 membership due to the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota. Motion by Schieber, second by Kingsley to approve the financial report and payment claim as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Industrial Park Update

Giesen introduced Jeff O'Connor of Twin City Trimmers to give an update on his building project in the industrial park. The city had provided a \$50,000 TIF discount on the industrial park lot price. That sale completed in 2021 and since then the site has been graded but no additional construction has taken place due to material costs/shortages, builder shortages, and inflation. Per the existing agreement, the building needed to be completed by the end of 2022 to make sure the TIF collections repaid the EDA covered the TIF benefit given. An extension was agreeable to both the board and Mr. O'Connor provided a payment of the lost TIF revenue for the year was paid. Motion by Batstone, second by Donney to extend the completion date of the development agreement with Jeff O'Connor/TIF 1-8 for one year (through December 31, 2023) in exchange for a payment of \$6,800.

Bike Trail Project

The board reviewed the conversation from the special meeting held earlier in the week with Senator Jeremy Miller and Representative Greg Davids about additional funding for the bike trail project. The board was encouraged by the conversation and support expressed from the legislators for the project. Once the election is over, the board will work with the legislators to introduce new funding legislation, coordinate meetings at the Capitol, and apply for LCCMR funding if necessary, similar to the first funding request. Giesen will check in with the DNR regarding the legislative support and keep the board posted. Giesen noted he had met with the DNR last week and contacts with landowners

are needed this fall to explain some needed temporary leases for construction purposes along the route.

New Home Rebate Program

The board reviewed a final draft of an updated new home rebate schedule. The new minimum would be a \$1,500 rebate for \$40,000 in new taxable value and the new maximum would be a \$20,000 rebate for \$500,000 in new taxable value. This new schedule was created based on an average 5 year payback from city taxes after the market value exclusion was factored in. The board noted the latest review of previous rebates awarded were repaid with new city taxes faster and higher actual taxable values than originally anticipated; in a 4-5 year timeframe instead of 5-6 year timeframe. Consensus was to keep the same program guidelines and goals otherwise, ask council for implementation of the new schedule in 2023, that if too many rebates are awarded the program could be cancelled or limited without notice, and to make a big announcement if approved by council. Motion by Kingsley, second by Schieber to recommend that city council approve the updated new home rebate schedule as discussed starting in January 2023. Motion carried unanimously.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Allison Whalen introduced herself as the new chamber director and gave the chamber report. She reported that she is busy getting up to speed this week but the Taste of the Trail event went well the other weekend; businesses reported an uptick in business that day. The cornstalks went up on the downtown light poles; thank you to the Hegg's for the stalks and the Kingsley's for setting them up. The annual tree lighting, breakfast with Santa, small business Saturday, and Christmas lights downtown. The chamber is also replacing the worn out sign at the visitor's center and starting its annual membership drive. The chamber is also working with Golden Happenings and have the fall road ditch clean up tonight.

Erica Thilges was present to discuss a new project she has led to design, locate, and place new directional signage downtown for general community and business amenities. She has received guidance and approval from MnDOT and has been working with Morem Electric to accommodate the new light poles that were recently purchased. There is more planning to do and they still need approval from the city council but she wanted to bring awareness of the project to the board. She noted that each sign will cost about \$1,000 but can be relabeled if needed, will be of high quality to survive the elements, and look good. The board received the idea well and suggested there may be funding available in the 2023 marketing budget but would like to see other participation as well.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen gave an update on a few prospects downtown.

Devin reported that the first comprehensive plan meeting was held the other night.

Giesen reminded the board that Downtown Revitalization Grant applications are due November 1 and that submissions will be ready for board review at the December meeting.

Kingsley asked the board if there were any ideas for big projects that might have local and regional impact that we could start thinking of/planning for; that there are funding sources in St. Paul and elsewhere we should start to brainstorm about. The board concurred.

There was no other business.

Hearing no objections, Kingsley adjourned the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for November 3, 2022 at 7:30 AM at the Community Center.