

Harmony EDA Minutes

November 2, 2023
7:30 AM

Community Center
Council Room

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

Also Present: Amy Bishop, Aaron Bishop, Erica Thilges, Allan Dahl, Sam Grabau, 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 October 5, 2023 meeting. Motion by Himlie, second by Kingsley to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports & Claims

The loan portfolio was reviewed. All loans were current. There was a payment claim for \$200 from Farm Charm for monthly digital marketing assistance services. Motion by Himlie, second by Schieber to approve the financial report and payment claim as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Semi Annual Development Agreement Compliance Review

The board reviewed the status of all active development agreements. All were current. Giesen noted that this report is given each June and November to keep track of all project agreements.

Concerns regarding the Twin City Trimmers/Jeff O'Connor TIF project were discussed at length. The project is currently meeting all requirements, but the building has not been constructed and the construction deadline is the end of 2023. It was noted that the board is willing to extend the construction deadline one more time, to the end of 2024 provided the paperwork is completed and payment in lieu of TIF of \$7,500 is received by December 1, 2023. It was also noted that phone calls and a letter encouraging the use of the extension had not been returned. Consensus of the board was that if the extension is not utilized, action to enforce the development agreement should be pursued. It was noted that outside legal counsel may be needed in this instance because of the city attorney's involvement in the project and area of practice expertise. Motion by Batstone, second by Donney to request that city council authorize the start of the collection process for the Twin City Trimmers/Jeff O'Connor project development agreement, including the hiring of outside legal counsel, if the December 1, 2023 deadline to request an extension on the development agreement passes without being finalized or the building is not completed as agreed.

2024 CEDA Contract

The board reviewed the proposed 2024 CEDA contract to provide economic development staffing services at the one day per week plus one day per month level as in past years, at a rate of \$36,494 per year. Giesen noted that the contract terms remained the same as in past years, rates increased 5% from 2023 to 2024, and that this amount was accounted for in the board's proposed budget. Motion by Batstone, second by Schieber to approve the

contract as proposed. Motion carried unanimously. Giesen thanked the board for their continued support.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Erica Thilges and Amy Bishop were present to give the chamber report. Thilges mentioned several recent successful community events and that membership renewals for 2024 were coming in at a better pace than prior years. The chamber is looking at different options and features of their website, too. Board treasurer Bishop noted that she is working on producing regular monthly financial reports for the board but does not have that level of information available yet. She gave a report of the current financial balances of the chamber and noted that more formal reports should be available next month. The chamber is working to better utilize QuickBooks.

Giesen noted an idea that was brought forward to meet with the chamber board, EDA, and city council to discuss opportunities and vision for continued future cooperation. It was agreed that perhaps 1-3 joint meetings between entities should be planned for the winter for the purpose of discussing and moving forward with ideas, concerns, and opportunities that came forward during recent budget talks. Further discussion is needed to formalize the concept. The chamber board was agreeable.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen gave a report on the status of the bike trail project. He reported that the trial committee met with the DNR last week and that about \$5.85 million was available for construction. The construction estimate (not including amenities, fencing, or a few other items) for the entire route is about \$5 million. Once the entire project is complete, the DNR may be able to use and leftover funds for maintenance or repairs on the existing trail to Preston. Because of state bidding rules and the availability of funding, the project will be bid in two phases, one phase will be bid out this week and the second phase in early 2024. The goal is to complete both phases of construction in 2024 however accommodations required to protect bat habitat may delay the second phase of construction (south of County Road 30) and cause completion of the second phase to be in 2025. The first phase should be completed in 2024. It was noted that because of the 30 foot right of way and project design, there are still some areas that need easements for drainage or shaping of the embankment. Staff will work with the DNR to ensure the project moves forward smoothly.

Giesen reported that a local housing committee met to discuss several topics related to housing projects in the community. It was reported as a good discussion. Once the notes are compiled, a formal report will be presented.

Giesen noted that 3 proposals for the Downtown Revitalization Grant were submitted by Becky Meyers, Eddie Swartzentruber, and Mason Weedman. Giesen will review and present the applications at the December meeting.

A prospect interested in leasing undeveloped ground in the industrial park for a solar energy generation project was discussed. More information is forth coming after a meeting with the developer.

The board was asked to review the housing rebate program digital marketing report for the past month. The board discussed thoughts regarding extending the program beyond 2023. No action was taken.

Giesen reported that he was invited to attend a panel discussion in Lime Springs, Iowa with the United States Secretary of Agriculture earlier in the month and to an address on rural development by the President of the United States in Northfield, Minnesota the day prior. He was able to connect with resources at both events to assist with possible grant and loan funding for local infrastructure projects including needs at the wastewater plant.

There was no other business.

Hearing no objections, Kingsley adjourned the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:01 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for December 7, 2023 at 7:30 AM at the Community Center.