

Harmony EDA Minutes

June 6, 2024
7:30 AM

Community Center
Council Room

Present: Kerry Kingsley, Steve Donney, Greg Schieber, Michael Himlie, and Stuart Morem

Also Present: Aaron Bishop, Amy Bishop, Erica Thilges, Allan Dahl, Beth Weedman, Sam Grabau, 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 May 2, 2024 meeting. Motion by Himlie, second by Schieber to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports & Claims

The loan portfolio was reviewed. All loans were current. There were no claims for payment.

Semi Annual Development Agreement Compliance Review

The board reviewed the schedule of development agreements. All active agreements were in compliance. Giesen reviewed the status of the Bishop agreement covering their downtown revitalization grant, including the progress updates provided in 2023. The Bishops were present to give an additional progress report and projected project timelines. While tuck pointing funded by the downtown revitalization program was completed about one year ago, subsequent project elements were delayed. The board discussed ensuring progress was made so that the space could be filled with an active business. Consensus of the board was for staff work with the Bishops over the next several months to create goals for the renovation project and report back to the board at the next agreement compliance review in December.

Comprehensive Plan: Review Development Goals

The board discussed development opportunities and strategies at length. Himlie suggested several possible project ideas including signage on 1st Ave SW for the in town route of the new bike trail, extending 1st Ave NW to connect to the trailhead parking lot, and improving pedestrian safety along Main Ave downtown. Morem asked if the board was able to strategically purchase uninhabitable homes with the intention of demolishing and either rebuilding a home to or sell the lot for home development. There was also discussion about various properties where the board saw opportunities for projects. Giesen will add the projects discussed to the board's list of priorities, discuss pedestrian safety with MnDOT, and develop a project scope for home redevelopment to discuss further.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Erica Thilges introduced Beth Weedman as the new chamber director. She is working part time, year round, and scheduled for 20 hours per week. The board welcomed Weedman. Thilges noted that to ensure the best use of paid staff time, board members will be covering attendance at various meetings including EDA meetings. In addition,

with a part time director staffing at the visitors center will be dependent on the director's schedule and volunteer capacity. There are a number of volunteers willing to help but there are not enough volunteers to cover all the schedule openings.

Planning for the 4th of July festivities is making great progress, the chamber is planning for its 2nd annual golf tournament fundraiser, and the first back alley jam is scheduled for June 20th.

Amy Bishop presented the current financials and the board reviewed. There were no questions.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen noted that today's meeting marked the 30th anniversary of the Harmony Economic Development Authority. It was established June 7, 1994. He thanked the board for being able to serve the board the past 15 years.

Giesen reported that the bike trail project construction was underway from the cave road to the southern city limit. The groundbreaking event on May 3 had nearly 50 people in attendance. The second phase of construction is still planned for bidding in late June or July.

The board discussed next steps with the new home rebate digital marketing effort. It was noted that the current agreement to provide digital marketing ends in July. The board agreed that while a good effort, the program might be casting too wide of a net for the opportunities available. A more limited effort, perhaps seasonally advertising the program, may be best. The board will discuss further at the next meeting.

Giesen reported that the city engineer would be able to update the cost estimates for all needed industrial park infrastructure for about \$300-\$500 and he suspects that pricing today will be much higher than when the current estimates were assembled in 2020. Consensus of the board was to look at alternative methods of pricing the industrial park properties including only selling/marketing currently improved property.

Giesen advised that the Fillmore County Assessor has determined that the economic development exemption for property taxes on three parcels in the industrial park have expired. The board will need to budget property taxes due for those parcels starting in 2025.

Because it would otherwise fall on the 4th of July holiday, consensus of the board was to move the regularly scheduled July meeting to July 11.

There was no other business.

Hearing no objections, Kingsley adjourned the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:10 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 11, 2024 at 7:30 AM at the Community Center.