

Harmony EDA Minutes

July 11, 2024
7:30 AM

Community Center
Council Room

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

Also Present: Erica Thilges, Allan Dahl, Becky Jones, Cyndi Ofstedal, 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 June 6, 2024 meeting. Motion by Himlie, second by Kingsley to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports & Claims

There were no claims for payment. Giesen reported that the loan schedule was not available yet, but he would forward it as soon as it was received. No issues were anticipated.

Digital Marketing New Home Rebate – Next Steps

Becky Jones was present to give the final report on the digital marketing effort to promote the new home rebate program. This advertising program is scheduled to end this month. Jones reviewed the overall efforts and results. Of the approved \$500 ad budget, \$475 was spent. Facebook and Instagram ads were purchased and reached anywhere between 1,800 and 25,000 viewers depending on topic. Ads featuring the Amish community and community amenities were by far the most viewed. Ads featuring content about building or buying a home in Harmony saw minimal engagement. The board discussed next steps. It was agreed that buying digital ads was very impactful, especially around community amenities/Harmony brand awareness. It was noted that the chamber does not currently purchase digital ads and it was suggested that perhaps in the future marketing funds for such ad purchases could be done in conjunction with the chamber's efforts. Consensus of the board was that the marketing efforts yielded good information and supports further ad purchases in the future, but for now the board would not extend the program. It was agreed to continue the discussion.

Home Redevelopment Project Concept

The board discussed a possible property redevelopment program per the discussion at the previous meeting. Giesen reviewed a memo giving an overview of several ideas. Consensus of the board revolved around the idea of creating a program that would provide a carrot for seriously dilapidated properties to sell the property to the EDA, the EDA would then demolish the property or somehow remedy the blight, and then resell the property requiring a new home/business be constructed on it when possible. It was suggested that this program would be reserved for the property owners that did not have the capacity to remedy fixes on their own, where such a program might expedite clean up or resale, or avoid future ordinance violations or future vacant properties. The board identified the undesignated funds from the payoff of the Hammel House development agreement as a possible source of funding for the program. The board asked if there was a list of properties that might be qualified for such a program. Grabau reviewed a few

properties that were on a city nuisance ordinance violation list. To the board's surprise, Grabau reported that most owners on the violation list were in process of resolving issues on their own. It was suggested that perhaps this program may not be as needed as thought, but further discussion and investigation was warranted. Grabau and Giesen will compile a list of nuisance properties along with a status report and additional information for a possible program for further discussion.

Schieber and Morem suggested the board take a tour of the city either individually or as a group to review the condition of properties and brainstorm projects in general.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Erica Thilges was present to give the chamber report. Recent events including the 4th of July celebration and Back Alley Jam went very well. This year's Customer Appreciation Night will be the last hosted by the chamber due to cost and realignment of events hosted by the chamber. The board reviewed the chamber financials, there were no questions.

Thilges presented a request for the board to consider participating in a purchase of professionally edited photos of local events, streetscapes, seasonal scenery, and the like. The total cost of the project is \$4,800 and will take approximately 1 year to fully complete in order to capture seasonal footage and editing. The photos and drone footage would be available for free use by any members of the community for either own digital and print marketing needs. The chamber will approach other local organizations to participate in the cost. The board discussed. Kingsley was concerned about actual usage and the lifespan of such photos. Schieber suggested that a collaborative approach was more economical for such content that is needed by many. Grabau confirmed that the board's marketing budget had \$3,160 remaining for 2024. The chamber's contribution would be organizing and managing the project. Motion by Kingsley, second by Himlie to contribute \$2,400 contingent upon other organizations funding the remaining project cost. Motion carried unanimously.

Kingsley thanked Thilges for her volunteer work assisting the chamber the past several months, especially when there was a vacancy in the director position.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen gave a report on prospects. He noted several loan applications in process. He was also working with several businesses on various projects.

Giesen reported that he and Schieber have been assisting the DNR in finalizing fence and field drive requests for the bike trail project. Phase I construction of the trail continues but has been slowed by rain, no new news on bidding for Phase II construction.

There was no other business.

Hearing no objections, Kingsley adjourned the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:20 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 1, 2024 at 7:30 AM at the Community Center.