

ST. CLAIR COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

February 18, 2021

Members Present:

Ken Sharkey, Chairman
Robert Allen
Matt Smallheer
Robert Trentman
Rick Vernier

Members Excused:

Jerry Dinges, Assistant Chairman
Marty Crawford

Staff Present:

Rick Stubblefield, Director
Jennifer Little, Executive Assistant

Others Present:

None

Call to Order:

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Governor's Executive order issued March 23rd, 2020 which closed County buildings to the public, the Economic Development Committee Meeting was held via conference call. Chairman Ken Sharkey called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. and took roll call.

Due to the nature of the meeting, Rick Stubblefield asked each member the following: "Do we have your authorization to sign your name electronically if needed?"

Response:

Chairman Ken Sharkey – yes
Robert Allen – yes
Matt Smallheer – yes
Robert Trentman – yes
Rick Vernier – yes

Approval of the December 17, 2020 Committee Minutes (action required):

Chairman Sharkey called for action on the December 17, 2020 Committee minutes. Mr. Allen made the motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Vernier. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business (Director's Report):

Rick Stubblefield stated he has been assisting an environmental company that is working with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to move some of their operations from Missouri to a section of ground on Coulter Road in Dupu. The realtor told them it was part of the Enterprise Zone however it is not. He believes they

still intend to move approximately 15 employees from their Missouri operation and add them to the 25 employees at their existing operation.

Mr. Stubblefield informed members Workforce Development is still in need of participants. The program has several grants for apprenticeships and short-term credentialing as well as emergency grants for dislocated workers. The program is struggling to find people to participate. Mr. Stubblefield expressed LIHEAP continues to have the same problem hiring staff despite the high unemployment rate. Chairman Sharkey asked about the minimum requirements for the LIHEAP position. Mr. Stubblefield responded a high school diploma. He added the positions are intake positions. Chairman Sharkey asked if it was interviewing clients and completing forms. Mr. Stubblefield responded much of the job is data entry. He added LIHEAP is looking to add 2-3 temporary staff; there will be one full-time, permanent position that will need to be filled as well. Mr. Stubblefield stated there are many employers in manufacturing and healthcare that are in great need of employees. He added Workforce Development has begun to work directly with employers to train people instead of them going through traditional schooling. The program recently finished up a cohort of medical assistants with Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation; 9 individuals completed the 18-month apprenticeship program. The program contracted with Lewis & Clark; Workforce Development reimbursed 50% of participants' hourly wage while they were on the floor completing their practical training. Mr. Stubblefield recently had a discussion with Memorial/BJC in regard to developing a similar program for their lab employees. It is anticipated there will be 100 apprenticeships enrolled by the beginning of March. Mr. Stubblefield expressed jobs such as Terra Source pay well, around \$28 per hour.

Mr. Stubblefield stated St. Clair County is set to receive additional funds from the Department of Treasury. The funds are similar to those received for Community Services. In discussions with the Chairman, it was decided funds will focus on rental assistance. Mr. Stubblefield expressed landlords have been left out of previous assistance programs as they have been at the mercy of tenants to apply for assistance. If a tenant did not apply, the landlord could not apply directly. With the new program, landlords will be able to apply directly. He noted the program will require the tenant to provide required documents however the program gives landlords some control. Mr. Stubblefield announced the County will partner with IHDA on the program. The allocation for St. Clair County is approximately \$7.5 million; 75% must be spent by the end of September. He explained if an agency does not expend their allocation, the funds will be captured and redistributed. Mr. Stubblefield noted IGD does not have the existing infrastructure in regards to staff or technology to develop a system that would move funds that quickly; IHDA is already set up. He stressed not expending funds and having them redistributed would be a disservice to St. Clair County residents. The goal is to have everything in place for landlords one month in advance of the program opening. The program is expected to open in April.

New Business (Airport Director's Report):

Bryan Johnson was unable to attend.

Other Comments:

None

Adjournment:

There were no additional comments or questions from the Committee. Chairman Sharkey asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Trentman so moved and it was seconded by Mr. Smalheer. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously and the Committee adjourned at 5:13 p.m.