

ST. CLAIR COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2021

Members Present:

Ken Sharkey, Chairman
Jerry Dinges, Assistant Chairman
Robert Allen
Marty Crawford
Matt Smallheer
Robert Trentman
Rick Vernier

Members Excused:

Staff Present:

Rick Stubblefield, Director
Jennifer Little, Executive Assistant

Others Present:

Bryan Johnson, Airport Director
Kimberly Huth, Military Affairs Director
May Brown, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 805

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 5:00 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
Jerry Dinges – yes
Robert Allen – yes
Marty Crawford – yes
Matt Smallheer – yes
Robert Trentman – yes
Rick Vernier – yes

Approval of the February 18, 2021 Committee Minutes (action required):

Chairman Sharkey called for action on the February 18, 2021 Committee minutes. Mr. Vernier made the motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Smallheer. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business (Director's Report):

Rick Stubblefield stated he has been submitting locations to a food processing company that has requested information through a site selector. St. Clair County has two locations identified: one in unincorporated St. Clair County with an East St. Louis address. He noted it is unfortunately right outside of the Enterprise Zone. The second location is in Sauget. He is working with DCEO and Intersect Illinois on the project. Mr. Stubblefield stated he is working with Bryan Johnson regarding another company that has requested information. He explained the company frames themselves as an aerospace company that makes components for the aerospace industry. The submittal is due next Tuesday. Mr. Stubblefield is also working with DCEO and Intersect Illinois on the project as well.

Mr. Stubblefield stated he has been approached by a developer interested in the land at Frank Scott Parkway and Sullivan Drive on the Northwest corner. The company intends to develop a luxury apartment complex at the location. It is intended to be a higher-end complex with pools and a gym. The company has an existing complex in O'Fallon, Missouri as well.

Mr. Stubblefield informed members the upcoming rental assistance program will be geared towards landlords. IHDA will assist with administering the program as they have the capacity to handle the volume in an efficient timeframe. Landlords will apply on behalf of the tenant; the tenant will receive an email to provide their documentation. The program will pay up to twelve months of arrearage and up to three months moving forward for a conceivable total of fifteen months of assistance.

Chairman Sharkey stated the apartment development on Sullivan Drive will be a nice development however questioned if there was an issue with the sewers at the location. Mr. Stubblefield responded he recalls there being an issue a few years ago prior to him being with Economic Development. He is hopeful the interest in the area will spur any repairs that need to be made.

There were no further comments or questions.

New Business (Airport Director's Report):

Bryan Johnson stated about a month ago he initiated development of what is called a Small Community Air Service Development grant. It is an opportunity for funding to pursue an existing or additional air carrier into MidAmerica St. Louis. It was submitted to the DOT; he expects to hear something back later this summer. The grant would be around \$500,000.

Mr. Johnson informed members Allegiant will now fly to Charleston, South Carolina beginning May 28th. Flights will be on Mondays and Fridays.

Mr. Johnson stated the airport schedule is up nearly 43% for tracked flights this year versus 2019 (pre-COVID) for June, July, and August. He expressed the significance of that for the airport as well as St. Clair County. It gives the airport more options and frequency which increase reliability and confidence in the traveler. It helps propel the airport forward as to why they are building out Phase Two of the terminal building.

Mr. Johnson stated Phase Two is starting; earth movers have been digging out what will be the second portion of the terminal. He noted the timing of the project will get additional support from the FAA for Phase Three and Four. He will know in the next few months.

Mr. Johnson stated the airport is the beneficiary of CRRSAA grant. The airport will be looking to utilize those funds for specific programs.

There were no comments or questions.

New Business (Military Affairs Director Comments):

Kimberly Huth stated Representative Greenwood introduced House Bill 2776 which introduces an exception to policy to military family members when moving to the area so they do not have to transfer their license or apply for an Illinois license as long as they are stationed here. Instead of getting an expedited Illinois license, military family members would be able operate under their state's license as long as they are in good standing. A bill was passed in 2020 which moved the needle in regard to DoD standards, however it was not enough. She noted it was one reason the area did not warrant a site visit for Space Command. Ms. Huth expressed there are groups that oppose bringing other talent into the area by accepting any other state's licenses. She explained in 2020 only 276 exceptions were applied for from Scott AFB; out of the 276 over 33% of them were nurses. Illinois is one of only nine states that does not have a nursing compact in which the states recognize other state's licenses. Licenses other than nursing would be reviewed by Springfield to ensure they are in good standing. She expressed there is pushback from other elected officials and community leaders. Ms. Huth reiterated only 276 individuals in the entire state of Illinois applied for an exception in 2020.

Ms. Huth is working with the airport director to hold a quarterly executive level meeting between Chairman Kern and the Wing Commander.

Rick Stubblefield discussed the opposition to the licensing exception from another Economic Development group in the area. He expressed his appreciation for the work Ms. Huth is doing and noted she has a lot of support. Ms. Huth responded this group can help battle the misinformation that military families are taking community jobs. She stressed that is not the case.

Chairman Sharkey asked if this will be the first quarterly meeting with the base post-pandemic. Ms. Huth responded it will be her first meeting and she is unsure if one had been held the entire year.

Mr. Vernier asked what the committee can do in response to push back from another Economic Development group. Ms. Huth responded a witness slip supporting the Bill can be submitted. She has received letters of support from mayors across the metro-area and has partnered with Greater St. Louis for support as well. Ms. Huth noted she has coordinated with the 4 Star Generals on Scott AFB and the Wing Commander as well. Her focus is to bring more business and initiative to Scott AFB.

There were no further comments or questions.

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. Dinges. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously and the Committee adjourned at 5:20 p.m.