

ST. CLAIR COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes September 16, 2021

Members Present:

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

Members Excused:

Robert Allen
Matt Smallheer

Staff Present:

Rick Stubblefield, Director
Jennifer Little, Executive Assistant

Others Present:

Bryan Johnson, MidAmerica Airport Director
Kimberly Huth, Military Affairs Director

Call to Order:

Chairman Sharkey called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and took roll call. Attendees rose and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment Regarding the Agenda:

Chairman Sharkey asked if anyone present had a question or comment regarding the agenda. There were none.

Approval of the August 19, 2021 Committee Minutes (action required):

Chairman Sharkey called for action on the August 19, 2021 Committee minutes. Mr. Dinges made the motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Trentman. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business:

Rick Stubblefield informed members the PACE ordinance is not yet complete as details are still being worked out. He tabled the item for next month.

Mr. Stubblefield stated Chairman Kern has signed a letter of support for Ed Weilbacher with Heartlands Conservancy to designate the Kaskaskia as a marine highway; the designation would allow Mr. Weilbacher to apply for additional grants. He explained the major goal of MARAD's Marine Highway Program is to expand the use of America's navigable water and to promote using waterways to transport goods and provide services.

New Business (Director's Report):

Rick Stubblefield stated work continues with the EDA for additional funding for the aerospace project at Boeing.

Mr. Stubblefield stated NASCAR has announced their race at World Wide Technology Raceway on June 5th, 2022. The race will be a weekend-long event that will attract and bring in large numbers of people and revenue. He noted the plans for the race moved quickly as the first meeting for the event was held this past July. Chairman Sharkey asked if the race will replace the Pocono race. Mr. Stubblefield responded he was unsure.

Mr. Stubblefield informed members they should have received an invitation via email to the Boeing announcement tomorrow at MidAmerica Airport regarding the company's future plans and their expansion there. He invited members to attend and noted the RSVP request in the email.

There were no comments or questions.

New Business (MidAmerica Airport Director's Report):

Bryan Johnson noted the significance the regional development of MidAmerica St. Louis Airport in tandem with Scott Air Force Base has for Belleville, St. Clair County, and Southern Illinois and expressed the valuable tool that has become. The announcement tomorrow will be market, if not aviation, history and will have a significant impact on the future. He encouraged everyone to attend the event and noted parking will be free.

Mr. Johnson stated the Illinois Department of Aeronautics under the Department of Transportation has undertaken an Economic Impact study of all airports in the state of Illinois; the study is almost ready for publication. The last study was completed in 2015. He noted some states are mandated to complete these studies every two years due to the amount of relevant information the studies provide not only to EDC but for pushing new projects. Mr. Johnson stated once the study is published, he will provide documents and brochures to be placed in various locations.

Mr. Johnson informed members North Bay is still working on preliminary plans for expansion; they are looking to expand 30-40,000 square feet. He anticipates he will have a letter of intent in the coming weeks. Chairman Sharkey asked if they were looking to double in size. Mr. Johnson responded yes; they plan to swing ninety degrees towards the road; they will also go up a second level. Chairman Sharkey asked when construction will begin. Mr. Johnson responded in approximately six months, spring of 2022.

There were no further comments or questions.

New Business (Military Affairs Director Comments):

Kimberly Huth informed members the Air Force released the 2021 Support to Military Families study. The Department of Defense is starting to use the information gathered from the study for future basing decisions or moving missions from bases. She reminded members Scott Air Force base was not eligible for a site visit in 2019 for the Space Command bid due to license reciprocity and support to education for military families. Mrs. Huth explained there are two sections of education: graduation rates and student learning rates including mandatory testing for students grades 3 – 8. She explained Scott Air Force Base is an "exceptional family member" base. Families with disabled members can receive special care; many of those students do not receive a diploma which can lower the area's graduation rate; however Mrs. Huth expressed that may be able to be addressed this year increasing that score. She also discussed license reciprocity; the governor signed the bill this past May; that information was not included in the original assessment. Mrs. Huth noted there is still work to do and the region remains in the yellow.

Mrs. Huth reminded members the 932nd Airlift Wing is retiring the C-40 which currently transports Congressmen and Senators as the airplanes do not have "comms". She explained it would require the Secretary of Defense to allocate funds to update the planes. She recently spoke with Senator Tammy Duckworth's and Senator Dick Durbin's office and expressed they are engaged in getting those planes here.

Mrs. Huth stated there is a follow-up to Chairman Kern's working group scheduled for October 19th regarding the study. She invited members to attend and listen in and noted the value of hearing what the Air Force and Department of Defense is looking for when deciding missions.

Mrs. Huth stated she will be attending the Air Force Association on Sunday.

Mrs. Huth stated she recently met with Colonel Robinson; the Air Force will be scoring Scott Air Force Base on energy resiliency. In 2024, the Air Force will begin to use the resiliency score in the Support to Military Families study. Mrs. Huth believes Scott Air Force Base is in a good position for that.

Mrs. Huth stated Bryan Johnson is going to host Colonel Robinson for a tour of MidAmerica Airport. Colonel Robinson is addressing the global response of Scott Air Force Base and adjusting how to respond to future and global threats; he does not see MidAmerica as a separate entity and refers to the airfield at MidAmerica as the "long runway". Bryan Johnson added pilots can roll between both airfields easily; the message is important for Southern Illinois as it reflects the value of both assets. He explained all airports have a three-letter identifier; both Scott Air Force Base and MidAmerica share the same identifier; they are looking to utilize that in future marketing.

Mrs. Huth informed members she will be meeting with the Association of Defense Communities in November. ADC is also concerned with the Air Force study; their Board is planning to address on a national level the unfairness of the Air Force and Department of Defense assessments and what they are looking at. Rick Stubblefield reiterated that has been a discussion on his recent calls with ADC as well.

Rick Stubblefield stated he believed there was a partnership with a company and Scott Air Force Base regarding energy resilience in the past. Mrs. Huth responded she believed it was with Ameren. Mr. Johnson stated there was an agreement with a company when he first came on however it focused more on battery and not sustainable energy and technology. He expressed a huge solar field is needed that can sustain Scott Air Force Base. Mrs. Huth noted the vital role communications out of Scott Air Force Base played in the Afghanistan mission.

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. Vernier so moved and it was seconded by Mr. Dinges. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously and the Committee adjourned at 5:17p.m.