**Mt. Pulaski Economic Development and Planning Board**

*The mission of the Mt. Pulaski Economic Development and Planning Board is to improve the quality of life and create a shared prosperity in our community by retaining, sustaining, and enhancing existing businesses and community organizations, attracting and developing new businesses, and improving and upgrading infrastructure.*

**Date: June 6, 2020**

**Meeting Location: 124 South Washington Street, Mt. Pulaski, IL 62548**

**Meeting type: Business meeting**

**Meeting Minutes**

**1) Call to order**

Tom Martin called to order the regular meeting of the Mt. Pulaski Economic Development and Planning Board at 9:01am on June 6th, 2020 at the Courthouse Foundation Office.

**2) Roll call**

Lorah Hoe conducted roll call. The following persons were present: Tom Martin, Deron Powell, Hillary Cherry, Andrew Meister, and Jim Birge. Lorah Hoe (Administrative Aide). Matt Bobell (city council representative).

Guests: Michelle Hagenbuch, David Meister, Gene Schoth, Bill Thomas, Allen Schahl, and Sue Schaffenacker

Absent: Tyler White, Erin Wyss and Matt Bobell (city council representative)

**3) Introduction of guests**

**Michelle Hagenbuch** talked to the EDPB in order to give feedback on the Covid-19 Relief Grant program. She also explained how her business is adjusting due to the pandemic. Her daycare used to have 16 maximum, but she can watch 10 maximum now that the guidelines have changed. She does not know if or when the number may raise up. She has had to turn families away and there is a new waiting list. All of her families are paying privately, and she is not expecting state funding at this time. She is having to look at new ways to do her business as she adjusts due to Covid-19. Her daycare business was unable to apply for unemployment or other forms of aid because it would disrupt their licensing and delay becoming relicensed once the state reopens. The $5,500.00 total that her business was awarded by the EDPB has helped her to pay bills in this uncertain time.

**David Meister** talked about the different avenues that he pursued for the Old Brickyard Grill and Pub to get funding for his business. The $10,000 from the EDPB has helped him to pay bills until other aid became available to him. Curbside pickup has been sustaining the business, but ultimately the operations of the business has been cut in half. Insurance companies have been giving his business some brakes during this time. The funds from the EDPB have been flexible and have allowed David to make loan payments that federal funds would not have allowed him to do. In June restaurants will be able to open at a 25% capacity. He has applied for the SBA loan for $25,000.00 but it has not been distributed yet. Outdoor dining will be an opportunity for him to try seating limited amounts of people with reservations. This brings up issues of needing additional staff to act as hosts who ask customers medical questions and monitor the outdoor seating area. David is not yet willing to have street dining on the weekend.

**Gene Schoth** talked about his Countryside Rental business. At this time, he is unable to generate revenue but still has operational expenses such as loan payments. His business is unable to have a break from the insurance because he must deal with transporting people with alcohol present. If he were to not pay the insurance, he would lose his coverage and become delayed in being able to reopen his business. He is working with event planners to possibly transport minimal amounts of people. But he is waiting to hear back from his attorney about when to start back up. If people are willing to take the risk, he can have people sign a consent form or release to be transported for social events. The $2,500.00 that he was awarded in the first round of Covid-19 Relief allowed him to pay bills for that 30 day period and was much appreciated.

**Bill Thomas** was here to help evaluate the donation to the Visitor’s Center at the Township Historical Museum in Mt. Pulaski. This visitor’s center is a part of the Logan County Tourism efforts to highlight Elkhart, Atlanta, Lincoln, and Mount Pulaski as tourist attractions. The board discussed if the EDPB got what they had paid for with their $2,000.00 donation. Bill has been working with Sue from the Mount Pulaski Township Historical Museum on the numbers from the Visitor’s Center. In 2019 there were 770 visitors; 400 from Christmas on Vinegar Hill event and the remaining 370 are the targeted group. They assume that the 770 visitors are only 80% of the total visitors to the town. The board needs to know how many days the museum has been open for. The utilities for the building are $4,500 a year. The board wanted to know how many visitors there were in 2018 compared to 2019. The museum needs volunteers to have the museum open for more days of the year. The museums ability to stay open for more hours will affect the number of visitors. The board discussed if the $2,000.00 was helpful to the museum and if the funds were doing what they were meant to do. The board also discussed the need to identify additional streams of revenue.

The board also discussed how data from 2020 will be skewed due to Covid-19. Data from 2021 will allow the board to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts. Overall, the Visitor’s Center followed all requirements and the funds were used to pay utility costs and were not waisted. The board wanted to know how our Visitor’s Center compared to the other Visitor’s Centers in Atlanta, Lincoln, and Elkhart.

Bill than discussed Atlanta’s yearly visitors, which is estimated to be 12,000 a year. This number comes from specific events in Atlanta such as baseball tournaments and other sporting events. Lorah will get the algorithm that Atlanta uses to calculate this number. The Atlanta athletic association gives coaches marketing information to increase the possibility of people from outside of town visiting businesses while in Atlanta for sporting events. Lorah will add Strategy of country visitors to the July agenda. McVickers will be the contact for the Mt. Pulaski athletic association. Local businesses need to be in the loop of when athletic events are happening in town so that they may change their business hours to capture more people that are visiting the town. The EDPB will start a coordinated effort with the business association, athletic association, and the courthouse in order to capture visitor’s attention to the assets of our community.

**Allen Schahl** turned in an application for the historical museum and answered some questions about the Visitor’s Center. The board asked Allen to provide some additional information on bids that are being collected for the repair of the building’s exterior wall. Membership fees generate about $1,500.00 in yearly income. There are fund raising opportunities and donations that add more income for the facility. Yearly expenses are about $8,000.00 to $9,000.00. The board suggested that John Wyss evaluate that electrical system to look for savings in the utility bill.

**Sue Schaffenacker** from the Visitor’s Center explained where most of the 770 visitors come from. When visitor’s come to the courthouse, they are then directed to the Visitor’s Center. In 2019 there were 17 from out of state, one from Canada, and the rest were from Illinois, but overall, 2019 was a slower year. The Fall Festival weekend and Christmas on Vinegar Hill are typically their busiest times of the year. Their hours are 12 to 4 Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Last year they were open every day except for one. There are 100 members and 15 volunteers. The museum operates on a $10,000.00 a year budget. The back wall of the museum needs about $15,000.00 in repairs and the museum has started a fund for this project. A structural engineer is needed to know the extent of damage. The museum had planned a 25 year celebration in April but it was cancelled due to Covid-19. The board wanted to know if it is possible for the museum to stay open for longer hours for the summer season and if an intern could make that possible. The board wanted data from the year 2018 to compare to 2019. Lorah will add the Museum to the July agenda to continue the discussion on opening for additional hours.

**4) Approval of April 15th, May 2nd, May 16th, and May 27th Minutes**

Minutes of the April 15th, May 2nd, May 16th, and May 27th meeting were presented by Lorah Hoe. **Deron Powell motioned to approve all meeting minutes, seconded by Hillary Cherry, all in favor, and motion passed.**

**5) Treasurer’s Report**

Please see attached report. **Hillary Cherry motioned to approve the treasurer’s report, seconded by Andrew Meister, all in favor, and motion passed.**

No bills to present at this time. Land of Lincoln CEO program was paid $1,000.00 for the second installment of the three-part donation. This program has benefited many students within our community, including Ruthie Ruhl. Tom will ask Ruthie Ruhl to speak with the EDPB about her experience with the Land of Lincoln CEO Program.

**Old Business**

**6) Desired Outcomes**

Project Updates

Retain, sustain, and enhance our existing businesses and community organizations

* Grant Program Updates; The Covid-19 Relief Grant program has helped businesses stay open due to our simplified grant process. The $60,000.00 came from the Windfarm donation not the Business District Tax funds. Josh Stewart thanked the EDPB with a Facebook post stating what a big difference this program has made to businesses in town. Bobbie Taylor had also reached out to let a board member know what a big difference the grant has made for her business.

1. **Farmer’s Family Restaurant** for $5,000.00 for the second round of Covid-19 Relief Grants. **Deron Powell made a motion to approve $5,000.00 from the community fund for emergency COVID-19 relief, 2nd by Andrew Meister. Roll Call Vote: Tom Martin- Yea, Andrew Meister- Yea, Hillary Cherry-Yea, Deron Powell-Yea, Jim Birge-Yea, Erin Wyss-Absent, Tyler White-Absent. Motion Passes.**
2. **Gene Schoth** for $3,071.67 for the second round of Covid-19 Relief Grants. His business is not eligible for PPP or other programs so the EDPB is the only source of relief this far. **Deron Powell made a motion to approve $2,500.00 from the community fund for emergency COVID-19 relief, 2nd by Hillary Cherry. Roll Call Vote: Tom Martin- Yea, Andrew Meister- Yea, Hillary Cherry-Yea, Deron Powell-Yea, Jim Birge-Yea, Erin Wyss-Absent, Tyler White-Absent. Motion Passes.**
3. **Stewart’s Carpet Center** has not responded to our request for additional information.

The Business District Grant Program has a time sensitive grant for the **Phoenix Fire Department.** The fireworks show will come before the next grant review session. Last year the Phoenix Fire Department asked for $4,000.00 but this year they are only asking for $3,000.00. The EDPB takes pressure off local businesses to fund this event by giving the Fire Department a grant. **Deron Powell made a motion to grant $3,000.00 to the Phoenix Fire Department from the Business District Funds, seconded by Andrew Meister.** **Roll Call Vote: Tom Martin- Yea, Andrew Meister-Yea, Hillary Cherry-Yea, Deron Powell-Yea, Jim Birge-Yea, Erin Wyss-Absent, and Tyler White-Absent. Motion Passes.**

Kelly Aylesworth is expected to turn in a new application for the 2nd quarter grant review In July. Debra May has turned in an additional bid for her grant and will be reviewed in July.

* Shopping Center Update; The contract has been signed and the building is being cleared out. The EDPB has allocated $45,000.00 for this project and needs a specified list of what it will pay for.

Attract, and develop new business

* Community Grocery Store; The opening date is set for June 22nd, with a grand opening on June 26th. Plumbing and health inspections are done. Inventory will be brought in next week.
* Day Care Steering Committee; The next meeting is scheduled for June 20th. Deron will reach out to YMCA to determine interest in expanding to Mount Pulaski.
* Food Hub Update; The pay for both project managers, Jeff Hake and Kyle Reed, is outcome based. The Executive board recommended a 75% payment to the project managers because less was accomplished this past month.

More producers and Vonderleith have joined in on the project. Due to Covid-19 the project deadlines may get pushed back. Zion is on board with the Food Hub as well.

* Stahl’s Building Update; Shaun Tyson is interested in the building outside of town. He is gathering meat producers together for the food hub which will sell local meat and produce. He has put together a Facebook page called Shop Illinois Farms and is collecting a network of producers. This page is also connecting local producers with individual buyers from all over the state of Illinois.

Improve and upgrade infrastructure

* Town Square Revitalization; DECO- Fast Track program is on pause, with the deadline being June 15th. Farnsworth completed the application for DECO at a cost of $3,500.00, half from the Community Funds and half from the Business District Account.

Rebuild Illinois Program is Due on June 30th. No matching of funds is required for this program but there are additional points for matching funds. The maximum is $5 million and the minimum is $250,000.00. The program requires an explanation of the impact that the program would have on the community. The impact would include creation of jobs, community need for the project, community support for this project, and the readiness of the project to begin. Bill will help complete the application for the Rebuild Illinois Program.

Dennis Keif completed the application for CEDS at a cost of $3,100.00 from the Community Funds. The EDA is able to give us a loan for $2.5 million with a 50% match of local funds.

Next meeting is June 13th.

* Building Demolition Report; No report at this time.

**New Business**

**7) Market On The Hill Discussion.** The project proposed was from the Market On The Hill- Health Initiative Committee to subsidize local produce by 20% for a limited time. The project total is $10,000.00. The board discussed how this project did not fit the parameters of the Business District Grant or the Community Grant Programs. This project would benefit the community as a whole and provide some relief in purchasing discounted, local produce. Therefore a donation seemed more appropriate than a grant. The Abraham Lincoln Memorial Hospital is not able to help provide funding for Market On The Hill project, but the Economic Development Planning Board is able to fund this project and fill this need of affordable, healthy food for our community. Once Market On The Hill is able to accept SNAP as a form of payment, the EDPB could help match those funds in the future, as this is what the Abraham Lincoln Memorial Hospital does at the Farmers Market in Lincoln. The board discussed starting out with a $5,000.00 donation with the stipulation that the Economic Development Planning Board will get advertisement for their efforts in helping the community. The board discussed how to get the word out about this discount program to our community. Press coverage for the discount program and post cards will be sent out to the community informing them of the opening of Market On The Hill and the promotion going on for local produce. This will help promote Market On The Hill, healthy living initiatives, helping customers, as well as local sellers. **Andrew Meister made a motion to grant the first initial donation of $5,000.00 to Market On The Hill for the Health Initiative Committee Healthy Food Promotional Project, with a promotional plan and press release, 2nd by Deron Powel. Roll Call Vote: Tom Martin- Yea, Andrew Meister-Yea, Hillary Cherry-Yea, Deron Powell-Yea, Jim Birge-Yea, Erin Wyss-Absent, and Tyler White-Absent. Motion Passes.**

**Second Friday’s-** Starting June 12th Second Friday’s on the square will start for this year. They will follow the guidelines set by the Farmer’s Markets. Social distancing and Masks will be encouraged but not mandatory.

**Chairman’s Report;**

**Next meeting for COVID-19** will be set once the board has heard back from Dennis Stewart and any other applicants.

**4th of July Celebration**- The board discussed having entertainment uptown to draw customers to the restaurants uptown. The celebration will be held before the fireworks show at sundown and will be a family friendly environment.

**Slate of Officers in July-** The Election will be held next month. Deron Powell- President, Tyler White- Vice President, Jim Birge- Treasurer, and Hillary Cherry- Secretary.

**Adjournment**

**Deron Powell made a motion to adjourn at 10:34am, seconded by Hillary Cherry, all in favor and motion passed.**