**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: July 8, 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 6:00pm on July 8th, 2020 at the Courthouse Foundation Office.

**2) Roll call**

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

Guests: Renee Martin, Ryan McVickers, Bill Thomas, Doug Johnson, Jessie (Enel Representative) Victor and Bishap Patel from BP Station.

Absent: Hillary Cherry, and Erin Wyss

**3) Introduction of guests**

**Renee Martin** was in attendance to discuss a commercial proposal created by the marketing committee.

**Ryan McVickers** was in attendance to discuss a coordinated effort between the Athletic Association, Business Association, Courthouse Foundation, and the Economic Development Planning Board to inform visiting sports teams of the businesses and attractions here in Mount Pulaski.

**Bill Thomas** was in attendance in support of the BP Station Project Grant. He was also in attendance to help plan the coordinated effort between the Athletic Association, Business Association, Courthouse Foundation, and the Economic Development Planning Board to generate more tourism in Mount Pulaski.

**Doug Johnson** was in attendance to give an update on the status of the New Hardware Store Project (Shopping Center Update).

**Jessie Puckett** from Enel had spent the day in Mount Pulaski meeting locals, touring the community, and learning about how the Community Funds have been spent. He spoke with the EDPB on how we can improve this project together. He wants to provide training within the community. Enel goal is to support and grow the economies in rural and smaller communities. They want to be used as a resource to share ideas through effective communication. The overall goal of this partnership is to improve on our community. More of their people will live within the community and work together to make this partnership even more successful. Enel has offered to donate hand sanitizer and masks to our community businesses and organizations if necessary.

**Victor and Bishap Patel** from BP Station Project we in attendance to introduce themselves and talk to the board about the updates they are doing to the BP Station to help create a better image for the community of Mount Pulaski.

**4) Approval of June 6th and June 17th Minutes**

Minutes of the June 6th and June 17th meetings were presented by Lorah Hoe. **Deron Powell motioned to approve all meeting minutes, seconded by Tyler White, all in favor, and motion passed.**

**5) Treasurer’s Report**

Please see attached report. **Jim Birge motioned to approve the treasurer’s report, seconded by Tyler White, all in favor, and motion passed.**

A summary of expenses incurred during 2018 and 2019 totaling $2,611.59 were presented by the Mount Pulaski Business Association for the 2nd Fridays on the Square events. In 2018 the Business Association was granted $4,000.00 from the Business District Funds to help cover expenses for these events. The Business Association has been instructed to turn in receipts for the 2020 2nd Friday’s on the Square events to receive the remaining $1,388.41. If their expenses do not exceed $1,388.41 for the 2020 2nd Friday Events, then the balance will be transferred back into the Business District Account to help fund other projects.

**Old Business**

**6) Desired Outcomes**

Project Updates

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

* Grant Program Updates; The Board discussed the quarterly grant review time frames of the current grant programs. The COVID-19 grants were an example of needing action in a timely manner and not being held to the quarterly review timeline. The board discussed if an organization should be able to have their grants reviewed on as needed basis versus a business having to wait for the quarterly grant reviews. Organizations like the Phoenix Fire Department, Hilltop Club or Christmas On Vinegar Hill tend to apply for grants in order to create community events. Without our funding capabilities these community events may not happen. Typically businesses apply for grants because that need funding for a specific project or an update to their business. During the restructuring of the grant program this was not a foreseen difference between businesses’ specific needs and organizations’ specific needs. The board discussed if a grant is turned in with extenuating circumstances, then the board will review them monthly, like the COVID-19 Relief Grants. The board can ask for more information from the organization or business applying for the grant and then review the additional information at the following monthly meeting.

Lorah will create a report of uncollected money appropriations from Business District Funds and Community Funds so that the board knows its spendable balance.

1. **The Mount Pulaski Historical Museum** is asking for $1,000.00 for the repair of the exterior brick wall. **Deron Powell made a motion to appropriate $1,000.00 from the Business District Fund, to the Mount Pulaski Historical Museum, for the repair of their exterior brick wall. Seconded by Tyler White. Roll Call Vote Tom Martin- Yea, Deron Powell-Yea, Tyler White-Yea, Andrew Meister-Yea, Jim Birge-Yea, Hillary Cherry-Absent, and Erin Wyss-Absent. Motion Passes.**
2. **Hilltop Club** is asking for $5,000.00 to fund the Fall Festival. The board discussed how in the past, businesses in town would donate to the Fall Festival but they may not be able to do so this year due to COVID-19. **Andrew Meister made a motion to appropriate $5,000.00 to the Hilltop Club, from the Business District fund, to cover the expenses from the Fall Festival. Seconded by Jim Birge. Roll Call Vote: Tom Martin-Yea, Deron Powell-Yea, Tyler White-Yea, Andrew Meister-Yea, Jim Birge-Yea, Hillary Cherry-Absent, and Erin Wyss-Absent. Motion Passes.**
3. **May and Burch Conservation** is asking for $5,000.00 to help replace exterior windows on the front of her building on the square. The board discussed how they have granted funds to replace windows in the past for businesses on the square and that these projects have contributed to the beautification of the square. The window replacement is necessary to update the building. **Jim Birge made motion to appropriate $3,500.00 to May and Burch Conservation, from the Community Fund, to replace the front window of the 106 South Washington Street building. Seconded by Deron Powell. Roll Call Vote: Tom Martin-Yea, Deron Powell-Yea, Tyler White-Yea, Andrew Meister-Yea, Jim Birge-Yea, Hillary Cherry-Absent, Erin Wyss-Absent. Motion Passes.**
4. **Guruji 62, LLC** is asking for $25,000.00 to help renovate the BP Station on Vine Street. The board discussed if there was something specific that hey can help with that would improve the exterior of the building. In the past the board had granted funds for exterior work to better the appearance of the community. The BP Station is an eyesore and the new owners are spending over $1000,000.00 of their own money to help better this building. **Tyler White made a motion to appropriate $10,000.00 to Guruji 62, LLC, from the Business District Fund, for exterior renovation to the BP Station Project. Seconded by Jim Birge. Roll Call Vote: Tom Martin-Yea, Deron Powell-Yea, Tyler White-Yea, Andrew Meister-Yea, Jim Birge-Yea, Hillary Cherry-Absent, and Erin Wyss-Absent. Motion Passes.**
5. **Bill and Judy Cavestani** are asking for $10,000.00 to help fund their roof replacement. The board discussed how the Cavestani’s received $6,000.00 last year from the City and EDPB to take care of their building. Their buildings are in great shape because they have always taken care of their properties. Originally, they asked for over $30,000.00 but resubmitted their grant and only asked for $10,000.00. **Tom Martin made a motion to appropriate $3,500.00 to Bill and Judy Cavestani, from the Business District Fund, for the replacement of their roof on 123-125 South Lafayette Street. Seconded by Deron Powell. Roll Call Vote: Tom Martin-Yea, Deron Powell-Yea, Tyler White-Yea, Andrew Meister-Yea, Jim Birge-Yea, Hillary Cherry-Absent, and Erin Wyss- Absent. Motion Passes.**
6. **D’Tails Dog Grooming** is asking for $7,000.00 to $8,000.00 to help repair the foundation of her building. The board discussed how repairing a building’s infrastructure was a part of what they hope to do for the community. The owners can not afford to fix these issues on their own, so they applied for this grant. **Tyler White made a motion to appropriate $3,500.00 to D’Tails Dog Grooming, from the Business District Fund, to help repair the foundation at 214 South Washington Street. Seconded by Jim Birge. Roll Call Vote: Tom Martin-Yea, Deron Powell-Yea, Tyler White-Yea, Andrew Meister-Yea, Jim Birge-Yea, Hillary Cherry-Absent, and Erin Wyss-Absent. Motion Passes.**

* Shopping Center Update; Doug has purchased the store and contractors are lined up to do demolition work, replace roof, remove asbestos, and remodel the interior of the store. TIF funds will pay for parking lot and new entrance. The change of location of his store leads to more traffic to his business as well as redevelopment of the area. The store will be double the size of his old store which will allow him to carry more items and expand his inventory. True Value is helping to make informed decisions about what to fill the store with. The effects of COVID-19 have given Johnson’s True Hardware more business than before. People are staying close to home and his business is doing well. He hopes to open his new store in January of 2021.

Originally, the Economic Development Planning Board had allotted up to $45,000.00 for the Johnson’s True Value Project from the Community Fund. The COVID-19 Relief Grants have taken $60,000.00 out of the Community Fund so the board discussed splitting the $45,000.00 commitment to Johnson’s True Value between the Business District Fund and the Community Fund. **Jim Birge made motion to appropriate a split of the original $45,000.00 between the Business District Funds ($22,500.00) and the Community Funds ($22,500.00). Seconded by Tyler White, roll call vote: Tom Martin-Yea, Deron Powell-Yea, Jim Birge-Yea, Tyler White-Yea, Andy Meister-Yea, Hillary Cherry- Absent, and Erin Wyss-Absent. Motion passes.**

Attract, and develop new business

* Community Grocery Store; Market On The Hill generated $23,000.00 in the 1st two weeks and 2 days. $980.00 of the $5,000.00 donation has been used this far to help subsidize local foods. Chocolate milk, bananas, and the deli have been popular. The second week sales leveled off to $1,200 to $1,500 a day. The store hopes to reach $340,000.00 a year to pay all of its bills. There will be a learning curve with this new store, but they are working with the community to meet their needs.
* Day Care Steering Committee; The committee is on hold due to COVID-19. The YMCA is our main lead on getting a community daycare to town because no local daycare will take the lead. For a corporate daycare to be an option, there has to be a private owner that is able to cover the startup costs. How we plan to start is small. We will begin with before and after school programs through the YMCA, but this has been stalled due to COVID-19.
* Food Hub Update; Jeff and Kyle are following contact leads. Kyle now sources directly to Voderleith. The Food Hub Executive Committee has not met yet for the previous month so no payment will be made to the project managers Kyle and Jeff.
* Stahl’s Building Update; John and Erin Wyss are interested in buying the two Stahl’s buildings uptown on the square. Shaun Tyson is going to have an appraisal done for the large Stahl’s building outside of town. Once the value of the store is known then he can move forward. There may be a grant request around $4,000.00 coming to help cover the cost of the appraisal. If Shaun were to buy this building he would turn it into a Food Hub which would further the local economy for food producers.

Improve and upgrade infrastructure

* Town Square Revitalization; Tom, Deron and Dave will present to city council on the 28th of July. They will bring the city council up to date on DECO’s Fast Track program application. The Fast Track timeline of review depends on the number of applicants. If we get the Fast Trach grant, we can use it as matching funds for the CEDS program grant. We are waiting to hear back from the CEDS program grant for presentation dates. The Committee will meet before the July 28th City Council meeting to prepare for the presentation. This presentation dose not represent a final draft of the Town Square Revitalization Project. Revisiting this project will help Tom, Deron, and Dave prepare for future presentations.
* Building Demolition Report; The owner of Sadie’s Place reached out to the EDPB because she is needing help with her building. The building will need about $40,000.00 in demolition to the back section. The board discussed the city buying the property, completing the demo, and then selling it. The board needs to find out what bank has the lean on the building to determine what the value of the building is. Once we know all the costs associated with the City buying this building, we can create a plan for where the funds will come from.

**New Business**

**Office Space**- The board discussed the need for office space updates. With the pandemic continuing on, the need to facilitate long distance meetings has become more apparent. Long distance meetings require things like a projector, camera, microphone, a conference phone, and a computer. A conference phone may be available to us via donation. Lorah, Jim and Tyler will meet to look for basic needs of a conference room/ office. The board will appropriate money at the next meeting once a budget has been submitted.

**7) BP Land Development Discussion- Bill Thomas**

Bill Thomas, Victor Patel and Bishop Patel came to speak with the EDPB about the BP Station Project. Bishop Patel is the owner of the new Atlanta gas station currently being built. The goal of this project is to update the store to meet today’s standards. Updates will include new imaging, new finished, new pumps, and new signs. The Parking lot will be updated, new coolers installed, a coffee bar and soda bar will be added as well. The Patels will be bringing a $120,000.00 to $150,000.00 investment into the store. They will work with the community by bringing more people to town while also increasing hours and hire more employees locally. The project should be completed by late July or Early August. Projections after the update include double the amount of gas sales and higher in-store sales due to capturing more traffic from the highway.

**8) Strategy for counting visitors to our community- Ryan McVickers**

Ryan McVickers, Renee Martin and Andrew Meister want to work together to figure out how to count the visitors to our town from athletics, history, and business sectors. Sports tourism can elevate our businesses, but the businesses need to be prepared for the sporting events. The Athletic Association should get their event schedule to businesses and businesses should give their business hours and specials to the Athletic Association. Ryan can include a small insert of business’s specials, coupons, and alternative hours to be emailed out to visiting teams. The Business Association can help create the small insert for the Athletic Association. The Athletic Association has an email network for informing visiting teams and their families of places to eat in town, attractions, or events. Visitors will be informed of the Museum and Courthouse as well. Visitors to the Courthouse can lead to increases in local business.

Renee talked about having welcome packets at school events for visiting families to pick up. Ashlee Sang could help with promoting our community through Facebook, Trip Advisor, Etc. The Athletic Association has a know market of visitors, they will send out an email for a specific event date with a short message from the Business Association. The short message will be highlighting business specials on that specific date. The Athletic Association is providing the Business Association with free advertising. This needs to be done in advanced by the businesses if they wish to be included. Sporting events include state tournaments, 2 volleyball tournaments, and home events. Jim Birge, Hillary Cherry, Renee Martin, Andy Meister, Ryan McVickers, Michelle Hagenbuch, and Lorah Hoe will meet soon to work out these details. The plan is to have the Athletic Association provide the Business Association with dates, the Business Association will then provide their electronic menus and specials in a condensed message back to the Athletic Association. The Athletic association will send this condensed message to visiting teams and their families.

**9)Marketing Committee- discussion about commercial- Renee Martin**

Renee has reached out to WAND and they have provided the EDBP with a few proposals for producing a commercial with wide coverage to attract potential visitors. The overall goal of the Marketing Project is to increase visitors and increase the population of our town. Renee provided the board with a handout listing three different proposals displaying what is possible at what price. The board recommends a meeting with a WAND representative to move forward with this project. They want to reach their target audiences of young families who wish to put down roots in a new community. Social media will be the way to reach these people. The board then discussed different types of advertising using new technologies.

The board then talked about going midrange on the proposals from WAND to give it a try while also bringing attention to town. The board talked about hiring their own videographer to film our town so that we have ownership of the footage. Or the board can stipulate to WAND that we own the footage that they capture. The committee needs to create a long-term plan with a combination of advertising avenues. The expectation is to promote the community in general as a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

The board discussed if the community is ready to take advantage of visitors. The website, Facebook, visitors center, and courthouse all need to be accessible and well presented. If we have an active Facebook page this would include scheduled posts that have an action plan for our town. Little ads could be everywhere on Facebook, YouTube, etc. to redirect people to links about our community. What do we hope to accomplish? We want to highlight current projects that are happening in town. The community needs to work together in unison. Ashlee Sang can start now and start small on this marketing campaign. The discussion will continue with more people and more eyes to help determine the focal point of our ads.

**10) Advisory Group Discussion- Tom Martin**

The board discussed whether they would like to hold another advisory group session at the end of this year. The board determined that it is not necessary now because the board has its vision and focus. There are many projects that the board needs to see through before they start looking for new ones. The board than talked about creating a questionnaire and getting feedback from the community to determine if they are focusing on the most prominent needs of the town. Currently our system is to assign a project to a committee, the committee works on the project until is it ready for a public meeting, and finally we will receive feedback from the public during those meetings.

**11) Election of New Officers**

**Andrew Meister makes a motion to approve the slate of officers: Deron Powell-Chairman, Tyler White- Vice Chairman, Jim Birge- Treasurer, and Hillary Cherry- Secretary. Seconded by Tom Marin. The Vote was unanimous. Motion Passes.**

**12) Next Meeting August 1st**

**Adjournment**

**Tyler White made a motion to adjourn at 8:38am, seconded by Jim Birge, all in favor and motion passed.**