

Cook County-Grand Marais Economic Development Authority
February 12, 2019 – Grand Marais City Hall

Present: Board members Scott Harrison, Howard Hedstrom, Anton Moody, Hal Greenwood, Bev Green
Absent: Carol Mork **Others present:** Mary Somnis, Peter James, Jim Boyd, Greg Wright, Rhonda Silence

Meeting called to order by President Howard Hedstrom at 4:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment, Agenda and Minutes

Somnis expressed sympathy to the family of Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribal Chair Norman Deschampe and the entire Grand Portage community on Norman's passing. Some of the board members will attend the memorial service and all added their condolences.

Discussion of the Cook County Food Shelf was added. *Motion to adopt agenda by Harrison, second by Greenwood. Motion carried, all ayes.*

Minutes of January 8, 2019 meeting reviewed. *Motion by Green, second by Greenwood to approve the January 8, 2019 minutes. Motion carried, all ayes.*

FINANCIALS

Superior National at Lutsen

Harrison distributed reports for Superior National for January 2019. There was discussion of the coming year and the 13,000 rounds that are anticipated. Harrison said that should be realized because this year Canyon will be open in May instead of end of June. Harrison said if the golf course continues on this track, it will be able to pay the EDA back the \$175,000 it owes to the county. *Motion by Moody, second by Greenwood, to accept Superior National financial reports for January 2019. Motion carried, all ayes.*

EDA financials

The EDA reviewed the financials for the EDA for January 2019 and checks to be issued. Harrison pointed out the \$30,000 from the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation, earmarked for the "plan B" workforce recruitment programs. *Motion by Green, second by Greenwood to accept the EDA financial statements and approve payment of invoices. Motion carried, all ayes.*

NEW BUSINSS

Resolution #2019-02 to apply to IRRRB for \$100,000 for North House

Greg Wright, executive director of North House Folk School, gave an update on the school's purchase of the property adjacent to the campus from Harley and Shele Toftey. Wright said things are going well. The people operating the fish market said it was a good year, but they had difficulty finding employees. He said Tyler and Zack Smith continue to operate their commercial fishing business. The boat barn has been remodeled to be used as classrooms. Wright gave an update on student hours and the upcoming Northern Fibers Retreat. Wright said the school's goal is to have the building fully paid off this year, so the school asked for the EDA's support for a grant application to the IRRRB for \$100,000. North House originally requested \$300,000 from IRRRB and received \$200,000.

Somnis said she and Wright were going to the next IRRRB meeting to talk about the request. She shared a draft resolution of support for a community infrastructure grant for the Dockside Expansion Project. *Motion by Greenwood, second by Moody to pass Resolution 2019-02 to authorize the EDA to make application to and accept funds from the Community Infrastructure Grant Program. Motion carried, with Harrison recusing himself.*

Consider funding for Superior National at Lutsen

Marketing of the golf course was discussed. Somnis said when the bonds were sold to fund the improvements at Superior National, the marketing agreement was set through 2022. The agreement states that Visit Cook County invests \$50,000 annually and the golf course and the EDA invest \$20,000. Somnis said that means the EDA needs to contribute \$20,000 this year. She suggested using \$10,000 from the golf course and \$10,000 from the EDA's

business development funds. *Motion by Green, second by Moody, to contribute \$20,000 to marketing the golf course in 2019. Motion carried, with Scott Harrison abstaining.*

Consider Request from Great Expectations School to use EDA property

Peter James, director of Great Expectations School was at the meeting to ask permission for Great Expectations School (GES) students to use EDA land near the school for outdoor exploration. James shared photos and information of GES students during outdoor activities. James said the school would not alter the property in any way. He provided a statement of insurance for the school.

The EDA reviewed a memorandum of agreement for use of the property and agreed to sign it with some minor language changes. It was agreed the agreement could be terminated at any time.

Motion by Greenwood, second by Green to accept the memorandum of agreement and allow use of the EDA property by Great Expectations School. Motion carried, all ayes.

OLD AND ONGOING BUSINESS

Cook County Workforce Solutions

Somnis gave a report on the visit from Frederico Velasco, an employment recruiter who is doing some work for Bluefin Bay. The EDA and Chamber set up a meeting with him and local businesses. About 25 people attended to learn about bringing workers from Puerto Rico.

Luis Cortes, a chef at Bluefin Bay, who came from Puerto Rico, spoke about his move to Minnesota.

It is not yet known if Frederico Velasco can help many local businesses, as the services he offers are perhaps more extensive than what is needed here. Somnis said she will keep the EDA board posted.

Somnis said the EDA, Chamber and Higher Ed representatives will go to the State Capitol next week. There are a number of events where they can talk to legislators about Cook County's workforce needs. She shared a legislative fact sheet outlining the top three workforce needs: culinary, health care and overall workforce development.

Cedar Grove Business Park

Somnis said Nesgoda Services is working on a possible proposal for a future EDA meeting.

Nordic Star

Somnis said one of the four new homes has been sold. One Roof is looking for someone to do some shoveling. They might also be asked to check the houses periodically, to make sure the heat was on and all is well there.

Four Directions Dwellings

Somnis said the Four Directions Dwellings buildings are proceeding on schedule. People are starting to move in. The next building will be ready for rentals in April. The 4th building has yet to arrive, so it will be available later.

Village North

Somnis said the plans drawn up by architect Richard Olson for Bruce Block for his next phase, the upper level housing area of Village North were sent to several modular and SIP companies to get some estimates. Two responses were received and will be looked at by the advisory committee, which is Howard Hedstrom, Scott Harrison, Dennis Rysdahl, Hal Greenwood, Jim Boyd, Somnis and Block.

Creative Economy Collaborative

Somnis submitted a grant application to the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council on behalf of the CEC to bring Jack Becker to Cook County. He is a professional in the field of public art and while here would give two workshops to help the CEC as it moves forward.

There have been ongoing meetings of the CEC, MnDOT, architect CJ Fernandez, the Grand Marais Park Board and others regarding the Highway 61 projects and possible amenities.

Small Business Development Center Report

Pat Campanaro has extended her leave of absence for family issues.

EDA Executive Director Report

Somnis shared a DRAFT “letter to the editor” in which the EDA publicly acknowledges the significant contributions to the businesses and community of Cook County from IRRRB. She said Senator Bakk had pointed out all the work that had been done in Cook County with support of the IRRRB and suggested that the EDA publicly acknowledge that support. There was discussion of the best wording. The board asked Somnis to reach out to Senator Bakk and Representative Ecklund for suggestions and bring the matter back to the board.

In addition to the agenda items already discussed, Somnis reported that she had met with Libby Larson, grant writer for North House Folk School; with Lyla Brown about Art Colony development plans; and with the Cook County Local Energy Project about possible partnerships with the EDA. She met with a property owner in Tofte where some old buildings had recently been cleared about a possible new project. She attended workshops on Opportunity Zones and workforce needs. Somnis shared the finalized Business and Housing Funding Policy, as approved at the January 2019 meeting.

Somnis submitted an application to the county Revolving Loan Fund and was appointed to that board. Hal Greenwood, who serves on that board, said that is great news.

OTHER BUSINESS

Highway 61

Hedstrom said it appears there will be a delay in the Highway 61 reconstruction project because of right-of-way easement issues. There were complications with land acquisitions needed in time to let bids for the work. The board said it appreciates the frustration of businesses in the city. Hedstrom noted that Somnis is on the Highway 61 Steering Committee. The board said it is good that the EDA has some input in this.

Cook County Food Shelf

Bev Green said the Cook County Senior Center has been contacted about the possibility of housing the Cook County Food Shelf. She said people asked about the garage at the senior center. She said the garage is small and not well-insulated, so the senior center wondered if it would be possible to tear it down and build something new that would better serve this need. The building is also used by Arrowhead Transit.

Harrison said the IRRRB has a demolition grant fund. Somnis said the IRRRB redevelopment fund is normally tied to job creation. Green said this isn't something that would lead to jobs, but it was a public need. Somnis said it could possibly be eligible for a downtown streetscapes grant.

Hedstrom said this sounds like something the EDA might want to be involved with, but there would have to be a plan. Green said this is very tentative and she will let the EDA if more comes of this.

School District 166 – EATS

Hal Greenwood is on the Cook County Schools/ISD 166 Education Foundation Board. He said the 10th annual EATS event is on Thursday, March 14. This is a major fundraiser in support of educational opportunities at ISD 166. The Education Foundation has funded robotics, Spanish language classes, scholarships to Wolf Ridge Environmental Center, school gardens and much more. Greenwood encouraged EDA board members to attend to assist the school.

The next EDA meeting will be Tuesday, March 12 at 4 p.m. at Grand Marais City Hall.

Howard Hedstrom will be available for the WTIP interview on EDA activities on Wednesday, Feb 13.

Motion to adjourn by Hal Greenwood at 5:45 p.m. Motion carried, all ayes.

Respectfully submitted by

Rhonda Silence

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