

MONROE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COMMERCE & TOURISM COMMITTEE
MONTHLY MEETING – 1-10-19 – Monroe County Board Room – Sparta

Present:

Committee Board Members: Dean Peterson, Nodji Van Wychen, Mark Halverson

Citizen Members (CM): Kevin Ravenscroft

Advisory Members (AM): Tonya Townsell – Ft. McCoy, Jarrod Roll, Tina Thompson – Tomah Chamber of Commerce, Jim Bialecki, (AM)

Economic Development & Tourism Coordinator: Steve Peterson

Absent: Mary Jo Hill (CM), John Hendricks – Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce (AM), Dennis Berg (CM)

Media: Pat Mulvaney – Monroe County Herald

The meeting was posted in accordance with the open meeting law. Meeting was called to order at 9:00am by Chair Nodji Van Wychen. Roll-call was taken.

Advisory Members Replacement or Recruitment – It was discussed about looking for a replacement for Dennis Berg, who retired from his business position at the end of the year, on the Committee. Mary Jo Hill has also asked to be taken off. It was decided since the transition from this committee to a Monroe County Economic Development Corporation there wasn't a dire need to replace anyone this year. The 3 County Board Supervisors are the only ones who can vote on financial decisions anyway, so no replacements will be found at this time.

Minutes – Motion by M. Halverson to approve the minutes. Second by K. Ravenscroft. Motion carried.

Financial/Invoices – Discussion on finalizing any projects that would be funded by the remaining funding in the 2018 budget was discussed. N. Van Wychen had no update on the clarification with the Hidden Valleys budget. S. Peterson said that the mix-ups with Hidden Valleys on the payments for the annual membership and the magazine ad buy was cleared up.

- S. Peterson presented invoices to be paid out of the 2019 EDCT budget:
 - WEDA 2019 Annual Membership Dues - \$325.00
 - WEDA 2019 Governor's Conference on Economic Development Registration - \$350.00
 - 7 Rivers Alliance 2019 Membership Dues - \$315.00
 - 2019 Monroe County Economic Development Conference Naming Rights Sponsorship - \$4,000 (S. Peterson will invoice the County for this sponsorship as it's a line-item in the budget)

Motion by D. Peterson to pay the invoices. 2nd by M. Halverson. Motion carried.

Monroe County E.D. Coordinator contract – J. Bialecki reported that the contract has been signed for 2019. Copies of the contract were not directly sent to the Committee as nothing has changed in the contract from past years. He said this was the last contract for this position as the transition to a Monroe County Economic Development Corporation will be completed this year. S. Peterson supported the decision and informed the committee that he gave his first monthly report at the County Admin/Personnel Committee meeting on 1/8.

Formation of Monroe County Economic Development Corporation – J. Bialecki reported on the presentation from the Polk County Economic Development Corporation at the County Admin/Personnel Committee meeting on 1/8. He said that the presentation shed light on how that County formed their organization, how it was funded and the representation on the board. S. Peterson said that with that presentation along with the information that had been sent from the Juneau County EDC and the Barron County EDC, there was enough information to start the process of creating the corporation. He also said that forming the task force needed to be completely nonpolitical. Peterson said that the City of Sparta made that quite evident with their cautious support of creating this corporation. The task force was going to be made up of reps from the County, Sparta, Tomah, Cashton, villages, towns and business leaders. Peterson suggested that the Sparta & Tomah Chambers be involved as well. Bialecki said that the group was going to get together very soon and get the process started. There was discussion that the funding currently from the County would move into the new corporation starting in 2020 and it's assumed that it will be. N. Van Wychen voiced concern about not forgetting tourism with this transition and she was assured that it would always be part of the eco efforts of the corporation. Bialecki & Peterson assured that the EDCT Committee will be kept consistently informed about the progress of this transition.

Monroe County Economic Development Conference – S. Peterson said went through the agenda of topic and speakers at the 2 day conference. He said that registrations have been coming in very well along with sponsorships and booth registrations. Peterson feels confident that the Conference will be a sell-out again. He encouraged everyone on the board to attend as all have registrations as part of the Naming Rights Sponsorship of the Conference. Peterson asked the committee to help recruit attendees and that registrations can be done on line at www.mcedconference.com

Possible Tourism Brochure Investment – County Parks – J. Roll is chairing the project and reported that he had discussions with Shay at the Tomah Chamber and she's willing to do the graphic work for the brochure. Questions were how many brochures to print? How would they be distributed? It was determined by the Committee that at least 1,000 brochures should be printed based on distribution by the Chambers and the County. Roll was asked to get price quotes on the printing of the brochure and bring it back to the Committee at the February meeting for final approval.

GO MONROE COUNTY Activities Guide – S. Peterson said he was contacted by Logan Everson with questions about the guide. She needed more pictures for the guide and Peterson said he really didn't have any new ones that they hadn't used for the guide in the past. It was recommended by Committee members that we get Evans Printing in contact with Warrens Cranberry Festival, Ft. McCoy, Sparta Chamber, Tomah Chamber, Local History Room and Lory Erickson about possible pictures they may have that could be used in the guide. Peterson also said Logan needed a calendar of events for the guide and it was recommended that she contact the same people about the pictures for their calendar of events info. The Committee recommended that Evans Printing design the full back page ad for the EDCT for the guide.

County Administrator's Report – no report. Reported earlier on the Corporation progress.

Monroe County E.D. Coordinator Report - This time of year business recruitment and overall economic development work slows down a bit because of the holidays. I also was on vacation for a time in late November.

PROSPECTS (updated from last month in bold) *not in numerical order as some prospects are not listed because nothing new has happened with my work with them since last month's meeting.

Continued activity with prospects. Some are in the next phases of looking at Monroe County as a viable location while others are gathering more information, scheduling site visits and looking for more incentives for their decision making process.

Prospect 1 – continued dialogue about a lodging facility near the hospital/clinic construction in Tomah. Because of those projects, naturally there is quite a bit of interest in that area for lodging, food, professional offices. **Pursuing other parcels of land around Tomah & South Pointe in Sparta. The lodging study that the Monroe County E.D. and cities of Sparta & Tomah partnered in has shown a real potential for additional hotel and lodging opportunities.**

Prospect 2 – restaurant facility near the hospital/clinic location. Same reasons as the lodging interest. **Everything is on hold until the finalization of the lodging facility.**

Prospect 6 – competed against 27 other locations in the Midwest for this food processing company. They are looking at either expanding or relocating and Monroe County is their only Wisconsin location in the final 3. I've been working with this prospect for 3 ½ years. **Negotiations and incentive information continues to be gathered and analyzed. This is a very complicated recruitment because of the # of locations that continue to be moved around in their priority line-up each week and month. Not expecting any decisions by the company until late in the first quarter of 2019.**

Prospect 8 – manufacturing company looking to relocate from Minnesota. Targeted area is Tomah or Sparta in Wisconsin. They are landlocked in the Twin Cities currently and would use their current location as research and development and build a new manufacturing plant elsewhere. **Lost the prospect to South Dakota because of a huge incentive package that was offered them that we could not come close to matching.**

Prospect 9 – manufacturing company looking seriously at Monroe County for over a year. **Lost the company to North Dakota as they received an incentive package that we could never meet.**

Prospect 10 – meeting with a development company looking at possibly adding at least 1, if not more assisted living apartment complexes in the County. There is a real interest on their end. **More discussions but nothing more than continued fact finding at this point.**

Prospect 11 – working with a company already located in the County who is looking at expanding with a potential distribution center. **No further progress at this point. They are looking at all location options and only 1 will be chosen so it fits with their budget limits.**

Prospect 13 – Looking at options in Sparta, Tomah, Cashton and Norwalk. **Putting off serious looks at the County until the first quarter of 2019. They have multiple sites to choose from across the country. We would just be one of many and the timing will be determined by their budgets and geographic needs.**

Prospect 14 – manufacturing company that has come back to look at the County again. Looking at creating a state-wide franchise buyer which will take some time. **Having dialogue but many things would have to happen before they choose the County. Not expecting movement on this company until summer of 2019.**

Prospect 16 – Health based company that is intrigued with the hospital/clinic project in Tomah. Initial

talks look promising but a long ways to go. **Continuing productive talks and a County visit is being planned in early 2019. This company could go other directions with locating but trying to keep them focused at Monroe County.**

Prospect 18 – Finalizing their patents on their product line which could be a game changer for organic, natural cleaning solutions. **Lots of areas recruiting this company, but we are staying in contact with them. We made the first cut, but a long ways to go yet. A long shot but talks continue.**

Prospect 20 – health based company that is looking to expand and are intrigued about the new hospital/clinic/wellness campus being built in Tomah. Very early in discussions but they have targeted us as a prime location for expanding their company/services. **Possible discussions to heat up again in 2019.**

Prospect 21 – met with a prospect with a company that creates grocery locker systems to be placed in grocery desert areas. Monroe County could potentially be one of their trial run locations. **Touring their plant in Pewaukee on Dec. 11th. Very interested in doing a prototype in one of our villages.**

Prospect 22 (new) – working with a company that wants to create a frac sand company near Oakdale. Most of the early permitting work and meetings with the Town of Oakdale and the Village have taken place. **I plan to attend the Zoning Committee meeting on 12/17 to show support for the project that would bring a big financial impact to the County and create another 100 jobs.**

IN THE WORKS

RLF/CDBG Transition – continuing to work with the Dept. of Administration on the process of transitioning all the RLF & CDBG programs to the State over the next 2 years. Coordinating efforts with MRRPC as well.

Tomah Healthcare campus – both the Hospital & Clinic projects are progressing nicely. Looking for interest to pick up in the areas around those facilities right after the 1st of the year.

Gen 3 Project - Construction is really moving along and interior construction is now started as they've enclosed the building. On schedule.

Connect Community – renewing the agreement for 2019. Villages in the County want to continue the Connect Community program and are working on short and long term strategies for their business districts. All of them have some real changes and challenges ahead. This will be a big part of creating the Monroe County Economic Development Corporation by the end of 2019.

Monroe County EDCT Marketing upgrades – looking at revamping the current digital marketing tools with a new web site in 2019 along with creating a comprehensive portal to available land, buildings, programs, etc that are available throughout the County. This will also include the villages becoming more active through the Connect Community program.

MEETINGS

- **Monroe County Board Final Budget Hearing** – attended the meeting to speak to the Board about putting the E.D. Contract back into the 2019 budget, which was successfully done.
- **Jim Bialecki** – meeting to work on revising the E.D. Contract for 2019 along with getting the preliminary work started on creating a Monroe County Economic Development Corporation by the end of 2019.
- **Vision One Performance** – Conference call with company that will be presenting at the Monroe County E.D. Conference.
- **Predictive Search** – Conference call with company who will be a featured speaker at the Monroe County E.D. Conference.

- **7 Rivers Alliance “State of the Region” Luncheon** – attended meeting to get an update on the WISE Plan, Rising Stars and workforce approaches in 2019 and beyond.
- **Town of Portland** – met with the board to discuss having a digital presence with a new web site and networking with the E.D. efforts in the County.
- **WI Rural Partners Board Meeting** – preparations in place for the Summit in April 2019 in Rice Lake.
- **WDAC Board Meeting** – Continue working on the Downtown Day at the Capital in Madison on 3/12 talking with legislators and downtown cities with their concerns with lawmaking in the future, pertaining to BIDs and other programs.
- **SW-ITBEC meeting** – Sparta – looking at plans for 2019 and recapping successes of 2018 at our December meeting.
- **SBA Disaster office** – continued contact with them on getting all the information out on flood recovery assistance to our areas businesses and residents.
- **Community Venture Network** – met with 14 business prospects in the Twin Cities about expanding or relocating in Monroe County. The 2 days of meetings were very successful as I have already done follow up discussions with 8 of the companies. Looking for more progress with all of them as we go into the new year.

REPORTS:

Hidden Valleys – S. Peterson said the new 2019 Hidden Valleys magazine is being printed and should be out in a week. The new digital version of the Guide is already on the Hidden Valleys web site. He said that would be attending their January 16th Board meeting and would report back next month to the committee. There is still no solution made on finding a representative from the County to sit on their Board yet.

SW-ITBEC – S. Peterson reported that the group continues to move forward with projects in 2019. County recruitment is a priority but it’s been tough since Trempealeau and Buffalo Counties do not have economic development staff anymore.

Local History Room – J. Roll reported that over 1,800 people visited the Local History Room over the holidays to see the new train display and other displays. He said there were many return visitors because many local families make the visit as part of their holiday visits to the area. Roll said the media coverage they have had over the past few months has had a very strong impact on visitor #s to the LHR. He said the LaCrosse Tribune feature that was done during the holidays was unplanned but really brought in a lot of tourists, especially from the LaCrosse area. In 2018 the Local History Room welcomed 11,470 visitors and Roll said its brought on more challenges, especially when it comes to coming up with a new Christmas concept each year. Roll said that they’ve become more aggressive with recruiting motor coach tour buses. Those buses have visited the building in the past, but was directly tied with the Deke Slayton Space & Bicycle Museum. Now bus visits are coming specifically for the Local History Room as well. Roll said they are now charging for bus tours instead of donations in the past. It was suggested by many committee members that the LHR increase the tour fee in the future because tourists will pay it.

Ft. McCoy – T. Townsell said the furlough from the government shutdown did not affect the military bases so activities continue. She said that the new “people mover” at the ski hill on the base has been a great addition and many positive comments from skiers because it’s much quicker to get to the top of the hill than in the past. Townsell said the winter training continues despite the fluctuating temps. The start of a renovation project on the Main Gate will begin in March, depending on the weather. There may be some minor delays along Highway 21 as the project moves forward. She said that annual Economic Impact Report will be coming out in late March.

Sparta Chamber of Commerce – no report.

Tomah Chamber of Commerce – T. Thompson reported that the TID funding for projects in downtown Tomah was approved by City Council despite pushback by some council members. She said the projects that were approved all have a strong impact on the improvements of the downtown area in Tomah, including new light poles/banners/signage throughout the downtown area. Thompson said a new logo and branding campaign is being created by the Chamber and will be unveiled at their annual banquet on 2/25 at Three Bears Resort. She reported that the Chamber, along with working with the Monroe County Workforce Alliance, have begun special programs at the schools. These career focus panels are targeting jobs in healthcare facilities, emergency services, service type work, masons/concrete, etc. The goal is to have students understand there are strong careers in non-traditional workplaces. Thompson said there will be an HR Conference held in April with more details to come. She also said they have begun a marketing campaign “Beyond the Bog” where they are filming people in hip waders, cross promoting the cranberry industry and the other businesses/attractions in the Tomah area. Once completed there will be a whole campaign built off of all the filming and pictures of this effort. Thompson also reminded the committee that there will be a very important election in the spring with 3 City Council members facing contested races.

7 Rivers Alliance – S. Peterson reported that a strategic planning session was completed and work continues with the WISE Plan.

Upcoming Events/Activities around the County – D. Peterson reminded the Committee that there will be a spaghetti dinner fundraiser at the Tomah High School on 1/19.

Agenda Items for next month:

- Monroe County Economic Development Corporation update
- Monroe County E.D. Conference update
- County Parks brochure
- WIGCOT – Kalahari – Wisconsin Dells

Next Committee meeting – Thursday, February 14th – 9:00am – Timberwood Bank - Tomah

Motion by D. Peterson to adjourn. 2nd by M. Halverson. Meeting adjourned at 10:44am.

Submitted by:



Steve Peterson