

**MONROE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COMMERCE & TOURISM COMMITTEE**  
**MONTHLY MEETING – 2-14-19 – Timberwood Bank - Tomah**

**Present:**

**Committee Board Members (CB):** Dean Peterson, Nodji Van Wychen

**Citizen Members (CM):** Kevin Ravenscroft

**Advisory Members (AM):** Tonya Townsell – Ft. McCoy, Jarrod Roll – Local History Room, Tina Thompson – Tomah Chamber of Commerce

**Economic Development & Tourism Coordinator:** Steve Peterson

**Absent:** Mark Halverson (CB), John Hendricks – Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce (AM), Dennis Berg (CM), Jim Bialecki, (AM)

The meeting was posted in accordance with the open meeting law. Meeting was called to order at 9:03am by Chair Nodji Van Wychen. Roll-call was taken.

**Minutes** – Change in the minutes to show the Main Gate project at Ft. McCoy was starting in March. Motion by T. Thompson to approve the minutes. Second by K. Ravenscroft. Motion carried.

**Financial/Invoices** – There were no invoices to be approved. S. Peterson explained the breakdown of the payments made out for the Monroe County Economic Development Conference & the WEDA Governor's Conference on Economic Development registration so there would be no need a line-item adjustment to the budget.

There was discussion about the ongoing County Parks brochure and the funding coming out of the 2018 budget and that update was given later by J. Roll.

**Monroe County Economic Development Corporation update** – S. Peterson informed the Committee that the first corporation creation meeting took place on 2/13 in Sparta and in attendance was S. Peterson, Monroe County - Jim Bialecki, Pete Peterson Tina Osterberg, Sparta - Todd Fahning, Mark Sund, Ft. McCoy - Tonya Townsell and WI Counties Association - Jon Hochkammer. Talks centered around options of how the future corporation could be formed and funded. Examples of other county corporations were discussed along with the formation options of a 501 C(3) or (6). No certain direction was determined in those areas.

There was discussion about full participation by municipalities in the County to help fund the corporation. S. Peterson told the group that he received very favorable support from Tomah, Cashton and a few of the villages. J. Bialecki asked if the towns had been contacted and S. Peterson said he had discussions with a couple of them but nothing concrete as far as support.

P. Peterson reiterated that the County is looking at getting out of the economic development area and would rather just be a funding partner with representation on the board.

T. Fahning & M. Sund said the City of Sparta would be a very hard sell on participating with funding for this corporation. They said the City is doing fine on its own with E.D. projects and sees no real value to get the Council to approve funding for it. They are already funding part of T. Fahning's position to do economic development for the City.

S. Peterson told the group that the best route was finding things that Sparta may need more resources for or could be stronger in those areas and that the corporation would fill those needs. No duplicating efforts or adding more bureaucratic red tape to E.D. recruitment. Both Sparta City Administrators said that is a start and the City will keep an open mind, but it still will be hard sell towards participation.

J. Hochkammer strongly urged that elected officials not be leading the charge on forming the corporation or heading up a board of directors. It had not been very successful in other counties. The Committee decided to keep the discussion moving over the next few weeks and meet on March 14<sup>th</sup> at 1pm for more discussions and game planning.

The EDCT Committee members had many questions about this transition and were unsure of it happening, how the County funding would be allocated and what the future of their committee would be? The EDCT Committee asked to be kept informed on the progress of the meetings and moved their March 14<sup>th</sup> meeting to March 15<sup>th</sup> so they would be meeting after the Corporation committee meeting.

**Monroe County Economic Development Conference** – S. Peterson went through the agenda of topics and speakers at the 2-day conference. He pointed out that a few State Secretaries had reached out to appear and briefly talk at the Conference. A rundown of the committee members who were registered and any county board members who may have registered. Peterson told the committee that registrations have been coming in well and even a delegation from Kazakhstan would be attending. He said Governor Evers and Lt. Governor Barnes both declined the invitation.

**Possible Tourism Brochure Investment – County Parks** – J. Roll said that he had met with Chad Zeigler to go over the Parks information for the brochure. \$500 had been allocated and approved out of the remaining 2018 budget. Roll was going to get bids from Evans Printing & Minute Man Printing to determine the # of brochures to order and get them printed and an invoice sent to the County.

**GO MONROE COUNTY Activities Guide** – S. Peterson told the Committee that Evans Printing had sent an invoice to Sharon Folcey for the full-page color ad in the new Go Monroe County guide for \$1,850. The Committee held off approving the invoice until they had more details on the new guide being printed. S. Peterson said that he had been sent a digital copy of the guide to proof but because of time conflicts, he had very limited time to review it and was being pressured for an approval because they needed to go to print right away. Peterson said he proofed some of it but not the entire guide. The Committee was concerned that this guide was moved forward with no correspondence to the Committee at any point. No input on the look of the guide, the content or proofing it as a Committee before going to print. No one, other than Peterson had even physically seen what the guide even looks like.

Evans Printing had not reported at any time during 2018 to the Committee on the distribution progress. Some committee members were wondering how a new guide could be sold and done without a contract being signed? When the 2018 guide contract was signed, it was stated that another RFP would be required for the 2019 guide. Others questioned why the Committee should be paying for a full-page ad in their own guide when Evans Printing is getting all the revenue for selling the advertising? N. Van Wychen said that Evans Printing will be asked to appear at next month's meeting to answer all these questions and clarify things.

**WIGCOT – Kalahari, Wisconsin Dells** – no discussion.

**County Administrator's Report** – no report.

**Monroe County E.D. Coordinator Report** - This time of year, activity with prospects is very low and will now start picking up again in late February.

**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. **Finding investors continues and this project will be much stronger in a couple of months. Location is chosen, it's just financing that needs to be in place.**

**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 continue and this company will be looking at their final options in the summer and will determine where to build in late 2019 with a start date of construction in the spring of 2020.**

**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 finding investors and land won't happen until early spring.**

**Prospect 13** – Looking at options in Sparta, Tomah, Cashton and Norwalk. **Putting off serious looks at the County until late in the first quarter. 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. **Expect talks to pick up over the next few months. We are still a targeted area for the company.**

**Prospect 16** – Health based company that is intrigued with the hospital/clinic project in Tomah. Initial talks look promising but a long way to go. **Don't see much activity with this prospect until the wellness campus is nearly completed.**

**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 our area 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. **Very interested in doing a prototype in one of our small villages in the County.**

**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. **Conditional use permit has been finalized and now the research and building concepts will begin.**

#### **IN THE WORKS**

**MONROE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE** – taking up a lot of the time these days. Registrations are going well, and we expect another sell-out. A strong emphasis on workforce issues will be discussed. For retention & recruitment efforts.

**Comprehensive Online Marketing Campaign** – For the Tomah area that will encompass the City land, the I-90 corridor land, the Meadows Park and the Forward Tomah land along with a directory of all commercial buildings and land available in the Tomah area.

**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 1<sup>st</sup> 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** – New web site was just launched featuring a comprehensive portal to available land, buildings, programs, etc that are available throughout the County. This includes the villages becoming more active through the Connect Community program.

## MEETINGS

- **SW-ITBEC meeting** – Jan. 4<sup>th</sup> in Sparta.
- **County Admin/Personnel Committee** – Jan. 8<sup>th</sup> - give report and hear from the Polk County EDC on the formation of their corporation to learn tips on forming the new Monroe County EDC.
- **Three Bears Resort** – meet with staff to go over details on the upcoming Conference.
- **WI Rural Partners Board meeting** – Jan. 10<sup>th</sup> – finalizing details on the upcoming Summit in Barron County in late April and reviewing strategic plan.
- **Associated Bank** – met with rep to determine level of interest in financing options for projects in Monroe County.
- **Town of Portland** – created a new web site for the town.
- **County Administration/Personnel meeting** – Jan. 8<sup>th</sup> – E.D. report and discussion about E.D. Corporation efforts including a presentation from the Polk County E.D. Executive Director.

## REPORTS:

**7 Rivers Alliance** – S. Peterson reported that the organization has some upcoming events planned and more details will be announced next month.

**Hidden Valleys** – S. Peterson said the new magazine is out and he would be attending their February board meeting in Richland Center on 2/20.

**SW-ITBEC** – S. Peterson reported that the group is considering a new brand name for the organization. They felt they needed something that is easier to remember and stands for what they are doing. ITBEC stands for International Trade, Business and Economic Development and they aren't doing any international projects.

**Local History Room** – J. Roll reported the first Thursday of March there will be a meeting on DNA Testing. With the popularity of this testing, this event will talk about the good and not so good about the process. This summer the Wegner Grotto will get some improvements done as sculptors and artists will work on fixing some of the displays that have weathered over the years. The funds to pay for the rehab projects will come from foundation money. There will be the annual Summer Art Day on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of August.

**Ft. McCoy** – T. Townsell reported on some upcoming events happening at the Ski area at Fort McCoy. On 2/16 there will be the Moonlight Snowshoe event. On 2/23 there will be a Chill Taste-Off. On 2/27 there will be the Dog Fair.

Cold weather operations continue at the ski area and is a very valuable training session for soldiers. The Main Gate construction is coming depending on the weather. There may be some delays during the

construction, but they are trying to keep it minimal. The Economic Impact Statement will be coming out at the end of March. Armed Forces Day will be on May 18<sup>th</sup>. There will be an exercise happening on 3/19 & 20 which will be a reenactment of a rail disaster.

Ft. McCoy will be contacting area municipalities about forming an intergovernmental Agreement where services could be shared to save money for all sides. Budgets are tight at the base and any ways to save money by partnering with area municipalities on certain needs and products will be looked at.

**Sparta Chamber of Commerce** – no report.

**Tomah Chamber of Commerce** – T. Thompson reported that their Chamber banquet will be on 2/25 at Three Bears Resort. Expecting a sell-out and tickets are \$45. The banquet will be much different as they plan to unveil the new logo/brand for the Tomah Chamber and City of Tomah. There will be mugs, clothing, etc on sale with the new logo that will be unveiled.

Chamber continues their panel discussions at the Tomah School District. Next one is for construction & trades. They speak to 400 students about these future job opportunities and job shadowing. A Career/Job Fair will be on 3/20 at Tomah High School.

A Meet & Greet Forum with the City Council candidates is being planned along with a possible forum. There are many candidates vying for positions.

There will be a HR Conference on 4/12 at Murray's on Main dealing with many important topics facing human resource staff.

**Upcoming Events/Activities around the County** – D. Peterson reported that the Wisconsin Singers and Tomah Show Choir have a concert this weekend. Great entertainment.

**Agenda Items for next month:**

- Monroe County Economic Development Corporation update
- Monroe County E.D. Conference recap
- County Parks brochure
- Go Monroe County Activities Guide

**Next Committee meeting** – Rescheduled to Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup> – 9:00am – Murray's On Main – Tomah. T. Thompson will contact them to reserve the room.

Motion by D. Peterson to adjourn. 2<sup>nd</sup> by K. Ravenscroft. Meeting adjourned at 11:31am.

Submitted by:



Steve Peterson