

**MONROE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COMMERCE & TOURISM COMMITTEE  
MONTHLY MEETING – 3-21-19 – Murray’s on Main - Tomah**

**Present:**

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

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

**Advisory Members (AM):** Tina Thompson – Tomah Chamber of Commerce

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

**Absent:** Mark Halverson (CB), John Hendricks – Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce (AM), Tonya Townsell – Ft. McCoy (AM), Jarrod Roll – Local History Room (AM), Jim Bialecki, (AM)

**Special Guests:** Greg Evans – Evans Printing & Media, Theresa Fitzgerald – Ft. McCoy (representing Tonya Townsell)

The meeting was posted in accordance with the open meeting law. Meeting was called to order at 9:04am by Chair Nodji Van Wychen. Roll-call was taken. It was discussed of taking Citizen members Mary Jo Hill & Dennis Berg off the committee. Hill had previously sent a letter requesting being taken off the committee and Berg retired from his bank position at the end of the year. Motion by T. Thompson to take Hill & Berg off the Committee as Citizen Members. 2<sup>nd</sup> by D. Peterson. Motion carried.

**Minutes** – Motion by T. Thompson to approve the minutes. Second by D. Peterson. Motion carried.

**Financial/Invoices** – S. Peterson told the committee that the Hidden Valleys ad in their 2019 Guide still needed to be paid. There was a confusion because the funds sent to Hidden Valleys in late 2018 went for the annual membership instead of the ad placement. The funding is in the 2019 budget and D. Peterson made a motion to pay the ad invoice. 2<sup>nd</sup> by N. Van Wychen. Motion carried.

**GO MONROE COUNTY Activities Guide** – Greg Evans was asked to appear before the Committee to answer questions about the 2019 Activities Guide. G. Evans stated that there was a real time crunch in getting the guides done for 2019. Getting ads sold and having the staff to create the guide was a struggle. N. Van Wychen mentioned that the proof of the guide is usually looked at by the EDCT Committee before going to print, but that the whole project kind of fell through the cracks.

Evans said that 35,000 guides were printed, and the distribution has started and is continuing. The guides were made available at the Monroe County Economic Development Conference. He said that getting all the guides out in the public takes time and it’s getting harder and harder to get people to pick them up. Thousands were left over from last year’s supply and he suggested to the Committee to consider only printing 30,000 guides in 2020.

Evans also voiced concern about the shipping costs he is incurring with sending cases of guides off to area Information Centers and other distribution sites around the State. He felt those costs are mounting up and asked if there would be a possibility of having the EDCT Committee reimburse Evans Printing & Media for the shipping costs. D. Peterson said that Martin Trucking would be willing to deliver some guides around the State if needed. N. Van Wychen suggested that Evans contact Hidden Valleys about possible partnerships at trade shows in giving out guides too. Evans is going to get a list of where cases of guides have been sent and the shipping costs and the Committee would review it at our next meeting and see if there is funding in the tourism budget for that.

Evans said the guide was smaller, down 10-12 pages from last year, and it was getting harder each year to get tourism businesses to buy ads. Even though the guide is needed, Evans said that the costs to do the guide is substantial and grows each year. There was discussion of having a future EDCT Committee meeting at Evans Printing & Media to discuss the progress of the guide's distribution and setting up goals for the potential 2020 guide.

**Monroe County Economic Development Corporation update** – S. Peterson informed the Committee that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corporation committee meeting did not progress well and at this point looks like creating a Corporation will most likely not happen. Peterson said that County Administrator Jim Bialecki, incoming County Administrator Tina Osterberg, County Board Chair Pete Peterson, Sparta Administrators Todd Fahning and Mark Sund and Tomah City Administrator Roger Gorius attended the meeting.

Peterson said that the City of Sparta is not in favor of funding and participating with the Corporation for many reasons and that their E.D. process is working just fine. City of Tomah is a bit apprehensive because of upcoming elections of council members and the tough financial decisions that R. Gorius is seeing from his council on other current City projects and issues. Both cities said that at this point they don't feel like they'd have their council's support.

P. Peterson said that the County still needs to get out of the E.D. business and that their funding level may be much lower than anticipated in the beginning of forming this corporation. S. Peterson felt that the villages would participate but not at what level at this time. He also said that the village's contribution will not be close to enough to start the corporation.

Committee members suggested that the villages fund the corporation because they could benefit the most from the corporation's help. S. Peterson said the level of funding the villages could support makes forming the corporation a non-starter. He suggested that maybe getting a % of the sales tax each year from the County would make sense because that's what is working great for Juneau County each year.

It was decided to table this effort for the time being, until after elections and having more time to put together a plan of services for both cities to look at so that they may see a reason to relook at financing the start of corporation.

The EDCT Committee had many questions and one option they want to pursue is to keep things as is with a contracted position staying in place next year. They felt that it's been working and County board members on the EDCT committee felt there would be enough votes on the Board to keep it. It was suggested that the Committee meet with T. Osterberg at one of our upcoming Committee meetings and have a discussion and see where her level of support would be? D. Peterson felt that if the EDCT Committee blew our horn more on the things we are doing that would help with gaining more support.

**Monroe County Economic Development Conference Recap** – S. Peterson reported that the Conference went very well with 282 registered attendees, from 25 counties, 6 States and 3 Countries. He said that through the survey results most of the speakers received very high marks. Attendees wanted Marketplace to be more during the day on Wednesday and Peterson said they may drop the

Wednesday evening Marketplace because of low turnout. Business spotlights were still a very popular segment of the Conference and will be back at next year's conference. Peterson said that some of the new exhibitors did very well with leads and follow-ups. Everyone felt that Three Bears Resort did a good job as the host venue again.

Peterson said the highlight of the Conference was having the delegation from Kazakhstan attend all day on Wednesday. The group had a great time during their visit and some of them wanted to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> day but couldn't because of their schedules.

**Possible Tourism Brochure Investment – County Parks** – J. Roll was heading up the project, but he was absent, so no report. T. Thompson said that Roll was working with Shay from the Tomah Chamber on some graphic layouts for the brochure. We will revisit the brochure project next month with an updated report from Roll.

**WIGCOT – Kalahari, Wisconsin Dells** – S. Peterson, T. Thompson and N. Van Wychen attended the conference. Comments about the conference included that it was very political, but not surprising. The theme was geared more towards fear and what we weren't very good at and needed to improve on. Puzzling approach because the Conference is supposed to be a celebrating of what we've accomplished this past year and where we go in the future. The big hot button was the Outdoor Recreation department being created within the Tourism Department. Again, confusing since we've always been promoting outdoor recreation. Those attending were disappointed with the lack of time and enthusiasm the new Governor put in at the Governor's Banquet. There should have been more substance and what his vision was for State tourism in the future.

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

**Monroe County E.D. Coordinator Report** – S. Peterson's report: Much of my work this past month has been involving the Monroe County Economic Development Conference, attending State Conferences, working on the proposed Monroe County Economic Development Corporation committee and creating more marketing tools for business recruitment for the County.

#### **NEW MONROE COUNTY E.D. WEB SITE**

I created a new, up to date web site for the County E.D. efforts. Some new features and updated information along with a new look. I will be working with the City of Tomah, land owners of business park land, realtors and the Chamber on a comprehensive marketing strategy for the Tomah area. This will encompass many features and become a one stop shop for prospects looking at the Tomah area as a new home for expansion, relocation or creating a business.

#### **IN THE WORKS**

**Cashton Day Care** – Cashton – progress is really moving forward to getting this facility expanded and open in the next few months.

**Vino Anjo** – Tomah – new wine bar opened up next to the new Gen 3 building in Tomah. The renovated building is another great accent piece to the downtown Tomah area.

**South Pointe Business Park** – Sparta – Dental clinic building is moving right along. The AMS Micromedical building is taking shape and ahead of schedule.

**Tomah Healthcare campus** – hospital construction is doing very well and expected opening date of October.

**Potential Industrial Hemp company – Kendall** – discussions continue on a potential hemp technology center and CBD processing plant. Progressing but still many hurdles to overcome.

**Murray's on Main – Tomah** – opening up the weekend of March 9-10. The rest of the Gen 3 building is continuing and progressing very well.

**Connect Community** – Will be starting with the area villages on Connect Community projects this year. Most important ones will be with Norwalk, Wilton & Kendall pertaining to the repairing and opening of the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail.

#### **MEETINGS**

- WDAC Board Meeting – Appleton
- Conference call with company officials looking at industrial hemp projects in the County.
- Conference call with prospect looking at building a plant in the County. Will be at the Conference.
- WI Rural Partners Board meeting – Tomah
- WEDA Board Meeting – Milwaukee
- 7 Rivers Alliance Board meeting – strategic planning session – La Crosse
- Media – frac sand layoffs – Covia; Conference; Kendall School Marketplace

#### **REPORTS:**

**Tomah Chamber & Visitors Center** – T. Thompson reported that they've changed up their board meetings where the Executive Board does the nuts and bolts meeting and then the full Board meets with a more of working meeting. They've implemented having Tomah businesses attend the Board meeting and giving updates. Toro's meeting with the Board led to a partnership with the Chamber utilizing Toro's resources and staff, for strategic approaches to projects and issues for the Chamber.

Thompson said that the Downtown Concert Series is a full go with the approval to shut down a part of Superior Avenue each Thursday night for their event. It will be called Downtown Thursday Night and will feature music, a kid's zone, plenty of food and refreshments. A true family event. Sponsorships are available and this will accent the Music in the Park series that takes place in Gillett Park during the summer months. Thompson also said that all their event sponsorship opportunities are now available to all Chamber members.

**7 Rivers Alliance** – S. Peterson reported that a Strategic Summit on Childcare will be held on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at the AmericInn in LaCrosse. He also said that the WISE Plan is a major part of the new 7 Rivers Alliance Strategic plan.

**Hidden Valleys** – S. Peterson reported that the new magazine is out and that the board is going to look at digital marketing ideas for 2020 as a compliment to their magazine. They feel the need to get more technology savvy in the tourism marketing area.

**ITBEC** – no real news other than there are projects in the works for 2019.

**Local History Room** – no report. N. Van Wychen did report that the LHR was nominated for the Arts/Heritage Award at the Governor's Conference on Tourism and was one of 21 nominees. Even though they didn't win, it was an honor to be nominated and spotlighted at the Conference.

**Ft. McCoy** – T. Fitzgerald reported the Main Gate construction has been started and all traffic is now detoured through the old main gate. Visitors would still need to get an admission pass at the Gate Admission office first and then travel through the old gate entrance on to the base. The construction is scheduled to be completed by November.

A force protection training exercise took place at Ft. McCoy reenacting a hazardous event.

A Housing Town Hall held on the base where the Army outlined any housing issues. Ft. McCoy is different as the housing is run by the Army, not privately, so issues you see on other bases are not a factor.

Armed Forces Day – 5/18 from 9am – 3pm. Gate 15 will be open like in the past so the Main Gate construction will not be a factor. The Tomah VA Medical Center will also be part of the AFD celebration.

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

**Upcoming Events/Activities around the County** – no report.

**Agenda Items for next month:**

- County Parks brochure
- EDCT Committee 2020 plans

**Next Committee meeting** – Rescheduled to Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup> – 9:00am – Tomah Chamber & Visitors Center – Tomah.

*\*The EDCT Committee did take a tour of the new Murray's on Main, from the restaurant area to the banquet hall facility to the outside deck area.*

Motion by D. Peterson to adjourn. 2<sup>nd</sup> by T. Thompson. Meeting adjourned at 11:08am.

Submitted by:



Steve Peterson