

**MONROE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COMMERCE & TOURISM COMMITTEE  
MONTHLY MEETING – 4-18-19 – Tomah Chamber & Visitors Center - Tomah**

**Present:**

**Committee Board Members (CB):** Mark Halverson, Nodji Van Wychen

**Citizen Members (CM):**

**Advisory Members (AM):** Tina Thompson – Tomah Chamber of Commerce; Jarrod Roll – Local History Room

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

**Absent:** Dean Peterson (CB), Kevin Ravenscroft – Timberwood Bank (CM), John Hendricks – Sparta Chamber of Commerce (AM), Tonya Townsell – Ft. McCoy (AM), Jim Bialecki – County Administrator (AM)

**Special Guest:** Theresa Fitzgerald – Ft. McCoy (representing Tonya Townsell)

The meeting was posted in accordance with the open meeting law. Meeting was called to order at 9:12am by Chair Nodji Van Wychen. Rollcall was taken.

**Next Month's Meeting** – Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> – 9:00am – Sparta – location TBD

**Minutes** – Motion by M. Halverson to approve the minutes. Second by T. Thompson. Motion carried.

**Financial/Invoices** – S. Peterson presented 3 invoices to be paid. Invoice #1 – Essex Capital - \$1,416.67. This invoice for 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of our annual membership for prospect vetting and interviews. The annual membership is shared with the Cities of Sparta and Tomah. Invoice #2 – Map-N-Tour - \$3,800.00. This is the annual maintenance and membership with the 3D Virtual Mapping System for the County Economic Development web site and marketing tools. These 2 invoices were part of the Marketing & Promotions line-item in the County E.D. budget. Invoice #3 – Top Dog Marketing - \$325.00. This is for the update and maintenance of the Monroe County Tourism web site. Each year, after the new County tourism guide is printed, the web site is upgraded with that current information and graphics. This invoice was part of the Marketing & Promotion line-item in the Tourism budget. M. Halverson made a motion to pay the invoices. 2<sup>nd</sup> by N. Van Wychen. Motion carried.

**Monroe County Economic Development Corporation update** – S. Peterson informed the MCEDC Committee members who did not attend the March meeting 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 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 was 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.

MCEDC 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 suggested that we continue to pursue keeping the current E.D. Coordinator's contract in the future as is. It was suggested that we talk with County Administrator Tina Osterberg at our May meeting about the successes and value of keeping the contracted position and work on getting it put in the proposed 2020 budget. It was also suggested that if any E.D. successes that occur in the County over the next few months that S. Peterson speak to the entire County Board and boast about the E.D. growth that his efforts are leading to in the County.

**EDCT Committee 2020 Plans** – the Committee wanted to keep this on future agendas as the group works on prospects, potential marketing strategies and recruitment efforts for 2020. This would help educate the entire County Board on the importance of keeping the contracted E.D. Coordinator's position in place in 2020 and beyond.

**County Parks Brochure** – J. Roll said that the process was moving forward as Evans Printing & Media Group offered a bid less than the approved \$500 amount for a new County Parks brochure. J. Roll said that he was working with Evans and Shay Jilek from the Tomah Chamber on the graphic layout. The invoice was submitted by Evans Printing with the approved date so funding would be taken out of the 2018 budget money as it was approved by the Committee in December 2018. Roll was going to check with Lisa Hanson to see if she got the invoice and getting it paid.

S. Peterson brought up about reprinting a new Campground Guide brochure. He said that last one had been done in the 90's and they were now gone, and that the Committee should consider doing another version since camping is getting to be so popular. This would not only include the campgrounds in the County Parks but all campgrounds in the County. The Committee recommended that it be put on next month's agenda.

**GO MONROE COUNTY Activities Guide** – S. Peterson presented a list of shipping schedules and receipts from Evans Printing & Media Group on the cases of guides that had been shipped out this year already. The shipping costs were \$202.16. Greg Evans had discussed with the Committee at the March meeting about possibly getting reimbursed for those costs. The Committee felt that the distribution was included in the printing contract even though a 2019 Go Monroe County Activities Guide contract was still not signed. It was suggested by Committee members that distribution responsibility and costs should be outlined in the next Guide RFP that will be offered in June to potential businesses wanting to bid on the 2020 Guide project.

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

#### **MONROE COUNTY E.D. COORDINATOR Report**

**Community Venture Network** – Twin Cities – I met with 14 prospects in the Twin Cities a week ago and 9 are seriously looking at the County, with 4 planning visits in the next 3 weeks.

**CBD Industrial Hemp Plant** – Kendall – I've been recruiting this company for months. We had 2 ½ days of

meetings in Kendall and everyone's very optimistic that this project is going to happen. It will lead to a manufacturing plant, a technology/research & development center and a 60-apartment workforce housing project. Peterson said it would be a game changer for the Kendall, the County and region along with having a very positive effect on the struggling farming community around the County. This is a MAJOR project that is proposed to come to Monroe County. The potential project would include the proposed company to purchase the old Kendall elementary school and renovate it into a CBD Technology & Research Center.

The company also plans to acquire 40 acres of land in the Village to build a 60-apartment workforce housing project as part of their overall plan. The goal is to contract area farmers for 120 acres of CBD industrial Hemp the first year which could have a real economic impact on our region. And, with the Technology Center, there would be scientists, agronomists and botanists who would be moving into the area with their families.

**Prospects** – right now I have 13 prospects that I am still in the running for. They are at various stages of recruitment but in almost all the cases I've made the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> cut when competing for their company. 3 of the prospects will be visiting the County over the next month. 4 others I have meetings set up with potential investors and State agencies as we continue to put our recruitment plans together. This includes WEDC, USDA Rural Development, WHEDA, DATCP and the WI Dept. of Administration.

**GROW TOMAH digital campaign** – working with the City of Tomah, Tomah Chamber, Forward Tomah, owners of business park land, realtors and commercial property owners on a joint digital campaign to market the City of Tomah. With the success with Sparta's South Pointe Business Park as a state-certified site, I feel that Tomah needs to build a stronger presence with their marketing efforts, especially digitally. This campaign will hopefully be launched by the end of May, if not sooner.

**Cashton Day Care** – Cashton – construction of the addition to the building will begin soon. Brickl Brothers has the contract.

**Gen 3 building – Tomah** – great turnouts already at Murray's on Main as the bar/restaurant is open and the banquet facility on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor will be having its first event in early April. The apartments and professional offices are still under construction and will be opening later this spring.

**South Pointe Business Park – Sparta** – Dental clinic building is close to completion. The AMS Micromedical building is taking shape with the enclosure coming soon. A new Martin Warehousing building will be started soon in the Park too.

**Tomah Healthcare campus** – hospital & clinic construction is progressing very well, and the time frames of opening are still on track.

**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 – Madison
- Conference calls continuing with company officials & State officials on the industrial hemp projects in the County.

- Site visit with prospect – Tomah & Sparta – looking at industrial land and warehousing
- WI Rural Partners Board meeting – Rice Lake
- WEDA Board Meeting – Milwaukee
- Governor’s Conference on Tourism – Wisconsin Dells
- 7 Rivers Alliance Board meeting – La Crosse

Along with the report submitted with the Committee meeting packet, S. Peterson’s reported that he’d been invited to testify in front of the Assembly Rural Economic Development Committee in Madison in late May on the seriousness of rural workforce housing in the area and it’s impact on recruitment and retention of employees.

## **REPORTS:**

**Sparta Chamber** – no report.

**Tomah Chamber & Visitors Center** – T. Thompson reported that the last Workforce Panel for the year at Tomah High School is taking place on 4/18. Great way to network with over 400 students with Tomah area businesses.

Thompson said that the Downtown Concert Series is a full go with shutting down a part of Superior Avenue each Thursday night for their event. It will be called Downtown Thursday Nights and will feature music, a kid’s zone, face painting, food trucks and refreshments. A true family-event. Gates will open at 5pm and music at 6pm. Entertainment will feature bands from across the nation and different music formats each week. Thompson said that they’ve signed a 5-year contract to do this event. They anticipate an economic impact of over \$300,000 in the first year and over \$1.25 million for the long term. The first event will be held on July 4<sup>th</sup>.

Thompson said that Forward Tomah will be having their annual meeting on May 16<sup>th</sup> at Murray’s on Main and the featured speaker is Andrew Bremmer from MSA, who will be talking about the long range plan for the downtown area and City of Tomah and the things that will be upgraded around the community.

**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 handed out the new 7 Rivers Region magazine that features all the great things of the area as we recruit people to move into the area and work. Magazines will be distributed throughout the 7 Rivers Alliance region.

**Hidden Valleys** – S. Peterson reported that the board is continuing their efforts to do more digital marketing in 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 2019-2020.

**Local History Room** – J. Roll said that bus tours have started to come to the Local History Room. They are offering food treats as part of the tour. They are charging \$6 per person on the tour and that is a big change from the little to nothing they charged in the past. Most of the tours are being coordinated by either the Deke Slayton Space & Bicycle Museum or the Sparta Chamber of Commerce.

Roll said the monthly public history series has been a big hit. Good turnouts and positive feedback. The last Thursday of April the LHR will host a session on the Civilian Conservation Corps and the impact they had on the history of Wisconsin.

J Roll was in Madison as part of the creation of the new \$100 million State Historical Museum. They are interviewing Counties on what makes them special and their interesting stories. The new museum will be located at the same location as the old museum that will be torn down.

**Ft. McCoy** – T. Fitzgerald handed out information about the Economic Impact Study of Ft. McCoy which showed a \$1.3 billion-dollar impact to the area. She also said the Main Gate construction continues and all traffic is now detoured through the old main gate. There is also construction going on along Highway 21 as a new gas line is being put in.

Fitzgerald reminded the Committee about 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** – S. Peterson reminded the Committee of the 7 Rivers Alliance Childcare Summit on Tuesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 8am – 2pm at the AmericInn in La Crosse. He also reminded everyone of the upcoming Wisconsin Rural Partners Summit on April 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> at Rice Lake.

N. Van Wychen was congratulated on their recent purchase of the Warrens Cranberry Discovery Center. Van Wychen said that the Center needed to be kept going in Warrens and their partners will be running the center.

**Agenda Items for next month:**

- Campground Brochure
- EDCT Committee 2020 plans
- Go Monroe County Activities Guide RFP discussion

Motion by M. Halverson to adjourn. 2<sup>nd</sup> by J. Roll. Meeting adjourned at 10:38am.

Submitted by:



Steve Peterson