

**MONROE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COMMERCE & TOURISM COMMITTEE  
MEETING - Thursday, July 14, 2016 – 9:00am – Tomah City Hall/Steve Peterson’s office**

**Attending:**

County Board: Sharon Folcey – Chair, Dean Peterson, Nodji Van Wychen, Cathy Schmit

Citizen Members: Pete Reichardt, Dennis Berg, Mary Jo Hill

Advisory Members: Tonya Townsell, Tina Thompson, Tim Hyma

Economic Development Coordinator: Steve Peterson

**Absent:**

Bernie Arena, Jarrod Roll

Meeting called to order by Chair Folcey at 9:01am. Dennis Berg from Citizens First Bank in Sparta was introduced as the new Citizen Member on the Committee, replacing Carol Ostrem.

***Minutes.*** Approval of the Jun 9, 2016 minutes. Motion by Thompson, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Reichardt to approve the minutes. Motion passed.

***Financials.*** The Committee reviewed the current budget with discussion of the amount of money still available in the Tourism line item. Folcey recommended to the committee that they think of potential projects and sponsorships that the committee could consider in the near future. Peterson outlined a potential County-wide workshop that he’d like to see happen towards the end of the year educating businesses on tapping into the revenue potential of the bicycling tourism on the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail. It was also discussed about looking at funding for improving/upgrading the County web site and potential help on other tourism destination web sites.

Peterson presented an invoice for a 6-month membership with Essex Capital. This vetting company recruits potential companies that are looking at Wisconsin and other surrounding States for potential expansion, relocation or starting their business. Peterson said that Essex Capital holds Prospect Meetings 3 times a year in the Twin Cities where members meet with these prospects and learn more about their companies. He said that 5 prospects are looking at Monroe County because of this program. The annual membership fee would be split equally between the County and the cities of Sparta and Tomah. The amount was \$709 for a membership from 8/1/16 – 12/31/16. It was recommended that the 2017 annual membership be included in the 2017 budget as a line item. Motion by D. Peterson, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Reichardt. Motion passed.

***EDCT Coordinator Report.*** Peterson recapped his work over the past month. His full written report will be given to Chair Folcey & Monroe County Administrator Schmit. Highlights included the City of Tomah Council approving a land purchase & amended TID on the south side of the City; attending the first Connect Community Workshop in Watertown; being appointed to a

WEDC Taskforce to create a new tag line for Wisconsin business recruitment; representing the County on an issue with the naming of the long eared bat as an endangered species and the impact of having the trail tunnel doors being closed as early as October 15<sup>th</sup> each year and the impact it would have on the Rails to Trails Marathon in Norwalk and biking on the trail during the fall colors season; and announcing Governor Walker's listening session scheduled in Monroe County on July 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Monroe County E.D. Conference.** Three Bears Resort in Warrens will be the host site for the 2017 Conference. S. Peterson will be meeting with the owners to work out all the details. This will include the banquet room layout, food prices, room rates, etc. Peterson recommended to the Committee that the conference be expanded to a 2 day event.

On Wed., Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup> the Conference would begin at 12pm with a full afternoon of sessions targeting tourism and retail/commercial topics. At 5pm, a 2 hour Marketplace would take place showcasing booths of businesses/resources/services. It would be similar to a Business @ 5 program and it was suggested possibly coordinating with the Sparta & Tomah Chambers on partnering on this. On Thurs., Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> the Conference would be run like past Conferences with registration from 7am – 8am and then a full day of sessions and networking.

There was discussion on the pros and cons of this format. The increase in the registration fee, how to price out events over the 2 days, potential issues with businesses committing two days to having a booth and finding the volunteers to help manage the conference. The committee instructed Peterson to survey past attendees & sponsors on their thoughts about the 2 day conference. The Committee felt there were many good reasons to expand to 2 days, but wanted to see more breakdown, costs and business input. Motion by Thompson, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Hill to move forward with expanding the Conference to 2 days with a breakdown report from Peterson at the August committee meeting. Motion passed.

**Elroy-Sparta Tunnel Debate.** S. Peterson explained the latest dialogue happening between the WI DNR and the Federal Fish & Wildlife Department. The long eared bat has been designated by the federal government as an endangered species in 2016. Because the bat hibernates in the tunnels of the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail, the F&W Dept. would like to close the tunnel doors on October 15<sup>th</sup>, well over a month earlier than in the past years. Norwalk holds their annual Rails to Trails Marathon on the 1<sup>st</sup> weekend in November each year. It is a sanctioned race and a Boston Marathon qualifying race. The track & date this year cannot be changed. They expect over 1,000 runners this year. It also affects the bike trail usage during the fall colors season. The DNR is defending us in keeping the tunnels open until after the Marathon this year and then looking at moving the date next year. Discussion continues and there is signs that the extension will be granted with contingencies that can be met. More discussions will be continuing.

**Connect Communities.** S. Peterson attended the first Connect Community Workshop as part of the certification of Monroe County being a pilot program. He also has been meeting with each of the Village's Boards to explain the program and start the process of getting representation from each village on a County-wide Connect Community Taskforce. Peterson said that he's very happy with the response he's received from the Boards so far about the program and the potential of working on future projects to grow their communities.

**Google Maps.** S. Peterson said the process is continuing with updating businesses on the Google Business Map Search. Tomah has had 2 workshops so far along with Cashton. Turnout has been good. Peterson is trying to schedule a Warrens business workshop in August before the Warrens Cranberry Festival. Most of the other communities will be done in late fall when more will have time to participate.

**Revolving Loan Fund.** There has been quite a bit of activity with the Fund as 3 businesses have been approved for funding over the past month. Growing Stars Child Development Center LLC & Specialty Foods in Sparta and USEMCO in Tomah have been approved for funding. The brochure and booklet on the RLF has been revised and will be approved at the next Review Board meeting. Peterson added that there are a few more potential businesses who are working on funding applications.

**Go Monroe County Distribution.** Greg Evans from Evans Printing could not attend, but distribution of the magazine continues. Thompson and Hyma stated that they are distributing them as well and shipments have been sent to Visitors Centers around the State.

**Announcements.** Thompson reported on the progress of the old DNR building in Tomah that will be the future home of the Tomah Chamber of Commerce/CVB. Bids are now being taken on the renovation and info can be found on the Chamber's web site. She also outlined the upcoming traveling art shows that will be set up in some of the empty buildings in downtown Tomah. It will hopefully generate traffic to see the works of local artists and showcase the open building space that is available too.

Hyma reported that Neighborhood Clinic will be opening up their facility in downtown Sparta in a week. He recommended to the committee to stop out at the Cotter Pin business that has opened up in Leon, featuring wines, micro beers and food. Hyma also stated that he is losing his Assistant at the Chamber and has hired a couple part time employees to bridge the gap in staff until he can get full time help.

Townsell reported that high numbers of troops continue to train at Ft. McCoy and the activity will continue for quite some time.

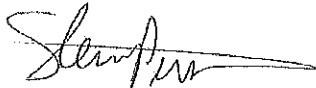
Van Wychen reported on the progress of the CranGrow project in Warrens. The 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the company will be completed with an open house on August 11<sup>th</sup>. There will be a light lunch at 11:30am and ceremony with Governor Scott Walker at 12:30pm. This is a state of the art facility with equipment & processes that have not been seen in the U.S. before.

County Administrator Schmit reported on the progress of the Justice Center construction. The old jail building is being torn down and progress on the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase is in full gear. Other consolidation of departments near the new center is being worked on to get more of the County departments centrally located.

**Next meeting date/location.** CranGrow – Warrens – August 11<sup>th</sup> – 9am. Other future meeting locations were discussed and will be looked into – Citizens First Bank – Sparta; U.S. Silica – Sparta; United Cooperative – Wilton.

Motion by Reichardt, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Thompson to adjourn. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 10:52am.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Peterson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Peterson