March 19, 2015 Minutes

Monroe County Economic Development, Commerce & Tourism Committee

Sparta Barney Center, Sparta, WI

The meeting was called in accordance with the open meeting law requirements.

Committee members present: Sharon Folcey, Nodji Van Wychen, Dean Peterson, Bruce Humphrey

Citizen members: Carol Ostrem, Mary Jo Hill

Advisory members: Linda Fournier, Bernie Arena, Tina Thompson, Tim Hyma

Economic Development Coordinator: Steve Peterson Guest: Amanda Grossell

Folcey called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

Motion by Humphrey to approve the minutes of the February meeting as presented. Second by D. Peterson. Motion carried.

The committee reviewed its financials. Motion by Peterson to pay the bills as presented. Second by Van Wychen. Motion carried.

S. Peterson gave his report which included:

* Announcing that Monroe and Crawford counties were selected by the WEDC to be the pilot program for the Connect Community counties program, giving the counties access to all programs the WEDC offers, including grants. It will officially be announced in July or August.
* 7 River is bringing back the business retention project. The survey has been streamlined and Western technical College is helping with the surveys. Monroe County has 35 surveys to do.
* The bio-diesel plant is coming back to Cashton.
* Theisen’s (in Sparta) will be opening at the end of the month.
* Tomah has some commercial businesses coming that cannot be announced yet.
* The Elroy-Sparta bike trail will celebrate its 50th anniversary on June 6th in Kendall at 2 p.m. The DNR is helping with the promotion.

S. Peterson reported on the February 26, 2015 economic development conference. There were 206 paid registrants. 39 surveys were filled out. Of those 51% were from the public sector and 29% were from the private sector. Over $5,000 was made in registrations and sponsorships. People from 14 counties and 3 states attended and 7% stayed at least one night in a hotel. He noted some positive feedback on the ratings for each session with the venue receiving a very high grade.

Folcey noted that the “Go Monroe County” magazine was finished for the conference and has been distributed.

S. Peterson noted that some changes and updates will be forthcoming to the video.

5-minute reports:

* Arena noted that Hidden Valleys will be attending the Wisconsin Sport Show in EauClaire, WI this weekend, March 20-22, 2015. It is being held at the new Menard’s Conference Center. They also had a booth at the Governor’s Conference on Tourism. Hidden Valleys did not meet in March because of all the trade shows and the Governor’s Conference on Tourism. Their annual meeting will be May 20, 2015 in Lafayette County.
* Tina Thompson introduced Amanda Grossell. Grossell is the new Tomah Chamber tourism and marketing associate. She hails from Winona, MN. Grossell told the committee some of her background. Thompson stated they got the keys to the Ranger Station to begin making an assessment and plan to move forward with a renovation. She mentioned a Young Professionals event slated for April 9th at 3 Bears Lodge. A teacher from Egypt will be making a presentation. They are also working on the Connect Communities project due in April.
* Tim Hyma stated they had a booth at the Governor’s Conference on Tourism and Canoecopia at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison. Theisen’s Store ribbon cutting will be March 31st. Hyma received a $10,000 grant from the state department of tourism to help with the 6 day bike ride “Will to Ben”. Hyma will attend the Wheel & Sprocket show in Milwaukee April 9-11.
* Fournier handed out the Executive Summary. 20,000 troops are currently training at Fort McCoy. $17.5 million has been secured in FY15 funding to build access control gates. The housing project (56 homes) will begin this year. The children of those families will attend the Sparta School District.
* Van Wychen reported that the SW-ITBEC board met at the American Legion and held a strategic planning session with Steve Peterson leading the discussion. It was decided to contract for a part-time director. A grant of $1,020 was given to “Our Town Tomah” for a spring beautification and cleanup project.
* S. Peterson said the WATA (Wisconsin Agriculture Tourism Association) conference is slated from noon to noon March 30 & 31, 2015 at the Ho-Chunk Hotel & Casino in Baraboo, WI. He also mentioned the four education days set up by the group. April 28th in Barron, WI; April 30th in Manitowoc, WI; May 12th in Marshfield, WI; and May 14th in Platteville, WI. All sessions will be held from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Motion by Van Wychen to pay for committee members to attend the WATA conference. Second by Humphrey. Motion carried.

Motion by Humphrey to adjourn. Second by D. Peterson. Motion carried.

The next meeting will be Thursday, April 9th at 9 a.m. at the F&M Bank in Tomah.

Bernie Arena, Recorder