Monroe County Economic Development, Commerce & Tourism Committee

Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes, June 11, 2015—Pending Approval

Pizones, 202 Superior Ave., Tomah, WI

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

Committee members present: Sharon Folcey, Jim Schroeder, Bruce Humphrey

Citizen member present: Mary Jo Hill

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

Economic Development Coordinator: Steve Peterson

Chair Folcey called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Motion by Schroeder to accept the May 14, 2015 minutes as presented. Second by Humphrey. Motion carried.

There was no financial review because the information was not available at the meeting. Bills were presented and approved on a motion by Humphrey, seconded by Schroeder. Motion carried.

ED coordinator report:

* The 50th anniversary of the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail was a huge success. Fifty riders from each of the five communities along the trail met for a group photo at Tunnel #1. Nearly 400 people attended the afternoon ceremony at the Kendall Depot. Stephanie Klett, state tourism secretary was among them. This event may lead to a “Grand Daddy Ride” moving to a different trail community each year. The June dairy breakfast will be in Kendall next year so it would be a great tie in for the event.
* The ad placed in the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation’s mailing to big manufacturers was passed around for the committee to see.
* The new economic development website will be up next week.
* Hyma, Thompson and Peterson met with John Fields, a “growth coach” from Eau Claire, WI. As a result an upcoming event will be held in the county in October this year.
* Peterson met with the Kendall Village Board regarding the 7 Rivers survey. He will meet with other village boards to complete the project.
* The Tomah TIF District was approved.
* Gordy’s in Tomah will be installing gas pumps.
* Cashton: The high school is expanding. Photos of the enhanced street design were shown. Peterson is working with Peter Fletcher for a USDA grant in connection with the Connect Community and Hwy. 33 project.
* Wilton: United Co-op is doing a $2 million expansion.
* Kendall: The feed mill has been bought by a local person.

Monroe County was approved for the Connect Community pilot program. Peterson will meet with the 7 village boards who qualify for the programs—Norwalk, Wilton, Kendall, Warrens, Wyeville, Oakdale and Melvina. After the official announcement of the pilot program by WEDC, programs will be looked at for future benefits for these villages.

Folcey noted that the final economic development report was in Leslie’s packet and had not been picked up for the meeting. Peterson stated that all bills were taken care of and all money was received from sponsors. They are checking on a place for next year’s conference. By rotation Sparta would be the next community to host the conference.

Roll stated that the good thing about our present website (bikesandberries) is that it is free, and the number of unique hits is growing. Last April the hits were 250 and this April they were 525. The “con” side of that is that it is done by voluntary workers and sometimes info is slow getting changed on the site. Roll stated that the site is heavy on text and needs more photos, and it should be adapted for mobile phone usage. The domain name needs to be renewed. Peterson agreed with Roll’s assessment of the site.

Peterson said the GoMonroeCounty.com site will have more graphics, a Google calendar for best usage, and you can turn a page with your mouse. The “Go Monroe Guide” will be the refresher for the site.

Peterson presented his proposal for the site. There was discussion on weather is needed to be put out on bids. Folcey will check with the county administrator on policy for this. Motion by Schroeder to have Top Dog Promotions do the website for the bid presented, if approved by the county administrator. Second by Humphrey. Motion carried.

Potential marketing ideas included Phase 3 digital, an e-mail targeting program, advertising opportunities and building website banners.

Five minutes reports:

* Hidden Valleys: Arena stated the annual meeting was held May 20, 2015, at the Gnarly Oak Restaurant in Blanchardville, WI. Thirty people were in attendance including State Tourism Secretary Stephanie Klett, Patrick Reinsma from the department of tourism, and Greg Smith from Discover Wisconsin. Hidden Valleys will be putting their free ad in the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel in late August to promote fall events and activities in Southwest Wisconsin. The mapping project for the 2016 magazine is in the works. Marie Sersch, Bob and Twila Thomas and Donna Douglas were honored for their many years of dedication and leadership to the Hidden Valleys organization. Arena said that Monroe County will have the front cover and four extra full pages inside of the 2017 magazine. This will be an additional $3,500 cost to the county. It will need to be put into the 2016 budget as it is payable by March 1, 2016. Action was necessary on the 2016 Hidden Valleys ad. Arena gave the contract to Folcey for presentation. Motion by Schroeder to do the full page inside front cover for the 2016 magazine at a cost of $2,805. Second by Humphrey. Motion carried. Folcey signed the contract noting that the committee will want to make changes to the ad. The changes will be done at the July meeting.
* Chambers: Thompson said upcoming events include 4th of July parade and fireworks, the golf outing and SBAF on June 24th at Gordy’s. Gordy’s donated $2,000 for the fireworks on the 4th. They are defining a long term lease with the City of Tomah for the old DNR building. They have received two architect bids so far for remodeling and one more will be coming. They had 250 people at their music in the park. They are working on defining a brand, and developing a wish list for Tomah. Hyma had a photo op with the Department of Tourism presenting a check for $18,000 for the Driftless Destinations project and a $10,000 check for the “Will to Ben” bicycle tour October 3-9, 2015 from Illinois to Wisconsin. He said 10,000 Driftless Destinations brochures were printed in February and another 10,000 will be printed next week. They have placed an ad in Thunder Roads; have two digital billboards and one vinyl billboard. SBAF will be moving to Thursdays so as not to conflict with the Tomah SBAFs. Healing Artistry Therapy is a new business in downtown Sparta. Reinhart Mueller will be renovating the Dodge & Davis building.
* Fort McCoy: Fournier stated lots of training is going on right now. The commemorative area and history center are handicap accessible. The grand opening of the newly remodeled history center will be September 11, 2015 on Patriot’s Day. This is also retiree day at Fort McCoy. There is now a USO presence on Fort McCoy providing cookies, coffee and perhaps phone cards to the troops training.
* Bikes & Berries/Local History Room: Roll stated that they just got word the front entrance to the history room will be closed from the end of June through July and August. They will be re-routing people through their back door. They have two projects happening at the Wegner Grotto from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on August 22nd. Plein air painting will take place at the grotto along with a mosaics project. There is no registration for the projects. People just show up. Last year 53 people did the plein air painting. The History Room is looking into elevator options both inside and outside. Humphrey expressed concern about the parking spaces available around the museum.
* SW-ITBEC: Folcey noted that a presentation is being developed for new counties to try and get more of them on board with the organization.
* WATA: Peterson stated that the education days have wrapped up. Next year these will be slated in February. The Wisconsin Farm Bureau is a member and an “Ag in the Classroom” curriculum is being developed. Travis Trammel is helping WATA develop a bill concerning the over 100 wedding barns in the state. They hope to get it to the floor in the legislature in September. WATA has almost 200 members. They are putting weekly tips on their Facebook page. The new motor coach publication is coming out and will be sent to 20,000 prospective clients.
* Peterson commented on the 7 Rivers Alliance project “Momentum West” where they are wining and dining six people for possible site selection in the area. The project cost is $60,000.

The next meeting will be July 9th.

Motion by Schroeder to adjourn. Second by Humphrey. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernie Arena