**Board Meeting Minutes**

**June 11, 2020**

**Perry County Economic Development Authority**

**Perry County Business and Tourism Center**

**New Bloomfield, PA.**

**Attendees:** Rich Pluta, Russ Hoover, Patti McLaughlin, Dawn Lowe, John Gerner, Duane Hertzler, Morgan Tressler, Shawna Weller, Kevin Fitzpatrick, Frank Campbell, Derek Whitesel, Mike Lawler, Brenda Watson, Marti Roberts

**Staff:** Michelle Jones

**Absent:** Jim Fuller, Emery Yoder, Greg Gordon

**Excused:**

**Visitors:** Jason Finnerty

**Call to Order:**

The monthly meeting of the PCEDA was called to order by Chair Marti Roberts at 8:01 AM. The meeting was held via a “Zoom” conference call.

**Public Comment:** Jason Finnerty reported the following:

* To date, the County Planning Commission has received 36 land development plans for review representing 70 new lots. While the total number of plans submitted for approval is down three from this time last year, the total number of lots is up 49 over last year. Most of the new home lots are in Rockville Estates in Marysville.
* He has been helping the county emergency managers update their Continuity of Operations Plan update. He is also working on updates to the Developers Resource Guide.
* Census count committee is reporting that responses have been slow in western end of community. Possible ways to improve responses were discussed, including fliers going out with student lunch program at West Perry.
* He is reviewing the three proposals submitted for the COG broadband initiative. SEDA-COG wants to bring on consultants, test run in each county. John Gerner asked if he knew if the County Commissioners have given thought to using stimulus money to improve broadband coverage. Brenda Watson said that she understands there will be limits/mandates on how the stimulus money can be spent and they will have to wait to learn more about how the money can be used. The County Grant Writer is also working on grant that could bring something here faster.
* Marti Roberts said we are looking forward to hearing how our proposed outdoor recreation plan proposal fares.

**Secretary’s Report:**

John Gerner presented minutes of our May 14, 2020 board meeting which had been distributed to all board members on June 9th. Patti McLaughlin made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, Kevin Fitzpatrick seconded the motion. The motion was approved by voice vote without dissent.

**Treasurer’s Report:**

Patti McLaughlin presented the Financial Report for the period ending May 31, 2020 prepared by Robert Morris & Co., which was distributed to all board members on May 12th. Ms. McLaughlin advised that the report reflects normal monthly expenses and payroll costs. However, due to an issue with syncing the online credit card account and Quickbooks, some minor expenses incurred in May were not recorded, but will be reflected in the June report. Michelle Jones advised that we are still waiting for reimbursement from the USDA for the last $10K payment to Kitchen Table Consultants, and for the $14K payment for our work in the ENGAGE program. Russ Hoover made a motion to approve the Treasurer’s Report as presented, John Gerner seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a voice vote without dissent.

**Chair Report:**

Marti Roberts reported as follows:

* Marti Roberts and Michelle Jones will be talking to Tripp Muldrow in the next week to figure out next steps and set date for renewing Downtown Revitalization efforts. At this point they believe that setting up meetings in July with Blain, Loysville, and Landisburg provide the best options for getting the program back on track. It was suggested that Michelle Jones check on the availability of the Perry Mennonite Center for some of the meetings since meeting space in some of these communities is limited. Ms. Roberts advised that the Recreational Trails grant request has been coordinated with the Muldrow team.
* Marti recently had a conversation with Jasmine Colbert from the Perry County Council of Arts and their interest in having PCEDA partner with them for Our Town Art grant request. PCEDA’s Downtown project would be used as a match for the Our Town grants to incorporate some art aspect in each borough. They are also looking to use their “Arts in Education” program to get kids involved. The grant application deadline is in August, so Ms. Roberts will provide more information at our July meeting.
* The Commonwealth issued a press release recently regarding a new small business grant program being run through DCED to help local small business recover from pandemic impacts. Guidelines and application have yet to be developed and released. DFI/Community First Fund is going to be releasing the money. The money will be in the form of grant, not loans, and the point is to cover expenses incurred due to shut down in response to Covid-19. Working with the Chamber, we should encourage businesses to get their name on the list to receive the application, however the money will not be distributed on a first come/first served basis, the applications will be scored and funds released based on that score.
* Morgan Tressler advised that the yard signs promoting Perry County businesses are complete and she will be picking them up soon up. She ordered 100 “Support Perry” and 100 “Shop Perry”. She will work with Michelle Jones to come up with a distribution plan. Ms. Tressler said that she has a photo of the signs and she will share it with the Board members.

**Staff Report:**

Michelle Jones reported on the following:

* The audit of our 2019 financial records is underway with about 98% of our records reviewed and Ms. Jones expects to get the rest finished this week.
* LFPP contacts who expressed interest in Perry County were sent emails to see if we could help in any way, but we had no responses.
* LFPP final report and final reimbursement request of $10,000 payment were submitted to USDA. They advised that their office is behind but confirmed receipt of request. They recommend we request a meeting with them to discuss where to go next with this project.
* One of our business plan clients who was interested in the New Bloomfield Orrstown building is bowing out, but we received a new call this week for a business expansion plan in Duncannon.
* Ms. Jones advised that she spoke with Josh Parrish from the Nature Conservancy about the Neville White property- they have raised over half of the $4.5 million they need to purchase the property. They discussed the possibility of working with us on future projects, such as our planning studies, that could be done jointly.
* PCEDA hosted call with the Chamber of Commerce and SCPaWorks to listen to the concerns of county employers in the wake of the pandemic. Had about 20 people in attendance, wished for more businesses, but the feedback was exceptionally good. The issues that arose are about what you would expect: finding and hiring qualified candidates, need for more training in county, marketing woes, no childcare. Great participation from all involved.
* Attendance in the business class we are offering through ENGAGE has dropped to five participants, but they are very satisfied with what they are learning. The discussion of profit/loss statements and balance sheets was extraordinarily successful and pointed up the fact that many attempting to start a new business need to have a better understanding of business financing.

**Old Business/Announcements:**

* Kevin Fitzpatrick advised of the recent opening of Farmer’s Daughter restaurant in New Bloomfield.
* Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if it would be appropriate for Talmudic University to join the Chamber of Commerce? Rich Pluta encouraged them to do so. Mr. Fitzpatrick also advised that the University is looking for a full-time maintenance person. Mr. Pluta advise that when they join the Chamber they can post their job description.
* Frank Campbell advised that the Fair Board, the engineer, and the water authority had planned to meet to discuss the water system design requirements, but that meeting has cancelled due to the pandemic. Since that time, a new engineer has been brought on board and the process of getting everyone back together needs to be restarted. Need to satisfy concerns of water authority. Representative Mark Keller and others are still looking at options to hold auction for livestock raised by local students.

**New Business:**

* Patti McLaughlin informed the Board of a video entitled “Last Supper, Losing It All” concerning the Laurel Run Tavern. She said it is very moving and she will share it with the Board.
* Center for Dairy Excellence will be issuing draft dietary guidelines that likely will hurt dairy farmers since they will likely not recommend the distribution of whole milk to school children. Some are requesting that the Secretary of Agriculture to not release the guidelines yet but are asking for further review of the science.
* Rich Pluta noted House Resolution 836 which calls for the ending of the Emergency Order regarding the pandemic. The Governor cannot veto the measure. This will lead to a court case. Democratic legislators and the Governor say that if the measure goes into effect the state will lose funding. At this point the Chamber is saying that nothing has changed until this is resolved through the courts. Also, only in Perry County would we get a new restaurant business during a pandemic shutdown.
* Marti Roberts advised that she, Rich Pluta, Frank Campbell, and Michelle Jones had an informal discussion with the commissioners regarding the Public Works and Economic Adjustment Grants – the amount has increased with CARES funding - to discuss ideas on how the county could use the money. Any application must meet/address community planning, work force development, and job creation goals. We shared ideas from Local Food Promotion Program study we recently completed. The grant application process will require a significant effort in the near term. The last application to this program was for water and sewer systems in the Business Campus 20 years ago.
* Brenda Watson advised that the state is looking to distribute money to non-profit organizations who lost money during the pandemic shutdown. While no specific guidance on this has been developed, she recommended that non-profit organizations should begin to assemble data to be able to show losses due to the shutdown based on a three-year average. She expects the program will have a short application period.
* Frank Campbell noted the speed with which the PA Options building in the Perry Innovations Park (Business Campus) is being built -it is a huge building. Jason Finnerty advised that the County Planning Commission will be reviewing a grant application for clean energy grant valued at $3 million to bring natural gas service to the Perry Innovations Park. They will also be evaluating a $1.45 million funding request for a water system project in Penn Township.

**Adjourn:**  Marti Roberts asked for a motion to adjourn. Patti McLaughlin proposed a motion to adjourn, Frank Campbell seconded the motion, and the motion was approved by a voice vote without dissent at 8:58 AM