**Minutes of Board Meeting**

**September 14, 2023**

**Perry County Economic Development Authority**

**Perry County Business and Tourism Center**

**New Bloomfield, PA.**

**Attendees:** Rich Pluta, Marti Roberts, Frank Campbell, Russ Hoover, Brenda Watson, David Misner, Dee Anderson, John Gerner

**Virtual participants:** None

**Staff:** Michelle Jones, Kyleigh Spidle

**Absent:** None

**Excused:** Duane Hertzler, Patti McLaughlin

**Visitors:** Jason Finnerty, Edward Barben

**Call to Order:**

The August 2023 PCEDA Board Meeting was called to order by Chair Marti Roberts at 8:31 AM.

**Public Comment:**

Jason Finnerty, the County Planner, reported as follows:

* 63 land development plans have been submitted to the county planning commission for approval this year, which is 8 behind this time last year. These plans represent 30 new residential lots, which is 74 behind last year’s pace.
* Mr. Finnerty brought plans for 3 new solar farms proposed in the county. Two proposed installations are in Liverpool Borough, one with 5200 panels on 12 acres and the other with 3680 panels on 6.6 acres. The third installation is in Buffalo Township (no zoning) with 12551 panels on 38.5 acres. The Buffalo Township project also includes 3 new lots for single family residential use. Reportedly, one of the Liverpool projects has been withdrawn. Brenda Watson advised that she has heard that the PJM distribution network is slowing down on accepting these projects into their system, but that individual property owners can still tie into the local system. This likely will slow down the implementation of larger solar projects because it will be so many years before the power will be accepted into the system. Jason Finnerty commented that some of these properties have sewer and water lines through them and would result in desirable development areas being lost to less productive use.
* Mr. Finnerty advised that his discussion of Tri-County Planning Commission’s Active Transportation Study was well received at the recent township supervisors’ meeting.

Frank Campbell introduced Mr. Edward Barben, a fellow member of the Newport Rotary. Mr. Barben is a retired banker, now an organic hobby farmer and is active in the United Way. He has been a county resident since 2013 and has expressed interest in PCEDA activities.

**Secretary’s Report:**

John Gerner presented the minutes of PCEDA’s meeting on August 10, 2023, which had been distributed to all board members in advance of today’s meeting and were presented for review and approval. Russ Hoover proposed a motion to accept the minutes as presented, Frank Campbell seconded the motion, and the motion was approved by a voice vote without dissent.

**Treasurer’s Report:**

* Russ Hoover presented the Financial Report for the period ending August 31, 2023, prepared by Robert Morris & Co., which was distributed to all board members in advance of today’s meeting. Mr. Hoover advised that the report reflects normal monthly expenses and payroll and included receipt of a $30K reimbursement from the USDA for expenses incurred under the RCDI program. John Gerner proposed a motion to accept the Treasurer’s Report as presented.
* Mr. Hoover advised that the Perry County Council of the Arts (PCCA) has submitted an invoice in the amount of $5157.00 for reimbursement of the artists working on the Placemaking Project we are co-sponsoring with PCCA. John Gerner proposed a motion to pay the invoice as presented, Frank Campbell seconded the motion, and it was approved by a voice vote without dissent. Michelle Jones said that this expense will be submitted to Keystone Communities for reimbursement.
* Michelle Jones advised that the results of completed audits of our DCED1 and DCED2 grants have been submitted to DCED for review and acceptance. The DCED2 audit has been accepted and the DCED1 audit is being processed at this time.
* Ms. Jones reported that seven new façade project proposals have been received and approximately $80K out of the total $100K available for this program has been encumbered.

 **Chair Report:**

Marti Roberts reported as follows:

* Ms. Roberts made a presentation focused on our initiatives with the four school districts (CNA training, career day, etc.) at the recent township supervisor’s convention. She said she felt the attendance has dropped off recently for unknown reasons. She noted many borough officials were attending also. Jason Finnerty noted that many people want to go back to Greenwood because it is a better facility for presentations, etc. Also, there were four major events competing for the attention of these officials this year. This event normally was scheduled in the Spring in the past years. Frank Campbell suggested opening it to municipal authorities also.
* Ms. Roberts noted the need to do something to create a 501c3 charitable organization to advance EDA’s activities. She suggested setting up a roundtable discussion with people like Mary Kuna and Scott Dunkleberger to explore organizational structures for both the EDA and the 501c3.
* Ms. Roberts advised that Michelle Jones has begun work on a proposed 2024 budget. This will be the first year that fundraising will be a part of the budget since a funding shortfall may be likely at this point.

**Staff Reports:**

Michelle Jones prepared a written report of her activities during the past month and a copy is attached to these minutes. Ms. Jones said she did not have anything more to report.

* John Gerner asked about the proposed contracting process for the Wayfinding project. He expressed concern about the design/build concept - that the permitting approval process can drag out and increase costs. The alternative of having EDA and/or a consultant working to secure all the necessary approvals and permits with the boroughs, townships, and PennDOT along with a fixed set of bidding documents would be a better way to get the best price for this work. Ms. Jones said that she has been working with a firm that has completed projects of this type in the past and has been assured that the design/build is workable and can simplify the process for EDA rather than having to hire a separate design consultant. Following more discussion, it was a consensus of the board members that the currently proposed design/build option will be pursued. Jason Finnerty suggested that some signs can be removed through this process to reduce clutter. Marti Roberts suggested sending the final draft RFP sheet to board for review prior to release.

Kyleigh Spidle provided a written report on her activities during the past month and a copy is attached to these minutes. Ms. Spidle provided highlights as follows.

* The borough groups are keeping their calendar of activities up to date and they highlighted the upcoming town clean up days and encouraged board member participation in these events.
* Preparations for the upcoming Pickleball Tournament are being finalized. To date five men’s, one woman’s, and five mixed doubles teams have signed up. She said that they are trying for 8 teams in each section.

**Old business:** None

**New Business/Announcements:**

* Jason Finnerty advised that the BrightSpeed phone company has applied for funding for improved broadband service.
* Mr. Finnerty also reported that Tuscarora Township is drafting an ordinance to address solar energy installations. He said that municipalities are trying to limit these in their industrial district which could limit implementation in agricultural zones. He recommends talking to farmers about whether they want them. Another option would be allowing for conditional use.
* Frank Campbell announced that a groundbreaking ceremony for the new Dunkin Donuts in Howe Township is set for next Tuesday at 12 noon.
* Mr. Campbell also reported that Empire Kosher Poultry has installed a CNG facility for their operations in Juniata County. The facility was put in by Compass Energy. He also advised that it is rumored that a new company is looking for an 8–10-acre depot adjacent to the natural gas transmission line that crosses US11/15 in Penn Township. The site would provide for offloading CNG from the pipeline for bulk tanker shipment.
* Mr. Campbell reported that the group looking into creating a sports complex in the area has now registered as a 501c3 organization but that they still have a long way to go.

**Adjourn:**

* Russ Hoover moved to adjourn the meeting. Dee Anderson seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 9:45 AM

Staff report September 2023

Project updates

Façade: Submitted reimbursement request to DCED for $20740.43. After many rounds of nitpicking, it was accepted and will be paid. There were 7 completed projects, which have all been paid by us already. \*\*\*I made a mistake and over reimbursed one of the projects. I submitted the check request for $3000 (the original application was for over $4k of work, she must have gotten a better deal). The check should have only been for $2570.18. I’m asking that we use $429.57 of our general fund to fix my mistake.

There are three more complete projects. They will be very difficult to get through DCED, as they are missing components. We have not paid anything for them yet. There are also 7 more approved projects underway and about 10 projects pending approval (which should happen after the board meeting.) The total of approved projects is approximately$30k. The total of pending projects will be another $30k.

Wayfinding: I asked a sign making company (and likely bidder) to review the RFP and comment. He had two areas of concern – there isn’t any specification about the signs (thickness, coatings, quality) and he is apprehensive about committing to a cost for the approval process. I’m working with Tripp and Shawn on addressing both areas and should have the RFP ready soon. I intend to send the Wayfinding plan to our borough committees to review before we release the RFP.

Misc:

* All three audits are completed and submitted where they were needed. I have not received close out documents for our two state grants, but the Compliance staff person I spoke to said that it can take 6 months or more.
* PCCA has requested a draw from DCED grant. I’m requesting that we pay this and I’ll submit it to be reimbursed.
* The next round of DCED grant funding was submitted August 31.
* The pickleball tournament seems to be coming alone nicely. It has raised $3240 so far, but that doesn’t include paying for expenses (shirts, trophies, dj)
* We have also made $550 on merchandise so far.
* We were present at the county fair all 5 nights. Engagement was pretty low. Should consider our goals in attending and think about redesigning the space/display for next year. However, our display is pretty standard to what other companies have at the fair.
* We hosting a networking event in Landisburg with a focus on the Main Street program. It was well attended and the main street volunteers in attendance seemed to really appreciate it.
* The counselors are back in school, so our meetings are back on track. They’re trying to get the superintendents together in October and tour the facility in Landisburg (Stone House Inn/day services for special needs youth/adults). The group emphatically agreed that the career day was a big hit and wants it organized annually. Can we sponsor the space again at $500?
* I will be focusing on writing grants in the coming weeks to try to get “planning” money for our multimodal/downtowns wish list. We will be applying for the LSA grant, which is open from Sept to October 31, and then for funding available through Tri-County Planning.