**Minutes of Board Meeting**

**November 9, 2023**

**Perry County Economic Development Authority**

**Perry County Business and Tourism Center**

**New Bloomfield, PA.**

**Attendees:** Rich Pluta, Marti Roberts, Russ Hoover, Brenda Watson, Duane Hertzler, Patti McLaughlin

**Virtual participants:** Dee Anderson, John Gerner, Frank Campbell

**Staff:** Michelle Jones, Kyleigh Spidle

**Absent:** David Misner

**Excused:** None

**Visitors:** Jason Finnerty, Scott Dunkleberger (potential board member)

**Call to Order:**

The November, 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:

* 78 subdivision and land development have been submitted for approval to the County Planning Commission this year, equaling the total received in 2022. One of the most recent plans provides for another storage facility.
* 11/15 corridor.
* Five work group for the Picture Perry Comprehensive Plan implementation effort have been former and their initial meetings concluded. The next meetings will be schedule for in January.
* Lori Yike, DCNR Recreation Conservation Manager, is concerned that Perry is not getting enough trails grant money and wants to help.

Marti Roberts introduced Scott Dunkleberger as a potential board member. Mr. Dunkleberger said he moved to Perry County in 1977, as student. He built home in Carroll Township for his family. He worked for DCED for 35 years and retired three years ago. He said he is excited about incoming commissioners and wants to help the county grow in the right areas. The board members present introduced themselves.

**Secretary’s Report:**

Russ Hoover presented the minutes of PCEDA’s meeting on October 12, 2023, which had been distributed to all board members in advance of today’s meeting. Russ Hoover proposed a motion to accept the minutes as presented, Duane Hertzler seconded the motion, and the motion was approved by a voice vote without dissent.

**Treasurer’s Report:**

* Patti presented. Positive net revenue. Façades paid out from DCED. Rich moved. Russ seconded. Motion carried.
* Patti McLaughlin presented the Financial Report for the period ending September 30, 2023, prepared by Robert Morris & Co., which was distributed to all board members in advance of today’s meeting. Ms. McLaughlin advised that the report reflects normal monthly expenses and payroll and included the payout of façade grant reimbursements from funds recently received from DCED. Rich Pluta proposed a motion to accept the Treasurer’s Report as presented. Russ Hoover seconded the motion and it was approved by a voice vote without dissent.
* Michelle Jones requested approval of three façade grant payouts: Millie’s Pizza in New Buffalo***.,*** Paragon Tax in New Bloomfield, and Blue Mountain Outfitters in Marysville. Russ Hoover proposed a motion to approve the three facades grant projects, Frank Campbell seconded the motion and it was approved by a voice vote without dissent. Ms. Jones reported that 85% of the façade grant funding has been spoken for.
* Michelle Jones presented a proposed 2024 Budget for PCEDA. Extensive discussion about the various funding streams and the planned efforts for their use ensued. Rich Pluta asked if the budget reflected the results of various fund-raising efforts, including those of the downtown revitalization teams. He was advised that a Google Spreadsheet was created and shared to track those efforts and that the Orrstown Bank account will be used to keep the borough accounts separate from the PCEDA efforts. It was suggested that the fund-raising data be included in the monthly Treasurer’s Report summary. Ms. Jones advised that we also have an $8K credit with PearlJade Marketing which is leftover funds that businesses did not spend from their 2022/23 marketing course grants. Patti McLaughlin proposed a motion to approve the 2024 Budget as presented, Rich Pluta seconded the motion and it was approved by a voice vote without dissent.

**Chair Report:**

Marti Roberts reported as follows:

* As means of briefing Mr. Dunkleberger on ongoing PCEDA activities and updating current Board members, Ms. Roberts provided an overview of the Perry County Fairgrounds Feasibility Study. She advised that four consultants had presented proposals for a study of rehabilitation needs of the current fair facilities and the potential for physical improvements to enhance the functionality and economic vitality of the complex. After careful review, the firm of By Design out of Mechanicsburg was selected and the field review meeting with the consultant staff, Fair Board members and PCEDA is set for 2 PM this afternoon. Ms. Jones said she has been looking at other counties’ venues to help in the consideration of what could be achieved at the Perry County facility. Mr. Dunkleberger asked what the desired result of this study is. He was advised that in addition to identifying deferred maintenance needs, we are interested in the feasibility of an event center, be it built new or as a retrofit of an existing building.
* Next followed a discussion about the proposed sports complex/event center in the Newport area. The group discussed conduct. The potential to have event space are a part of this project was brought up, but the consultant said that finding the amount of land and funding to support the athletic facilities needed and an events center may be beyond the realm of possibilities for this project. Conversely, the consultant brought up the fairgrounds as a possible alternate site for an event center – just one more reason to push for improvements at the fairgrounds.

**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 additional to report, except

* A five-year funding plan had been developed as part of our original application to the Keystone Communities program and funding for much of that work has been applied for through a Multi-modal Grant program sponsored by PennDOT. We have not been successful in securing these funds after multiple applications. The individual borough work groups are now coming up with their own list of projects to meet local needs like sidewalks in Liverpool and playground improvements in New Buffalo. The question now becomes how do we move forward with these more individualized projects?
* Brenda Watson brought up the issue of providing administration capacity when and if funding for these projects is secured. She noted that implementation of some projects in the county is being delayed because of issues complying with and administering grants. Ms. Jones echoed that concern for finding/funding grant management based on the steep learning curve that PCEDA has had with the years of grants, particularly the façade grant program. Rich Pluta asked whether these services could be added to the scope of work for the grant writer?

Kyleigh Spidle provided a written report on her activities during the past month. Ms. Spidle provided highlights as follows.

* The borough groups are keeping their calendar of activities up to date and a number of projects were highlighted. The Blain group is moving along with a “Welcome to Blain” brochure that will include activities in the surrounding area. They are currently raising money for printing and distribution. The Blain Mainstreet group sponsored a float in the recent ***Blain Halloween***  parade, won first place and donated their winnings back to the group’s fund-raising effort. A community-wide Christmas in Blain event is also being planned. Community enthusiasm in Landisburg is really growing. They are also planning a Christmas Tree event centered around local residents making ornaments to adorn the tree. They are looking into a project to create a walking trail in Lions Park. While getting an organization started in Marysville, one resident went out to identify walking trail routes in the borough.
* Ms. Spidle reviewed the status of each of borough art projects:
	+ Blain mural on building
	+ Duncannon steel sculpture in parking lot in Square
	+ Liverpool lighting in gazebo park
	+ New Buffalo buffalo sculpture
	+ Millerstown tunnel lighting on path to pool/park
	+ Newport “ghost signs” – restored business signing
	+ New Bloomfield huckleberry bush sculpture
	+ Landisburg three gateway signs
	+ Marysville stairway to tunnel mural

**Old business:** None

**New Business/Announcements:**

* Frank Campbell reported that he heard that two new façade grant applications may be coming in from the Newport area – the old Newport radio station building next the Hard Hat bar, and at 57 N. 2nd Street.
* Brenda Watson advised that she was approached by representatives of an engineering firm about the potential for the county government or authority undertaking to establish broadband service in parts of the county not currently being served. That entity would hire a company to establish, run and maintain the systems and the county/authority could in turn earn income from the overall project. She said that she did not think the county commissioners would be interested in this opportunity, but suggested that PCEDA or PCEDC might want to consider it as a way to bring in new revenue.
* Jason Finnerty reported that he has heard of some effort to tax commercial solar operations in a manner similar to the natural gas extraction tax currently being assessed by the state – the proceeds being used to support local governments.
* A question was raised about the results of the hotel feasibility study PCEDA commissioned late last year and how we should make use of that information. No action taken on that matter.

**Adjourn:**

* The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 9:59 AM

Staff report – November

Education/Workforce:

* Met with career counselors.
* Started a MY Work project: collab with Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to provide students with mental or physical disabilities an opportunity for meaningful work in our communities. If this goes well, we could have 1 or 2 teams of students (under the guidance and supervision of an OVR paid supervisor) working in our 9 boroughs on beautification projects. We (PCEDA/Kyleigh/me) would coordinate days and supervisors in the boroughs, who would arrange work. For example, a crew may spend Monday in Millerstown mowing public spaces, weeding and watering flowers. They may be in Blain on Tuesday sweeping sidewalks and planting flowers.
* Attended Susquenita Chapter 339 advisory Committee meeting. These are mandated meetings for the school to connect with the business community regarding their career readiness efforts. Among their successes, they listed the career day that PCEDA helped to plan/enact.

Grants:

* Discussions with Keystone Communities to advance our legislative funding grant application. Additional details were requested (again).
* RCDI quarterly reimbursement request and reports were submitted and paid already.
* DCED4 reimbursement request for art project progress was submitted. They have not reviewed it, so additional materials may be requested.
* LSA grant application is underway and will be submitted soon. Deadline is 11/30.
* 2024 budget has been in progress, including discussions with Rob Morris staff. It will be presented at the board meeting for approval.

Economic Development

* Met with a business plan client and fielded several calls regarding expansion and/or relocation ideas.
* Will attend Longenecker grand opening.
* Attended two discussions/input sessions for Governor Shapiro’s initiative to create a state-wide economic development strategic plan. The last one was in 2003. One was EcDev focused, one was Main Street focused.
* Coordinated PeCo Fair feasibility study kickoff.
* Will begin compiling and scheduling Business Retention and Expansion surveys for this fiscal year. I’m shooting for 12 surveys to meet my engage requirement (9 surveys=$7200). I do not have a theme for the outreach yet, so please share your suggestions.