**Minutes of Board Meeting**

**December 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, Duane Hertzler, Patti McLaughlin

**Virtual participants:** John Gerner, David Misner

**Staff:** Michelle Jones, Kyleigh Spidle

**Absent:** Dee Anderson

**Excused:** None

**Visitors:** Ed Barben, Scott Dunkelberger, Jason Finnerty

**Call to Order:**

The December 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:

* Eighty-three land development plans have been submitted to the County Planning Commission for review and approval so far in 2023, which is four more than last year at this time. It is the highest number of requests in the last five years. Mr. Finnerty is in the process of preparing the Planning Commission’s annual report.
* Mr. Finnerty is working on a report to all municipalities in the county providing an update on the Picture Perry Plan and any new projects that have been added. He will also encourage the municipalities to add any new projects they are contemplating to aid in grant writing.
* Mr. Finnerty alerted the board members of the upcoming public input sessions planned by the Tri-County Planning Commission regarding the Active Transportation Plan they are developing for the 3-county region dealing with outdoor recreation (hiking, biking, kayaking, etc.). The Perry County meeting will be held in the New Bloomfield municipal building on January 11th at both 4-6 PM and again at 6-9 PM.
* Brenda Watson thanked Mr. Finnerty for his help throughout the year, and especially having zoning plan recommendations ready for any municipality that wants/needs them.
* The proliferation of solar panels arrays is beginning to raise concern among some county residents.
* The need for funding to deal with deficient bridge repair/replacement projects is an issue to be addressed.

**Secretary’s Report:**

John Gerner presented the minutes of PCEDA’s meeting on November 9, 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, Patti McLaughlin seconded the motion. Patti McLaughlin noted that Carrol Township had been misspelled in the original version and Michelle Jones advised that it had been corrected in the minutes that are now presented for approval. The motion was approved by a voice vote without dissent. In recognition of Mr. Gerner’s pending resignation from the Board, Ms. Roberts thanked Mr. Gerner for his work with the Board.

**Treasurer’s Report:**

* Patti McLaughlin presented the Financial Report for the period ending November 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. Patti McLaughlin 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 advised that the Perry County Council of the Arts submitted two invoices for approval – an October invoice for $2986.15 and a November invoice for $2654.04. Patti McLaughlin proposed a motion to authorize payment of the invoices as submitted. Duane Hertzler seconded the motion, and it was approved by a voice vote without dissent.
* Michelle Jones advised that three new façade grant projects had been completed and are ready to be paid – a second grant application from Old Trail Laundromat for $1281, a project at the County Seat Restaurant totaling over $6K but is applying for the maximum grant of $3K, and for the property owner of two storefronts—Podium Awards and Country Footwear totaling $6K.

**Chair Report:**

Marti Roberts reported as follows:

* PCEDA has had a very productive year to date. Our Keystone Communities projects has gotten off to an exceptionally good start in the nine boroughs thanks to all the hard work of Kyleigh Spidle and Michelle Jones. The borough work groups have generated a great deal of community spirit and enthusiasm.
* Looking to 2024, there are several issues we need to bring some attention to:
  + County-wide Hotel Tax- legislation requires municipalities to endorse the imposition of such a tax, and some then believe their local jurisdiction should reap the benefit of that tax revenue. The tax can range up to 5% and is paid by the hotel guest, not the hotel owner. Any effort to bringing this proposal out will have to be well planned.
  + In the lead up to the Keystone Communities application, one of the biggest improvements needs voices by the boroughs was for sidewalks, crosswalks, and safer traffic conditions. PCEDA has tried numerous times to submit funding applications for all nine boroughs in one package - our LSA grant was the most recent situation – where we were told that they would only approve funding for one borough at a time. There seem to be many doors shut about our “regional” status. We are considering seeking an appointment with our state Senator and possibly the Governor to explore options. Scott Dunkelberger provided some insight on the political process behind the Commonwealth Finance Authority (CFA) and the LSA grant program. He suggested we have a discussion with Mandy Book. DCED’s multimodal program is also under CFA.
  + The fairgrounds study is moving along on schedule. A meeting is set for Tuesday, December 19th at 1 PM with the study’s engineering and architectural staff for them to present some of their initial findings. Paul Britcher and Jason Snyder with the Fair Board plan to attend. Russ Hoover requested a set of any plans they provided for him to review.
  + PCEDA’s Board structure is in flux with another resignation and the concern about having two sitting commissioners on board. We have had some ongoing discussion with county solicitor about the two commissioners. We will be sending a recommendation to the County Commissioners to consider adding Ed Barben, Scott Dunkleberger, and Lindsay Hutchinson to the PCEDA Board. Rich Pluta proposed a motion to recommend these three individuals to the Commissioners, Duane Hertzler seconded the motion, and it was approved by a voice vote without dissent. Executive Board reorganization will also be an item for discussion at the Annual Meeting in January.
* Staff members Michelle Jones and Kyleigh Spidle were asked to leave the meeting room. The Finance Committee reported that they recommend offering bonuses to Ms. Jones and Spidle for their exceptional performance during the past year at the same level as provided last year. Patti McLaughlin proposed a motion to approve a $2500 bonus for Michelle Jones, and a $2000 bonus for Kyleigh Spidle. Rich Pluta seconded the motion, and it was approved by a voice vote without dissent.
* Frank Campbell asked Scott Dunkelberger if RACP funding could be approved for multi-municipality projects. Mr. Dunkleberger said it could be if it is approved that way in the capital budget.

**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 added the following comments:

* The four school districts have decided to hold a Career Fair for 11th graders again this year on April 17th at the Family Life Center. Career counselors from the school districts met recently with the County Commissioners and praised the work PCEDA and the Chamber is doing to help provide career information and experiences to their students.
* Four new façade grant applications have been submitted for consideration. If these grants are approved, only $8K of the program funds will be left.
* The first phase of the Army Corps of Engineers flood risk reduction assessment has been completed. This phase focused on the Susquehanna River. The study results showed low risk for 100-year flooding in Liverpool, New Buffalo, and Marysville. In most cases the flood is due to flood water rise in the connecting streams. Conversely, in Duncannon, the drainage structures under the railroad embankment are the primary reason for flooding in the borough. The study suggested that flood gates, along with access improvements, could reduce flooding damage by as much as 2/3, as well as providing beneficially improved access to the river as a recreational resource. A local taskforce has been established to explore options. It was noted that Norfolk Southern does not want its embankment to be considered as a flood control levy – it was not designed for that purpose. However, there are other locations where they have agreed to allow their embankments to hold back flood waters temporarily and those situations will be explored for similarities with the Duncannon situation. It was noted that any improvement is not likely to reduce flood insurance costs. The second phase of the Corps’ study will focus on the Juniata River.
* Ms. Jones said she recently met with representatives of the USDA regarding funds for the proposed sports complex near Newport. They advised that projects of this type need a feasibility study to demonstrate that they have the potential for success. USDA said that these types of studies range in cost from $50K to $100K and they could provide a low interest loan to augment local funding for that type of study. The local group is still looking at potential sites in the 40+ acre range – the biggest issue is finding a site that can provided the necessary level ground for the athletic fields. One site under consideration has a flood plain issue that limits what can be done on the site.

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

* Establishing the ambassador program – identification of 1-2 representatives from each borough workgroup that will represent their community and its program.
* Working on end-of-year newsletter highlighting accomplishments. A number of the borough groups are developing their own newsletter.
* Each borough group provided an end of year evaluations on the work of the Coordinator and the results were most complimentary.
* The Blain Christmas celebration is this Saturday, December 16th. The Landisburg Christmas Tree ornament workshop was an outstanding community event.
* The Pennsylvania Downtown Center is planning to conduct an on-site “assessment” of the borough programs, complete with local team interviews in the January/February 2024 timeframe.

**Old business:** None

**New Business/Announcements:**

* Frank Campbell advised that most of the current RACP itemizations expire in 2027. Based on discussions with representatives in Senator Rothmen’s and Representative Perry’s office, up to $24.1 million could be available for proposed projects in the next round. The county should be prepared with project proposals when that process opens again.
* Mr. Campbell recently met with representatives from the Juniata River Tourism Bureau. Mr. Campbell suggested we could partner with them to promote tourism opportunities in Perry County.

**Adjourn:**

Russ Hoover proposed a motion to adjourn the meeting, Patti McLaughlin seconded the motion, and the motion was approved without dissent at 9:50 AM

Staff report December 2023

Ongoing:

* Working on work plans for 2024. Please send your suggestions.
* Managing facades, grants (applying and reimbursements), finances, etc
* Flood study project update (11/29/2023), proposed a task force for improved access and flood control Duncannon. Potentially address 2/3 of repetitive flood claims in county.
* Counselors meeting, set up with new commissioners, also met with new Greenwood superintendent.

New:

* Started an economic development course offered by PEDA. I’m thinking about going for certification
* Meet with the USDA regarding the sports complex project and potential funding
* Longanecker ribbon cutting. Tour was so interesting
* Fairgrounds kick off meeting.
* Working on end of year/annual report for each borough will be available digitally and in print.