

LA CROSSE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND, INC.

La Crosse County Administrative Center, Rm. 3220

Wednesday, June 9, 2010

7:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Doyle, Jill Billings, Vicki Burke, Tara Johnson, Steve O'Malley, Bill Shepherd, Mary Jo Werner (exc. 8:10-8:43), John Wettstein

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Don Brenengen, Dirk Gasterland, Gary Ingvalson, Audrey Kader, Dennis Manthei

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Burgess

STAFF & GUESTS: Brian Fukuda, Margaret Norden, Greg Flogstad, Steve Cottrell, Travis Robinson, Bob Brown, Lorenzo Cruz, Jenny Kuderer, Jim Hill, Carol Wetuski, Steve Cahalan

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chair Doyle called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None requested.

APPROVE MINUTES OF MAY 6, 2010

MOTION by O'Malley/Werner to approve the Minutes of May 6, 2010. **Motion carried unanimously.** Brenengen, Gasterland, Ingvalson, Kader, Manthei excused; Burgess absent.

PUBLIC HEARING ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT FOR LOAN TO CENTURYLINK, INC.

- Description and input on the CenturyLink, Inc. project
- Input on other County development needs
- Description of the Wisconsin Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

Greg Flogstad stated that La Crosse County is eligible for a block grant as a vehicle to provide a loan to CenturyLink as incentive not to move to another location. \$4.5 million will go to CenturyLink which then has an obligation to retain jobs in its regional call center and create 20 more jobs. Bob Brown from CenturyLink provided information showing the company's average annual capital investment in Wisconsin of \$41 million. He explained that in La Crosse County alone they have 620-640 jobs in their La Crosse offices, but employ just over 800 in the county. Brian Fukuda reported that if the obligation to retain and create jobs is not met by December 31, 2014, CenturyLink will be required to repay the loan to the County's revolving loan fund. There was no public input regarding other County development needs. Chair Doyle then declared the public hearing portion closed. Greg Flogstad spoke about the CDBG program, which grants \$30 million in block grants, of which 30% is for housing, 35% for public facilities, and 35% for economic development.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING LA CROSSE COUNTY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WISCONSIN CDBG PROGRAM FOR CENTURYLINK

The Resolution states that after a public hearing, the County Board may authorize the Board Chair to sign necessary documents to prepare and file an application for funds, and to administer the loan in accordance with Department of Commerce loan conditions. A grant of \$4,506,000 will come from the State of Wisconsin to La Crosse County for the purpose of making a loan of \$4,500,000 to CenturyLink; \$6,000 is for administration of the loan; no County funds will be used. Loan

repayment is to be deferred until the forgiveness measurement date of December 31, 2014. **MOTION** by Johnson/Burke to approve the Resolution Re: Authorizing La Crosse County to participate in the Wisconsin CDBG Program for CenturyLink.

Motion carried unanimously. Brenengen, Gasterland, Ingvalson, Kader, Manthei excused; Burgess absent.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Carol Wetuski, Area Director of Rural Development, USDA, presented their economic development programs. She stated their primary focus is economic development in rural communities. They provide loan note guarantees to mitigate risk to the lender, direct financing, and competitive grant programs. They fund business enterprises and housing programs, establish loan funds and business incubators, and provide technical assistance for business start-ups. The Obama administration has expanded an agricultural program to include farmers markets and community garden start-ups. Another rural agriculture program assists with selling renewable energy or seeking more efficient energy methods. John Wettstein asked about consideration of smart growth plans and land use before development takes place, and Wetuski stated they do look at existing plans.

AUTHENTICOM REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF KATHRYN PERTZCH PERSONAL GUARANTEE

MOTION by Johnson/Billings to go into closed session for the purpose of considering financial data of specific persons which, if discussed in public, would be likely to have a substantial adverse effect upon the reputation of any person referred to in such histories or data, pursuant to Wis. Stats s. 19.85 (1)(f), TO WIT: Authenticom Request for Release of Kathryn Pertzch Personal Guarantee. **Motion carried unanimously.** Brenengen, Gasterland, Ingvalson, Kader, Manthei excused; Burgess absent.

CLOSED SESSION (8:10 a.m.)

NOTE: Mary Jo Werner was excused from the closed session.

MOTION by Billings/Shepherd to approve holding over 30 days. **Motion carried unanimously.** Brenengen, Gasterland, Ingvalson, Kader, Manthei, Werner excused; Burgess absent.

MOTION by Johnson/Billings to reconvene open session. **Motion carried unanimously.** Brenengen, Gasterland, Ingvalson, Kader, Manthei, Werner excused; Burgess absent. No other discussion took place in closed session. No action except as noted.

OPEN SESSION (8:43 a.m.)

SKIPPERLINER INDUSTRIES INC. – CHAPTER 128 BUSINESS LIQUIDATION

Bill Shepherd reported having had a lengthy conversation with the attorney retained by La Crosse County and Town of Campbell, who recommended waiting for developments before advising further. Shepherd will continue to follow the matter.

AGENCY REPORTS

- The LADCO Economic Forum will be held June 30, 2010, and will include a public policy discussion on TIF's.
- WHEDA is launching a new website on workforce housing. On June 28, 2010, Secretary Riley will be in La Crosse to speak about employer assisted housing programs.

NEXT MEETING – JULY 1, 2010, AT 7:30 A.M.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None suggested.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Werner/Johnson to adjourn. **Motion carried unanimously.** Meeting adjourned at 8:56 a.m.

Approved, July 1, 2010, Margaret Norden, Recorder