

LA CROSSE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND, INC.

County Administrative Center, Room 3220

Thursday, October 6, 2011

7:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve O'Malley, Jill Billings, Don Brenengen (7:38 a.m.), Steve Burgess, Vicki Burke, Dirk Gasterland, Gary Ingvalson, Tara Johnson, Audrey Kader (7:41 a.m.), Dennis Manthei (exc. 8:33 a.m.), William Shepherd

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Steve Doyle, Michael Richards

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joe Veenstra, John Wettstein

STAFF & GUESTS: Brian Fukuda, Charlie Handy, Karl Green, Margaret Norden, Greg Flogstad, Jenny Kuderer, Dave Clements, Jean Lunde, Sharon Hampson

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Vice-Chair O'Malley called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None requested.

APPROVE MINUTES OF JULY 7, 2011

MOTION by Manthei/Gasterland to approve the Minutes of July 7, 2011. **Motion carried unanimously.** Brenengen, Doyle, Kader, Richards excused; Veenstra, Wettstein absent.

REPORT ON I-90 VISITORS CENTER

Dave Clements gave an update on the visitor information center which the La Crosse Area Convention and Visitors Bureau has been operating since the state tourism office was closed. There have been more than 41,000 visitors, which is comparable to the former state-operated center. The projected shortfall is \$14,000, which the LACVB board has agreed to cover. Clements reported that new grants are available, and the state is available for consultation. The Onalaska Tourism Center will provide some staffing, and it will otherwise be staffed by volunteers. He estimated that expenses will be in the mid-\$40,000's in 2012. He expects that revenue will be short, but will stay within a range that the LACVB board is comfortable with. He reported that there are eight partners from surrounding communities that help with funding.

SKIPPERLINER LOAN UPDATE

Bill Shepherd reported that the agreement is nearing conclusion, and he has received documents to review. Discussion was held about obtaining title insurance. Shepherd reported that the Town of Campbell is apparently making their own deal. Brian Fukuda gave a jobs report: Huck Finn's has three management staff and approximately 40 part-time staff, and Skipperliner has 23 full-time employees.

MOTION by Burgess/Gasterland to obtain title insurance. **Motion carried unanimously.** Doyle, Richards excused; Veenstra, Wettstein absent.

2012 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUDGET

Steve O'Malley presented the Administrator's recommended budget for economic development and the business park. Revenue for economic development comes from sales tax. He reported there was a request to increase Mississippi Parkway Commission contribution for a project, and O'Malley recommended inviting them to make a presentation. He also recommended having a presentation from ITBEC

about regional cooperation. He recommended joining the Chamber of Commerce, and there was discussion about membership level, County departments that could benefit from membership, and concerns about overlapping services. Discussion was also held regarding an increase in tourism promotion, and funding either from excess sales tax or transfer from another line item. The following motions were made:

MOTION by Brenengen/Manthei to amend Chamber of Commerce membership to a level based on 40-49 employees. **Motion carried unanimously.** Doyle, Richards excused; Veenstra, Wettstein absent.

MOTION by Kader/Shepherd to restore line item 71060 – Tourism Promotion from \$4,000 to \$10,000 from excess sales tax. **Motion carried unanimously.** Doyle, Richards excused; Veenstra, Wettstein absent.

FRAC SAND PRESENTATION

Karl Green gave a presentation on frac sand mining and the use of the sand in oil field extraction operations in North Dakota and elsewhere. The term “frac sand” applies to sand from Jordan sandstone or Wonewoc sandstone that lies close to or on land surface, especially in Western Wisconsin coulees and bluffs. The sand is transported from sand mines to oil field sites. At the oil field, a slurry is created from mixing the sand with water and chemicals. This mixture is then inserted in underground fractures (or “fracs”) that are created by strategically placed explosives. The sand slurry keeps the fractures open so oil or natural gas can seep into wells and be piped out. Green reported that the demand for natural gas as a clean fuel will create local jobs and growth associated with frac sand mining. There will be more road maintenance needs from increased truck traffic, and there are concerns about air quality from dust from the mines. Green stated that the Wisconsin DNR regulates mining, and Wisconsin has a history of sand mining with few problems.

PARK PLAZA CHARRETTE PRESENTATION

The item was referred to the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING – NOVEMBER 3, 2011, AT 7:30 A.M.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None requested.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ingvalson/Kader to adjourn. **Motion carried unanimously.** Meeting adjourned at 9:02 a.m.

Approved, November 3, 2011, Margaret Norden, Recorder