

Meeting Minutes
Economic Development Committee
Tuesday – November 30, 2010 - 4:30 p.m. - City Council Chambers

Members present: Morack, O’Connell, Romberg, Schirpke and Steinhorst. Tate excused.

Also present: Mayor Henke, Hager, Bob O’Donnell, and Lee Rousseau.

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Morack at 4:30 p.m. O’Connell/Steinhorst to adopt the agenda. Carried 5-0.

2. Bob O’Donnell, Director of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Small Business Development Center was introduced. Mr. O’Donnell spoke at length about the services his office supplies to existing and prospective business people in the seven county region he serves. There are two staff people in his office. His office is one of twelve located throughout the state. There are also three Specialty Centers: the Center for Innovation and Development, the Center for Wisconsin Innovation Services, and the Center for Advanced Technology & Innovation. The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is a partnership between the College of Business, the U.S. Small Business Administration and the University of Wisconsin-Extension. They provide free business counseling services, and moderately-priced workshops and training programs for start-up and existing businesses in East Central Wisconsin. The center also advocates for an environment that supports the creation and growth of entrepreneurship in the region by working with a variety of partners, including economic development organizations and chambers of commerce. They look at one of their jobs as building bridges between the university system and businesses in the region. Bob noted that it is typically not difficult to find a person with a good business idea, it is more difficult to find the people with money to finance a “start-up” company. The Committee visited with Bob about several topics. Maintaining our City Revolving Loan Fund is important. Having a talented pool of young people is important in order to grow our local economy. It was suggested that a local “business plan” competition be held where a cash prize would be awarded to the winner along with a year of free rent to establish the proposed business. We may be able to find a local entrepreneur that way. There a lot of talented people out there, the difficulty is getting them to come forward. Get their idea and plan in place and then get them funded. The concept of a “cluster analysis “ was discussed. It was noted that a cluster analysis tells you where you have been and where we are now as far as the local economy. The problem with the analysis is that it does not tell you where we want to be in the future. We need to inventory what our economic strengths are and reposition ourselves for the new economy. A question was asked about how do we attract people that want to start up a business. How do we meet them and convince them to come to New London. Advertise on a billboard to people that commute was a suggestion. This would speak to the people who currently commute to work and try and get them to locate their work in the community that they call home. The Committee thanked Bob for sharing his insights. Bob noted that he is always available. He asked the Committee to refer people to him for assistance.

3. The Committee reviewed Kent's memo regarding his economic development activities over the past month. It was noted that Earl reviewed the provisions of the North East New London Business Center and that the covenants can only be amended when five lots have actually been "sold." Since this has not happened yet, no amendments can be made. The initiative to promote canoe and kayak rental operations took a step forward at a meeting with a representative from Mosquito Hill. The City will be trying to coordinate some canoeing outings with Mosquito Hill in the future. The Committee reviewed the summary report regarding the Fox Cities Economic Development Partnership strategic planning process. It was particularly interesting to review their report on things that worked for them well in the past and also those things that did not work out so well. The Committee reviewed the informational flyers put out by the Fox Valley Technical College on the PRO-Seed program and the E-Seed Express program.
4. The Committee reviewed information regarding a recent conference sponsored by the Wisconsin Technology Council titled "Wisconsin Early Stage Symposium." For more than 20 years this conference and its predecessors have helped fuel Wisconsin's high-growth economy by matching investors, companies and entrepreneurs. Information regarding this event can be found on the web at this address: <http://www.wisconsintechcouncil.com/events/earlystage/>
5. Given the next Committee meeting would ordinarily be scheduled for Tuesday, December 28th, there will not be a meeting in December. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on Tuesday, January 25, 2011. Further discussion will occur regarding the billboard contest status and the possibility of conducting a local business plan contest. The speaker at the January 25th meeting will be Bill Schmidt, Chairman of the New London Tourism Commission. At the February 22nd meeting the speakers will be Karen Harkness, Director of Community Development for the City of Appleton along with Jim Vandyke, Economic Development specialist for the City of Appleton. At the March 29th meeting, Ed Wendland will address the Committee.
6. A motion was made to adjourn by O'Connell and seconded by Schirpke. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Kent Hager
City Administrator