

Meeting Minutes
Economic Development Committee
Tuesday – July 27, 2010 - 4:30 p.m. - City Council Chambers

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

Also present: Mayor Henke, Hager, Steve Thompson, Peggy Jesion, Vicki Lobermeier, and Lee Rousseau.

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Morack at 4:30 p.m. Romberg/Tate to adopt the agenda. Carried 6-0.

2. Steve Thompson, Director of New London Utilities, introduced Peggy Jesion, Key Accounts Manager for WPPI Energy. The topic of discussion was how our New London Electric Utility can play a roll in economic development. Peggy informed the Committee that WPPI Energy is a regional power company serving 51 customer-owned electric utilities, the City of New London being one of the founding members. Through WPPI Energy, these public power utilities share resources and own generation facilities to provide reliable, affordable electricity to more than 192,000 homes and businesses in Wisconsin, Upper Michigan and Iowa. WPPI Energy was created to provide members with a highly reliable, cost-competitive power supply for the long term and excellent services. The New London Electric Utility is community owned and locally operated. An economic strength of owning our own electric utility is not only that we can provide power economically, but also be very reliable. Our electric rates are typically 16% to 20% less than other providers. Our electric supply is strong and more importantly, redundant. If one supply option goes down, another can be brought into service. Our utility is very responsive as our employees live here. The Utility is governed by residents of New London that are appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council. WPPI provides economic development assistance by providing at no cost an energy service representative to work with local industry to help them become more efficient. Energy audits are conducted and utility savings are identified. If a new business wants to get established, WPPI will send in their consultant to evaluate the energy consumption of the business and make recommendations for savings. The most important economic characteristic of the New London Utility is that it is owned by the community, we have great service and our power reliability is unmatched. These characteristics alone are an economic development incentive over many other communities that do not have their own electric utility. Peggy pointed out that WPPI has a program where they can partner with their participating communities with a grant of up to \$1,000 on a specific economic development project. We all thanked Peggy and Steve for the great electric service we enjoy.

3. An update from Sandy Flease of Century 21 Realty was next on the agenda. Sandy has had a couple leads come off the Internet. She has their contact information, but it is very hard to get any additional information out of them. Similarly, it is difficult to get any information out of our surrounding communities regarding their industrial parks. She is in contact with the prospective clients and she is keeping them informed. The Committee reviewed the possibility of increasing the signage near the highway. Sandy reports that with the exception of residential real estate, there is not much going on right now.

Sandy will visit with Missy about putting the industrial park marketing information on the City web site. It was noted that the web is the best place to focus our marketing efforts for the industrial park.

4. Vicki Lobermeier from the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point office of the Small Business Development Center visited with the Committee about the services she is able to provide. There are over 1,000 Small Business Development Centers around the United States. There are twelve in the state of Wisconsin. Their office is funded by the United States Small Business Administration. We are served by her office in Stevens Point as New London is in Waupaca County. We are also served by the office at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh as the City is also in Outagamie County. Their offices offer no-cost business consulting on any topic including marketing, cash flow, business planning and related activities. Services are afforded to new and existing businesses. There are also three specialty Small Business Development Centers in the State. One at UW Whitewater that focuses on serving inventors, another at UW Stout for engineering and development, and the other at University of Wisconsin Parkside which houses The Center for Advanced Technology and Innovation. The SBDC offers several services including “trade area mapping” for specific businesses, and entrepreneurial training programs. Over the course of the past nine years, they have assisted 400 businesses that have resulted in over 280 start-up businesses. Participants in SBDC programs are assured confidentiality and the center is only allowed to provide services to private businesses. They cannot assist non-profit organizations or governments. It was suggested that Vicki do a brief informative cable TV program about the Small Business Development Center and the services that they can offer so that we can help her get the word out about the services that are available thru her office. The Committee also suggested to Vicki that she keep the City of New London in mind when she runs across someone looking for a place to start a new business. When asked if there was anything that the City of New London could do to attract or develop business, she said that all communities are trying to do the same thing. She suggests that the best avenue for economic development is growing the businesses that are already here and have made a commitment to our community. The Committee thanked Vicki for her work and invited her to conduct one of her future business classes here in New London.
5. Administrator Hager presented his update memo. Kent noted some work he did regarding property ownership along the river wall near the Pearl Street Bridge. He also noted that we should know more soon about the possible relocation of a retail business to the Highway 54/Shawano Street intersection. A general discussion regarding downtown parking occurred and it was suggested that the Public Works Committee follow through with this matter. Kent noted that he had only received one phone call as a result of the 180+ RFP’s sent out. It was suggested that Kent make a few phone calls to developers that received the RFP document to determine the reasons why we are not receiving more interest in the development of the downtown property. The deadline to submit a proposal is September 28th.
6. Chairman Morack reported to the Committee that he attended a Chamber sponsored meeting and he received a request to share the list that was developed identifying businesses that are not currently located in our community. He also reported on the web site he found from East Wisconsin Savings Bank where they have an on-line business assistance center.

Everyone noted that there is a lot of information and assistance out on the Internet for business; it is just a matter of directing people to it. An idea was to change our small business manual to a small business assistance center or library on our City web page.

7. Possible wording for the City billboard out on Highway 45 was considered. A couple ideas were “Living On The Edge” and “New London, Opportunity Awaits.” It was suggested that we need to focus the billboard on attracting business to the City. This item will receive further consideration at the next Committee meeting.
8. Our guest speaker for the August meeting will be Rita Thiel from the Forward New London Group. Bobbi Miller from the Fox Valley Workforce Development Board will visit us at the September meeting. The August meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 24th at 4:30.
9. There being no further business to come before the Committee, Tate/Steinhorst to adjourn. Passed 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm.

Kent Hager
City Administrator