

## EAST BETHEL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MEETING

September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014

The East Bethel Economic Development Authority (EDA) met for a Regular EDA Meeting on September 15, 2014 at 7:00 P.M for their regular meeting at City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Heidi Moegerle Dan Butler Bob DeRoche Julie Lux  
Brian Bezanson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mike Connor John Landwehr

ALSO PRESENT: Colleen Winter, Community Development Director  
Jack Davis, City Administrator

**Call to Order & Adopt Agenda** Mr. Bezanson motioned to adopt the September 15th, 2014 agenda. Mr. DeRoche seconded; all in favor, motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes June 16, 2014** Mr. DeRoche motioned to approve the minutes. Julie Lux and Brian Bezanson abstained as they were not present at the meeting on June 16<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Butler seconded; all in favor, motion carried unanimously.

**EDA Website, Miscellaneous Projects Update** Ms Winter reported that the website intern, Amy Norling, has been working on several items in support of the EDA page on the website as well as looking at how our website is used. Members reviewed the following (Attached):

- Website report, along with analysis of Piwik (our internal program) vs. Google Analytics.
- Business Resource and Financial Assistance Directory (draft)
- Resident Guide (draft)

In addition to the EDA page, there are several other pages on the website that have been enhanced and were reviewed as well. Members provided comments and feedback.

The analysis of the website for June showed searches for information on Booster Days, employment, permits and information on rules/restrictions for keeping chickens. In July, the top 10 pages accessed on the website included Booster Days, City Council and City Codes. August showed searches for zoning items, “candidates” and “noise”.

It was noted that data for July may have been skewed due to Ms Norling’s frequent access of the website and its various pages for analysis. This issue has already been addressed and changes made to exclude staff access from being included as part of the analysis. The reports on the website will continue to be presented at this meeting on a monthly basis.

The comparison of Piwik vs. Google analytic programs for website data demonstrated that Piwik is a better tool for our purposes internally. Ms Winter stated that there are several things we can get with Piwik that we cannot get from

Google.

There have been several changes made to improve the website with a goal of getting our business listing directory published on the site as completely as possible. If a business is a member of the Chamber of Commerce it is noted on the site with the logo.

There has been very positive feedback on improvements to the Building Permits and Inspections page. Information has been consolidated within links to provide all the necessary information needed to complete the entire process for applying for permits.

Discussed possibility of adding Paypal as an option for residents to use to pay permit fees when they submit their applications. There is a large fee to use Paypal and other programs of this type that would have to be passed on to the consumer (in this case the resident paying the fee). Civic Plus (the website host for our current system) may have something similar that could be used but this is still being researched.

Mr. Bezanson raised the concern that if the building permit process became too easily completed without visiting the permit office or Staff, there may be more errors or discrepancies that require rework. He feels it is important to have interface between the customer and the permit staff.

Ms Moegerle reported that other states allow paying property taxes online and charge a convenience fee that goes to the state. Anoka County also allows paying property tax online. Members agreed that paying online might be better for flat fee permits and more user-friendly but anything more complicated should require face to face time with staff. It might also be helpful to make the forms "fillable".

The staff hopes to make the same updates and changes to the Planning section of the website for land use issue forms. The Business Resource and Financial Assistance Directory is planned to be posted on the EDA section of the website. The Resident Guide will be very interactive once it is posted on the website and is very comprehensive.

Mr. Bezanson complimented the staff on the Business Resource and Financial Assistance Directory. Ms Winter reported that the product is an ongoing work in progress as the information changes frequently and requires updating on a regular basis. The directory is intended to be interactive on the city website as much as possible and to assist in keeping the information up to date. The sources for the facts and figures for this product as well as the Resident Guide are the Metro Council Website and the 2010 Census. The goal is to have the Directory available on the Economic Development page of the website with possible links to real estate data.

Mr. Butler gave kudos to the staff for their work in preparing the Resident Guide and raised the question of how to identify new residents so that the guide can be sent to them. Ms Winter reported that new residents are identified through

annual county property tax information. People coming in to City Hall or calling and identifying themselves as new residents is one of the only other ways new residents are identified.

Ms Winter discussed how the guide might be distributed with suggestions for providing copies to Chamber of Commerce member businesses, churches, schools, banks and the Post Office to give to new residents of the community as they become aware of them. She noted that the guide is really meant to be interactive because of all the hyperlinks that will be available through it on the city website. The availability of the guide may also be advertised in the city newsletter, Channel 10 and on the Reader Board. Rather than making multiple copies, the guide could be published in a digital format for distribution as appropriate.

If the guide is to be mass produced, advertising may be a possible option to assist with funding the production. Some suggestions for potential advertisers included members of the Chamber of Commerce, Realtors, Banks, and Insurance Agencies. These businesses may also be interested in advertising in an online publication of the guide. Ms Winter cautioned that some of the suggested options may be so labor intensive as to prohibit pursuing them further at this time.

Ms Moegerle suggested alphabetizing the entries in the Resident Guide as well as the Business Directory. She also suggested possibly using subcategories to make it easier to organize and use. Ms Winter noted that there is an alphabetized index for the Resident Guide. Members provided other suggestions for improvement as well.

Mr. Butler brought up the challenge of keeping the information up to date and ensuring that the hyperlinks work. Ms Winter noted that Ms Norling found 14 hyperlinks that no longer worked when she first assessed the website and has done a great job of cleaning up the website since she started.

## **Business Development Report**

IUP completed for Verizon, in the process of finalizing lease agreement to present to Council

- Have not had a meeting for some time. Still working to have a viable lease agreement to present to the City Council at their next meeting.

Developer's Agreement for Viking Preserve to be presented to Council

- This project is on hold at the moment in hopes that they can partner with the project at the corner of 22 and Hwy 65 to get better prices from contractors for putting in utilities.

Met with existing business who is interested in bringing in another business into East Bethel

- Hoping that the groundwork for this will still be accomplished this calendar year.

Continue to work on access issues out of Classic Commercial Park and on the east side of Hwy 65, met with representatives from MNDOT

- This issue was discussed at the last Chamber meeting. It is understood that

there is a great need to have a secondary access out of the Classic Commercial Park as well as a stoplight somewhere between 181<sup>st</sup> and 187<sup>th</sup>. MNDOT does not share this view but the community continues to feel it is very important. Mr. Davis stated he sent an email to MNDOT on 9/12/2014 asking for their interpretation on the 185<sup>th</sup> request ASAP.

Preliminary Plat of Classic Commercial Park 3rd Addition will be presented at Planning commission meeting on August 26, 2014

Work with existing developer on an already platted (pre 2007) rural residential development

- There has been increased discussion on opening up rural residential developments again. There seem to be differing views as to where the One/10 acre rule came from and that anything that was outside of the corridor or outside of the sewer and water project should have been 2.5 acre sizes. It is believed that if this is true, it would simplify things and may result in an increase in rural residential development. This issue was previously passed and forwarded to MET Council for their approval. No word yet from MET Council.

Three existing businesses are currently looking at expansion projects and the City is working with them

- One business expansion is relatively small but the other two could be substantially larger.

EDA President wrote letter to Bob King (East Bethel Properties) to find out the status of his project.

- No response yet.

Continue work on website changes and tools as previously discussed.

Developed all new Planning forms, including Developer's handbook both for print and electronic media format as previously discussed.

Community Development Block Grant project – Coon Lake Beach

- The city originally applied for \$300,000 but was awarded \$200,000. Recently made aware of another \$100,000 available. Fourteen people have been prequalified for the program in hopes of bringing their septic systems up to code. There is currently no limit in dollar cost per resident but this may be something the city should consider. Several of the selected residents may require additional assistance to implement the program for them. The grant is specific to the area originally identified as it is tied to previous environmental reviews and may not be expanded outside the area.

The county also has a program that residents can apply for that is based on income. It is not known if this program is a grant or a loan.

New construction home permits issued to date: 12; Commercial permits: 3

Met with East end businesses (across the street from the Classic Commercial Park) to discuss sewer and water - Meeting went well.

Chamber Golf Outing – very well attended.

## **Data Center Proposition**

The State of Minnesota has put together promotional materials and incentives for data centers to be located in communities in the metro area. Ms. Winter met with Brian and Don from Connexus to discuss possible options for Data Centers in East Bethel. There are pros and cons to having these businesses in our community.

### Pros:

- Increased tax base for buildings and land
- Large water and electricity user
- Unobtrusive, clean, attractive building
- Does not generate a lot of traffic

### Cons:

- Need to have a large tract of land (10-100 acres)
- Do not generate a lot of jobs
- Incentives for location are a priority
- Will not generate a lot of ERU's – WHAT DOES THIS STAND FOR????

### Questions for discussion included:

Are data centers an industry that we would like to pursue and make a part of our Economic Development strategy?

What priority level should data centers be, and is the City willing to look at providing incentives to entice these types of businesses to locate in our community?

Members discussed options for use of the buildings and land if the company decided to move after having been established. Most data centers request only 10 – 20 acres of land but some need as much as 100 acres. The amount of land needed may be a security requirement. The usual employee level is only about 10 – 15 people.

Possible sites available were discussed and Ms. Lux felt that some of them would meet the requirements of most data centers but not all of them would. Mr. Davis stated they would be looking for redundancy in fiber service which is currently available. Water/sewer/utility requirements may be costly to provide access. Cooling towers may allow for reusing some water.

Some less desirable locations for other businesses may be appropriate for data centers. There are a few with 40 acres but most are only 2 acres. Discussed several possible locations as well as pros/cons of each.

It is not known if the city has the resources to offer adequate incentive for these organizations in order to compete with other locations. Ms. Moegerle commented that we would need to update the franchise agreements with our electricity providers to accommodate the centers.

**Chamber Update**

Ms. Winter reported that Jodi Millbrandt from Employer Solutions Group presented information on the services offered by their company including helping businesses in working with the affordable healthcare act. Ms. Winter presented on the Highway 65 corridor and what our local community's expectations are vs MN DOT priorities.

The Chamber will invite Anoka County and representatives from MN DOT to the next meeting in November. The intent is to discuss what they see as priorities for Hwy 65.

On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Chamber of Commerce and the Senior Citizens Center will jointly sponsor a local Candidate Forum at City Hall in Council Chambers.

**Council Report and Other Business**

The City Council will meet on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Bezanson noted many vehicles at new Park and Ride lot at theater. Ms. Winter reported an average of 35-40 vehicles per day have been using the new service.

Ms. Winter introduced Sue Irons as the new Recording Secretary for this meeting. Members welcomed her aboard.

**Adjournment**

**Ms. Moegerle made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m. Ms. Lux seconded; all in favor, motion carried.**

Submitted by:  
Susan Lori Irons  
Recording Secretary