

EAST BETHEL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (EDA) MEETING
October 16, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: President Julie Lux, Vice President Tom Schulzetenberg, Mayor Kevin Lewis,
Council Member Brian Mundle, Catherine Lancrain, Brian Bezanson, Suzanne Erkel.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Aaron Berg, Community Development Director
Jack Davis, City Administrator

1.0 – Call to Order

President Lux called the regular meeting of the EDA to order at 7:00 pm.

2.0 – Adopt Agenda

Bezanson moved and Erkel seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Lux asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Lux asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

3.0 – Approval of Meeting Minutes

Bezanson moved and Erkel seconded to approve the August 21, 2023, meeting minutes as written. Lux asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Lux asked any opposed? Lux and Mundle abstained. That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

4.0 – BR&E Program Update Discussion

Davis presented the staff report stating staff met with the East Bethel Chamber of Commerce at their May 11, 2023 meeting and updated the Chamber on the EDA's initiative to revisit the current BR&E Program and requested their participation going forward with the BR&E update. Staff has had follow-up meetings with the Chamber along with email communications to determine their interest in partnering in the update. Their involvement is critical to moving forward with this program.

Davis stated the EDA President Lux spoke to the East Bethel Chamber of Commerce on October 12, 2023 and presented an overview of the BR&E Program and Chamber President Brad Slawson announced the need for Chamber volunteers to work on the interview committees.

Davis noted in the EDA's previous meetings they have discussed the need for the BR&E Program, a variation of approaches of how to structure the update and what we have learned from the previous plan. One key item that we haven't reviewed in depth is the 2016 plan itself.

Davis suggested the EDA examine the survey information and the strategies addressed in pages 20 – 49 as exhibited in Attachment 1 to the Commissioner's packet, East Bethel Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Program. From this discussion, the objective will be to identify those areas that need focus to give us a better picture of the goals of the revisions needed for an action plan.

Davis highlighted some of the important items and recommended various changes in the report. He believed they needed something to show the Chamber of Commerce at their next meeting. He recommended the next step was to develop what they wanted, so they know what they want when they ask the Chamber for their participation. He noted that while they asked for the Chamber's participation, they had not spelled out exactly what the EDA wanted.

Davis indicated they could update a lot of the census information and he believed the list of businesses was important, along with the demographics of the things that remained constant. He indicated they should create some interview questions that focused on the current needs of the businesses and measure what had been done to address the concerns identified in the 2016 plans. He stated they should also focus on the low satisfaction ratings from the last study. He noted from this they need to propose a

follow-up program or let the interview results find that follow up problem(s) and then establish a process to ensure that the continuation of the plan recommendations were carried out and it was sustainable going into the future.

Lux stated she believed the Chamber was very interested in supporting them in this process. She did not think they needed further explanation on this. She asked if they should get together a main task force or leadership team to start doing the framework. Davis responded he believed that made sense. He recommended giving the Chamber a broad interview of what the proposals would be, which might encourage some of them to willingly sign on board to participate in this.

Bezanson stated it was up to the EDA to take the first step and they needed to show a bit of investment. He stated he intended on being involved again.

Mundle stated if they had some things flushed out and had a good idea of what the volunteers needed to do, this would not be hard and it might attract more people to do it.

Erkel stated she thinks they need to focus on things that could be changed and not on things they had no control over such as wages, benefits, etc. She indicated the statistics were nice, but they cannot do anything about that. She asked how could they help a business if a business was going to stay in the City. She indicated it would be nice to know if a business's growth meant they were going to need a larger place and whether they were even trying to grow or not, and if there was anything the City could do to help them. However, she indicated she did not think they should focus on this, but instead focus on interview questions for the things that could be implemented in a plan. Davis agreed and noted there were a lot of things identified that were beyond the control of the City and that was something they were going to have to work out. He believed their primary job coming out of this, once they found out what the needs were, was to find out the resources that could be made available to help the businesses.

Lux stated they might not be able to directly affect the businesses as the City, but the City could provide links, resources, and connections.

Mundle noted Christine had a lot of resources, along with the State and private resources also if someone needed a transition plan. He stated there were people out there that could help the businesses. Davis agreed the City could facilitate for the businesses and direct them to those resources.

Bezanson stated it might also be a good idea to contact Anoka Tech to find out if there has been any changes with some their apprenticeship programs. He recommended they also contact the Forest Lake School District for information on their shop classes.

Mundle noted St. Francis also had some very good shop classes.

Lux stated employment was also a big issue. She indicated they should create a task force to address some of the main issues. She noted they could use these people to create a new task force to address some of the main issues.

Davis pointed out that a lot of commuters also left the City to go to work and spent their money out of the City, whereas if they could find employment in the City, they would spend more money in the City, which would benefit the local economy.

Lux asked if the EDA could get an updated map or statistics regarding this. Davis responded the Census Bureau would have a lot of this information. He indicated they could start the process by contacting them for those updated statistics to see if there was anything that needed to be identified. He did not believe there would be a lot of change percentage wise though.

Lux asked what were the next steps. Davis recommended they come up with some type of basic outline and then get serious with the Chamber along with getting a committee organized. He stated they should determine the roles everybody was going to play also.

Erkel asked if they were planning on using the Chamber to create the questionnaire. Davis recommended they start out with the basic questions. He stated if the Commissioners had questions they believe were relevant, those could be looked at also. He believed they would want to submit this to the Chamber also to get their input.

Erkel stated while there were some good questions, she thought the actual businesses might have more input ideas to add to it. Davis responded he believed both of them needed to take a review and provide comments before they developed a final set of questions.

Lux stated once the task force was assembled, the task force would come up with questions also.

Mundle believed the first thing they needed to do was put together the leadership team. Lux believed Christine from Connexus should be on the team, along with Greg Gillis.

Mundle volunteered to be on the team as a member of council.

Lux stated she was willing to help. She stated they should also check with the Chamber to see if anyone wanted to help also. She indicated she would start reaching out to individuals. She indicated between them they could start the write up and the process.

Bezanson stated he would start doing research on the tech schools and high schools for what programs they had.

Davis stated he would put together something for the next ERA meeting, which outlined this discussion and presentation of what they have gone over.

5.0 – Business Activity Report

Davis updated the Commissioners on the Holiday Station Store, the Elevage project, Kwik Trip, NEXUS Family Solutions, Capstone, October 12 Chamber of Commerce meeting, Designing Earth Contracting, Designing Earth Contracting, the open application for mining permit/site preparation for a proposed greenhouse/garden center project north of 209th Avenue on Highway 65, the 7.1 acre City owned property on Taylor Street, the Strandlund Farm Rural Residential subdivision, Classic Commercial Park 5th Addition Preliminary Plat, and marketing of the Osborne Development 9 acre site at Hwy 65 and 181st Ave.

6.0 – Other Business

Lewis noted Capstone was pushing back a bit on the traffic study the City had requested, so that will need to be negotiated.

7.0 – City Council Report

Mundle updated the Commissioners on recent Council activity.

Erkel requested the Town Hall meeting be better advertised.

8.0 – Adjournment

Mundle moved and Erkel seconded to adjourn at 7:48 pm. To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

Submitted by:

Kathy Altman

TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.