



The sweetest place in Texas for business.

BOARD MEETING MINUTES – July 23, 2018

PRESENT: Billy Whisenant, Carolyn Lawrence, Jerod Peek, Gil Cherry, Ken Becker, Larissa Place, Stacy Fritz, Patty Torres, Joseph Crouch, David Vela, Karen Hunt

CALL TO ORDER: 10:30 AM by Billy Whisenant

PRAYER: Carolyn Lawrence

ACTION ITEMS:

MINUTES: Board to review and consider approving minutes from the June 29, 2018 meeting. Jerod Peek made the motion to approve the minutes. Carolyn Lawrence seconded. The motion carried.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE: Board reviewed Accounts Payable and no corrections were recommended.

CITY MANAGER UPDATE (David Vela):

- July Sales Tax Allocation: City and SEED sales tax allocation is up 8.78%. If this trend continues there will be a 10.29% increase year over year. There is a \$2.9 million allocation with SEED getting \$380,000.000
- Texas Communities Group: David recently spoke with Danny Barrett with TCG. TCG is currently identifying properties to get them back on the tax roll. 13 that have been identified are unmarketable due to drainage and will be deeded to the City. The other properties will start to be aggressively marketed by TCG. The City is beginning to prep for demo properties. Republic Services from Abilene will give pricing to haul the demo'd waste to the Abilene landfill until Sweetwater's is operations (next year)

MARKETING/ADMIN UPDATE (Larissa Place): The board was updated on the following topics:

- Larissa is still dealing with MDD Legal paperwork. There are discrepancies from the Appraisal District and what we have in deeds for the properties that SEED owned. Before the paperwork will be signed there will be a title search from Rod Wetsel's office to confirm the number of acres on one property.
- Larissa will begin updating the website with MDD verbiage and would like feedback from the Board on how we want to present ourselves.
- The Chamber has a new member directory coming out and has asked SEED MDD to have two pages to introduce our new role in the community. Verbiage for this is needed as well. Carolyn Lawrence recommended using the "Move Sweetwater Forward" flyer.
- We received a request from the Sweetwater Fire Department to assist in funding a fire safety program. Does SEED MDD want to contribute? Board stated that this isn't something we will pursue.
- Working on getting quotes to mow the SEED MDD property on W. Broadway.

EXEC DIR. UPDATE (Ken Becker): The board was updated on the following topics:

- Larissa has been working with the attorneys on the legal paperwork on the MDD. We did find out that some paperwork did not make it to the state on time. This was information we were not given until after the fact. However, instead of losing 3 months of collecting tax, SEED will continue to collect until December 31, 2018 and the MDD will start collecting sales tax starting January 1, 2019 with the first check around mid April. Jerod Peek asked when the ETJ will start with the taxing. Ken assumes it will be 1/1/19. Both Ken and David thanked Patty for all the hard work she put in from the elections to submitting paperwork to the SOS.
- We will begin working on the 18/19 SEED MDD budget. If we include projects in the budget they will not need to be brought to the City Commissioners if they approve the budget. We can include items like assisting in funding TCG with cleanup, revitalization projects. Ken mentioned going to Sulphur Springs to meet up with City members who worked on a revitalization project. Joseph Crouch will assist in setting that up.
- With the budget in mind we should set up a retreat prior to the finalization of a budget so we know the direction the Board would like to take. Billy Whisenant agreed we need to sit down and discuss what we as an organization want to do.



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EXEC DIR. UPDATE (Ken Becker): Continued

- Cape & Son: work has begun. When finished the City and MDD can take a tour. Geoff Haney has been invited by Economic Development of BNSF to discuss the design of their park.
- Icy Breeze: Ken and John Brinkman have discussed expansion. The business is doing well.
- Labor Force: 3.1% unemployment for Nolan County right now. That means that 211 people aren't working. Of course there are more but that is the statistics. Companies need labor. Joseph Crouch mentioned that the MD crabbers are struggling with labor force due to a stop on VISA's. They are not being granted a VISA so the crabbing industry doesn't have the labor they need. Ken mentioned this is like the cotton warehousing we have in Nolan County. There are labor forces that come in just for that season and the cotton warehousing has begun supplying housing and buildings for these employees to stay in while they are here. Ken also mentioned that NY has made the minimum wage \$15.00 an hour. Businesses have had to close because they cannot pay staff at that rate and make money.
- Big Country Manufacturing Alliance will have three tours. 2 of the 3 will be with companies in Nolan County, USG and Ludlum Measurements.
- Ken is working to coordinate a plant tour of USG for representatives from TWC, Senator Perry, Stan Lambert, Jodey Arrington. TSTC will also be included since they are part of the Skills Development Grant.
- Ken is working with two different groups on wind tours. There will be a group from Australia that would like to do some tours regarding wind and how it effects manufacturing, recycling and tooling in our County. He is also working with a reporter from Washington DC regarding an article about wind.
- WTX Legislative Summit: Ken will be part of a panel to discuss wind in regards to land owners and how it benefits them. Ken is collecting information from Rod Wetsel.
- GFS: The City will hold a zoning change request from GFS. Currently GFS has employees in Canada to train on machines that will come to their Sweetwater facility. They currently employ 15 people in Sweetwater and believe they may have 40-50 by the end of 2018.
- RPMH: They have all brand-new signage on Hospital campus. Ken and Karen will assist in tours for the hospital when they have new recruits in town.
- TSTC: They held a lunch last week regarding the Skills Development Grant. It had companies that have participated in the past and currently speak.
- SBA: The SBA held a lunch for the local bankers. Joseph mentioned the SBA has streamlined the process to help find the means for capitol.
- Universal Basic Income: The mayor of Chicago has started to implement the Universal Basic Income program in Chicago. This will mean that someone will get paid even if they aren't working. 1000 families in Chicago will receive \$500 a month. Brazil has been doing this for its low-income families.
- Ken asked if Karen Hunt from the Chamber would like to add anything: Karen stated that the hotels are very strong right now. They are trying to get an idea as to why people are staying at the hotels. Is it work, Coliseum, vacation....?
- Gil asked if SEED ever provided incentives to chain restaurants? Ken advised as a Type A organization we were not legally permitted to, but as an MDD that could be a possibility if the Board wanted to go that direction. Ken stated that the chain restaurants do their own studies to find if they would be profitable in our town or not. We can also consider a retail leakage report for our retail market. Ken has also considered attending the retail convention to gather more information. Joseph feels that Sweetwater would benefit from a local restaurant in the downtown area.

ADJOURN

Board to consider adjourning. Gil Cherry made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Carolyn Lawrence Peek Lawrence seconded. The motion carried.