



The sweetest place in Texas for business.

BOARD RETREAT MINUTES – August 6, 2018

PRESENT: Billy Whisenant, Carolyn Lawrence, Jerod Peek, Gil Cherry, Joseph Crouch, Ken Becker, Larissa Place, Jeff Grimland (USG), Stephen Erickson (USG)

CALL TO ORDER: 11:08 AM by Billy Whisenant

PRAYER: Jerod Peek

Ken Becker:

As we continue to work on transitioning from a Type A organization to the MDD we need to start looking at the 2018/19 FY budget. Larissa and Ken have come up with some topics to discuss to see what the Board would like to focus on this coming year.

- Improvement / Beautification Incentives
 - Texas Communities Group
 - Façade Improvement Program
- Non-Profit
- Retail Incentives
- Hotel / Motel
- Community Development Incentives
 - Housing / Infrastructure – Ken was speaking to John McPherson and John knows a developer that believes he can build in Sweetwater. Will get that contact info and pursue if the board wants to go that direction.
- Quality of Life Incentives
 - Parks
- Economic Development Incentives
 - FTE's
- Small Business Incentives
 - Gil mentioned to Ken he would like to see money assigned to small businesses that just need a hand getting started. This could be anything like a snow cone stand to a landscaping company. These would be \$5000 and less and we can set the dollar amount per project. Ken mentioned that the SBDC in Abilene can assist these folks in creating a business plan. The computer in our conference room can be used as a satellite office for the SBDC and we can assist these folks in this process.

Jerod Peek: He would like to see some type of guidelines in place for our organization at this time. This would include a Mission Statement.

Billy Whisenant: He would like to see our Mission Statement to include encourage existing and new business development versus funding.

Ken stated the staff will still be a facilitator to build relationships like help find the property a company is looking for even if we aren't offering any type of incentive.

Ken mentioned the possibility of assisting in a 380 agreement if that moves forward for the Kmart building with a prospective buyer. They are looking at moving forward quickly. This would be huge for our community since it is a very visible location.

Jerod Peek: We should look at our organization and budget going forward as a "buffet". We should include a little of everything.

Carolyn Lawrence: She is not really on board to assist the Non-Profits. If we open that door we will be flooded with even small sports teams looking for handouts.

Ken and Larissa both stated there are some Non-Profits that could benefit from our resources.. But how do you say yes to one and no to another. There needs to be some kind of limit and guideline set.

Jerod: He would like to see a budget of \$15,000 a year for Non-Profits. They would get \$5000 and it be on a first come first serve basis. We could make adjustments as we go.



The sweetest place in Texas for business.

Carolyn: She would like to see the Housing be a big key of our focus.

Jerod: Agrees with Carolyn on housing as this would be a large support to the community.

Gil: He said he got some feedback from his staff and believes that patio homes for seniors would be a good direction. But agrees that Housing should be high on our list.

Joseph: Housing is the most important.

Billy: Housing should be #1.

Gil: How do we incentivize contractors?

Joseph: can we provide the land or infrastructure?

Ken: As an MDD we can no longer use land as an incentive. As a type A organization we could have but not now. It would have to be auctioned off like a piece of City property. But we can incentivize the infrastructure. Brownwood invested \$500,000 and the contractor put in \$5 Million.

Billy: The loop on 1544 has about 200 acres. The City has already developed this area with small housing pads but this could be an option for a development. Or maybe even the Henderson property?

Ken: Apartments could be a direction we go in as well. Is this something the board is interested in?

Jeff Grimland and Stephen Erickson of USG joined in the conversation regarding the housing in the area. Jeff stated that he knows of only one of their technicians that live in Sweetwater. All the others live in Abilene. This is primarily because there is no apartment complex or housing that they would be interested in living in. Some may have new carpet but the appliances, and furnishing are very dated in all of the complexes. Plus the only new complex in town will not allow his workers with their salaries to live there due to Section 8 regulations. Stephen agreed that he and his wife live in Abilene as there was not a rental house or apartment complex they wanted to live in in Sweetwater. They are able to rent a fairly new home with upgrades, something that was not available in Sweetwater. When he first lived here he did live in an apartment complex in Sweetwater but living there with his wife was not an option.

Gil: Going back to the small business incentives, he would like to see \$100,000 in the budget annually. Stipulations would be minimal but they would be required to work with the SBDC.

Billy: He would like to widdle down some subjects that we don't need to focus on this year. Non-Profit and Hotel/Motel.

Jerod: He would like to see a gesture towards the Non-Profits. He would like \$15,000 in the budget. \$5000 limit per organization on a 3 year rotation. They are required to have a 501-3C.

Ken asked about Splash Pads?

Carolyn: She would like to see 2 splash pads funded by Sweetwater Economic Development. Ken agreed this would be a very visual project for us to do. Gil stated he would like to see the south side of town, specifically Fraley Park get the first one. There is a perception that only the north side of town will get the nice parks. This would be a good gesture. And maybe incorporate a splash pad with an apartment complex?

Jerod: Would like to bring up the dog park. This needs \$50,000. Gil and Ken were under the impression this was already funded by a State Farm Grant? Jerod is not sure of the status of that. If that does come through it would be \$25,000 so another \$25,000 would be needed. Sweetwater Economic Development could be looking at \$25,000 or \$50,000 to fund the dog park.

Ken: What about Retail incentives? This is not something we have to have a budget for since we don't know what could come up but is this something we would be interested in?



The sweetest place in Texas for business.

Gil: Asked how to incentivize apartments and housing?

Joseph: money I better on housing than apartments.

Billy: But the tax base is just as good on an apartment complex.

Carolyn: What does the \$50,000 pay for on a dog park?

Jerod: Fences, sprinkler system, benches, maintenance which City will handle.

ACTION ITEMS:

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Jerod Peek made the motion to go into Executive Session. Gil Cherry seconded. The motion carried.

REGULAR SESSION: Jerod Peek made the motion to re-enter Regular Session. Carolyn Lawrence seconded. The motion carried.

Ken: We need to focus on what top items the board would like the staff to focus on this first year.

- 1) Economic Development Projects
- 2) Housing Development/Apartments – the funding for this would need to come from Reserve since there is no way to determine what that budget would be at this time. Plus the other projects will need to come from the tax collected this year.
- 3) Quality of Live- This will include splash pads and dog park.
- 4) Small Business Incentives- \$75,000 annually. Limited restrictions.
- 5) Improvement/Beautification Incentives – This will include a Façade Improvement Grant Program. Limit for the first year will be \$100,000, each “participant” will not receive more than \$15,000. Texas Communities Group contract for another year at \$6000 and possible funding of the demo of properties.
- 6) Non-Profit Incentives – They must be 501-3C, \$15,000 overall annually with each organization receiving no more than \$5000 which can only be requested every 3 years.

ADJOURN

Board to consider adjourning. Gil Cherry made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Billy Whisenant seconded. The motion carried.