City of Evansville **Economic Development Committee**
Regular Meeting
The Night Owl Sports Pub and Eatery, 189 E Main Street, Evansville, WI 53536
Monday, August 17, 2026, 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order.** 6:02 pm

2. **Roll Call**:

	Present/Absent
Norman Barker	P
Kelly Knoble, Chair	P
Jon Alling	P
Paul Liesse	P
Brandon Rutz	P
Vacant	-
Sue Berg	P

Others Present
Erik Ferrar, ECSD
Colette Spranger, Com. Dev. Director
Shawn Dunphy, Chamber of Commerce
Alex Moderhock

3. ***Motion to Approve Agenda as printed. Motion by Liesse, second by Alling. Motion carried unanimously.***

4. ***Motion to waive the reading of the minutes from June 15th, 2026 meeting and approve as printed.*** *(Note: The July 20th, 2026 meeting was not held due to lack of quorum.)* ***Motion by Liesse, second by Alling. Motion carried unanimously.***

5. **Civility Reminder**

6. **Citizen Appearances, other than listed agenda items**

   A. Alex Moderhock is a resident attending this evening because he interested in participating with the committee. He works at Bell Laboratories. Has served on various boards throughout the years, including the Dane County Tree Board, Dane Dances.

   A. Greg Ardisson – Owner of the Night Owl, Mama Rita's, Ardy Brothers BBQ
   Greg is generously hosting this evening's meeting. The group asks for an update on how business is. Greg's business has pivoted many times throughout the years in response to market changes and unique challenges, such as fire, rebuilding, and relocating. Business is tough right now and he warns that there is no guarantee any local business would continue without a push to patronize non-chain businesses. He is concerned about how rate increases for electricity will affect him. He is also skeptical of the food truck trend,

noting he pays taxes to the City each year. Food trucks do not leave that kind of impact on the community. Greg is also active with the Fourth of July committee.

7. New Business

A. 2026 Fall Job Fair

Spranger requested formal approval of a date. Agreement from group that a later afternoon event worked well. Suggestion made to have a place for employers who cannot make it to leave applications and position descriptions at the City's own table, or one made for local businesses. Spranger will reach out to DWD and confirm with Creekside for a location.

B. Review and Approve Applications for ARPA Housing Grant

$50,000 is left to distribute to local property owners improving residential units on upper floors. Two applications have been submitted. Funds need to be distributed before the end of the year.

Motion by Alling to approve the application for $25,000 to Sue Farnsworth for improvements made to 16 E Main Street. Second by Liesse. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Berg to approve the application for $25,000 to Dave Mueller for improvements proposed at 116 E Main Street, with the conditions that estimates are gathered for proposed work and Historic Preservation approval is given for any exterior changes. Second by Alling. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Review Preliminary 2027 Budget

Brief discussion on proposed budget that dovetailed into tentative plans for this committee in 2027. The 2028 budget may include a larger ask depending on the outcome of those plans.
Motion to approve the economic development and tourism budgets as presented by Berg, second by Alling. Motion carried, with Liesse abstaining.

D. Discussion and possible action regarding Evansville Municipal Code §130-799 – Window Treatment in the B-2 Central Business District, including consideration of amending the current 50% window-covering limitation to allow up to 75 % window coverage for operating businesses where customer, client, or patient privacy is reasonably necessary, while maintaining an attractive and active downtown storefront appearance.

A letter was delivered to several alderpeople requesting a review of the existing ordinance. Spranger presented an article from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation that detailed how windows can be ornamented or styled to provide an attractive appearance. The general advice given is that no more than 50% of a window should be permanently covered, and that changing displays can be an attractant to downtown. The City has pushed for enforcement of the ordinance over the past month. Discussion included whether or not the ordinance should apply to just empty storefronts and what mix of uses the City should strive for in the downtown. Spranger notes this a zoning question, and the committee could suggest changes to Plan Commission that would encourage certain uses by right (such as entertainment) and make others (office space) conditional. Discussion also touched on motivated landlords versus business owners stuck in the middle. Consensus that the group understand the goal of the ordinance is to create an open, lively, and engaging atmosphere in the downtown. Spranger took a poll of members on their thoughts to take action:

- Alling is uncomfortable with making the changes proposed.
- Knoble would like to see the changes made.
- Barker would like the ordinance to remain as is.
- Berg would like to leave it for the moment, and will consider revisiting it down the road if it proves problematic or difficult.
- Liesse would like the ordinance to remain as is.

8. Old Business

A. Library Partnership Update

Library director Bronna Lehmann has organized a talk from SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) on September 15th at the library. This is the first event in a series of business related content she hopes to offer the community.

B. Business Visits with WPPI Energy

Spranger reported on business visits to a handful of downtown shops and offices, including the Evansville Veterinary Clinic. She was accompanied by Darren Jacobsen of WPPI Energy, who educated those available on using the MyAccount features to track energy usage.

C. Promotional Materials Update

Alling and Dunphy have been working on a one page tear-off directory that will be distributed to businesses. The goal is to get them printed by the Fall Fest.

9. Monthly Reports

A. Community Development Report

Spranger reported on progress from Plan Commission and Common Council discussion on data centers, noting the exercise was a good way to engage the community.

B. Chamber of Commerce Report

Chamber reported on events and recent ribbon cuttings at Schoop's Second Chance and Chesterfield Kennels.

C. Tourism Commission Report

Tourism's latest meeting included going over the budget that was recommended at tonight's meeting**.**

10. Discussion

11. Next Meeting Dates:

A. Regular Meeting: September 21, 2026 at 6:00 PM.

12. ***Adjourn.*** ***At 7:47 PM.***