

City of Evansville **Economic Development Committee**
Regular Meeting
Monday, February 20, 2023 6:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order. Brooks called meeting to order at 6:04pm

2. Roll Call:

	Present/Absent	Others Present
Chair James Brooks	P	Com. Dev. Director Colette Spranger
Ben Ladick, Vice Chair	P	Bill Lathrop, Evansville Today
Jon Alling	P	Shawn Dunphy, Evansville Chamber of Commerce
Sue Berg	P	James Otterstein, Rock County Economic Development
Brandon Rutz	A	Linda Gard, ECSD
Pat Carr	A	
Gabe Schrader	P	

3. Motion to Approve Agenda by Ladick, seconded by Schrader, approved unanimously.

4. Motion to waive the reading of the minutes of the January 16, 2023 meeting and approve them as printed by Ladick, seconded by Schrader, approved unanimously.

5. Civility Reminder. Brooks reminded the committee of the City's commitments to civil discourse.

6. Citizen Appearances, other than listed agenda items.

A. Linda Gard, Career Coordinator at Evansville High School, Ms. Gard visited the group at the behest of Bill Lathrop, who shadowed her for a day. Her role is to find opportunities for students who were interested in career paths outside a college-bound path. Lathrop is trying to find other businesses to participate. Shawn Dunphy has talked with her as well. James Otterstein noted that some districts operate such programs differently than others and that it takes time to really focus on key relationships with the business community.

7. Monthly Report

A. Community Development Report. Spranger gave the report, filling in on recent Plan Commission applications, grants and yearly reporting. Business visits are being conducted again and the Building Improvement Grant and Board of Zoning Appeals committees met after several year hiatuses.

- B. Chamber of Commerce Report.** Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Shawn Dunphy spoke briefly of her first few days on the job. The Chamber of Commerce has a physical location in the Grange Building, renting out space with Ringhand's Beer Mustard.
- C. Tourism Commission Report.** Berg gave the report. Creekside Place is going in a new direction with its event space, offering community meal, outdoor music, and the regular car shows as "Maple Street Events." The Committee put an ad in the magazine "Our Wisconsin". Brief discussion on how there is an overall lack of good connection with the school district regarding events that could be regarded as tourism events, such as capitalizing on tournaments and other events that draw in people from outside Evansville.
- D. Rock County Development Alliance Report** – James Otterstein provided further detail regarding the quarterly dashboard he puts out regarding economic activity throughout the region. Consumer confidence is up, as indicated by increased sales activity. Brooks inquired what percentage of sales were e-commerce. Otterstein estimated about 1/3 of the sales were attributed to online sales. Otterstein noted that the company featured in the Project Profile – GEA Mechanical Equipment, In, took 2 years to convince to settle in Janesville. Employers are also suffering from fatigue in hiring – jobs are there, but the energy to fill them is cooling off.

8. Discussion.

- A. Building Improvement Grant – Standing Member.** Spranger expressed desire for a standing member of the EDC to act as a go-to to be on the committee to review Building Improvement Grants. Brooks interjected that the point of the phrasing in the grant language not to specify a person was to allow for flexibility in who could participate. Spranger replied that having a person available midday would be preferable in order to cut down on night meetings. Brooks, Alling, and Carr all showed interest in serving in this capacity.
- B. MadREP/Livability.com Media Opportunity.** Spranger shared that she had been contacted by a consultant hired by MadREP to seek out Evansville's interest at having an advertisement in its yearly regional guidebook. Discussion throughout the group about what kind of content should be included came to a conclusion that, at this time, the City lacked a cohesive story that could be succinctly told in the small amount of space provided in the magazine. Group agreed that this opportunity should be considered at a later date, when time and budget allowed and after a narrative could be developed.
- C. Ad Hoc Committee to organize Business Summit.** Brainstorming for the summit took place. Spranger noted that there are tools that the committee has that it didn't in 2008 – MadREP and greater WEDC support. Brooks added that a better relationship with the Chamber was also an asset. 2008's affair took up six hours on a Saturday and featured a speaker from the Tomah Entrepreneur's Club. It was held at the Performing Arts Center and brought in about 100 people. There were focus groups before the actual summit to identify what topics should be covered by the summit. All this effort resulted in the 2008 Economic Development Plan, which was later absorbed into the Economic Development Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Group consensus appeared to be that this time around should be focused more on networking and reconnecting.

9. Next Meeting Dates: Monday, March 20, 2023 at 6:00pm.