

November 15, 2023
Berlin Economic Development Authority Meeting
Berlin City Hall – Council Chambers

Present were: Vice Chair Peter Higbee, Andre Duchesne, Dick Eastman, Amber Bachner, Paul Robitaille, and Steve Halle

Excused were: Dick Huot and Bobby Hill

Others Present: Pam Laflamme, Director of Strategic Initiatives; Ericka Canales, CEDC; and Dan Whittet

Call to Order

The regular meeting was called to order at City Hall at 5:30 PM.

Approval of September 2023 meeting minutes

Mr. Robitaille made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 2023 meeting as presented. Mr. Duchesne seconded the motion. So moved, the motion passed with all in favor.

Financial Report

Ms. Laflamme did a brief summary of the financials – the audit was recently started and we had financials for August, September and October. Very little has been spent and there is no real change in our economic position. With that in mind, Mr. Eastman voted to approve the three months of financial reports, seconded by Ms. Bachner and all members voted in favor of the motion, motion passed.

Economic Development Strategy

Introductions were made and Ms. Canales from Coos Economic Development Corporation did an overview of a program she wants to start that is modeled after other similar projects in NH and beyond. It is pitch project where small businesses or entrepreneurs with ideas or a product vie amongst one another for the pitch to have the top idea. If the idea is selected, the winner could have access to a space to rent for low cost, access to technical support from CEDC, Small Business Development Center staff, and USDA. Ms. Canales is hoping to hear soon about a grant she applied for to support the project. The board was supportive of the idea and is going to work to see what kind of role they could play in this project.

Ms. Canales talked about the effort and work being done around workforce housing and the programs that work better than others to get things done quickly without all the red tape. There are state agencies interested in funding projects in the North Country as well as financial institutions.

It was mentioned that Business Beautifications grants are still offered through CEDC. The board then discussed a number of issues including the solar eclipse in April 2024, the use of rail in the region, being small business friendly, etc. The board then settled into a

conversation about the lack of housing and childcare in the region. It was mentioned at the moment we don't have a lack of jobs, but a lack of affordable housing and childcare in which to fill vacant positions throughout the region across several sectors. The board discussed the role they might be able to take in these issues in particular housing. Housing is not considered a primary economic activity but if done as part of a mixed-use project there is potential to provide housing as part of a larger effort. There was a lot of discussion about all the work that needs to be done.

Other

None

Public Comments

Mr. Whittet mentioned the need to make new members of the community feel more welcome and for us to be more inclusive.

Nonpublic

Mr. Robitaille made a motion to go in to Nonpublic Session per RSA 91-A:3, II (d) Land Matters, and seconded by Mr. Duchesne, roll call vote was taken, motion passed.

Mr. Robitaille made a motion to exit nonpublic session per RSA 91-A:3, II (d) Land Matters seconded by Ms. Bachner. A roll call vote was taken, the motion passed.

The potential purchase of land and a building was discussed but no votes were taken.

Member Comments

None.

Adjourn

Mr. Robitaille made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Bachner seconded the motion. So moved, the motion passed unanimously.