



Marion County Development

MISSION: *The mission of the Marion County Development Commission (MCDC), a department of county government, is to enhance the quality of life and standard of living in Marion County by promoting and developing Marion County as a quality destination to live, work and visit.*

MINUTES

Marion County Development Commission

Wednesday, November 8, 2023, at The Bread Board, 616 Franklin Street, Pella, IA

MCDC Present:

Megan Weiler Green, Barb Kniff McCulla, Jim Mitchell, Tony Alyswoth, Steffanie Bonnsetter, Doug Stewart, Brian Thomas, and Jacob Crozier

Ex-Officio Present:

Carla Eysink

Others Present:

none

CALL TO ORDER.

The regular meeting of the Marion County Development Commission was called to order by Chair, Megan Weiler Green, at 7:15 a.m., Wednesday, November 8, 2023, at 616 Franklin Street, Pella, IA.

A motion was made (Alyswoth/Stewart) to approve the September minutes. Motion carried.

A motion was made (Kniff McCulla/Alyswoth) to approve the financial report. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- **Budget:** Eysink indicated that work will begin in December for the FY24-25 Budget. Commissioners discussed potential projects and staffing needs.
- **2024 Red Rock Travel Guide:** Eysink indicated that she needed a couple more individuals for a layout in the guide which features locals. This section focuses on why people like to live and work in the area. Eysink indicated there was a need to have folks in different occupations and who did not grow up in the area. She has a short survey for them to complete and needs a photo from each. Commissioners were encouraged to send contact information to her.
- **Digital Passports:** The Twinkleland Passport is live. Signs and prizes are being distributed. Commissioners are encourage to sign up and experience this new marketing tool. There are stops and shops in Oskaloosa, Pella, Knoxville, and Pleasantville. The stops feature lighting displays while the shops feature holiday clothing or décor.
- **Top 10 Under 40 Review Committee:** Eysink indicated that the nomination form for the 2023 Top 10 Under 40 is now live. Nominations are due by January 31. She indicated at the January meeting she will need a couple of volunteers to read through the nominations to make a recommendation to the full commission of recipients. This meeting would be in early February.
- **Red Rock StartUP! & Young Entrepreneur Awards (YEA):** A meeting is scheduled with past sponsors for planning this program in 2024. Eysink indicated a need to find additional sponsors so award amounts can remain at the same level. Commissioners were encouraged to contact potential sponsors that they had connections with for the program. All sponsor dollars go directly to prize money for pitch contestants and YEA recipients.
- **Assistant Director Timeline:** Eysink shared with commissioners a timeline for finding an assistant director. The first steps are to update job descriptions for both the director and assistance director. These have not been updated in 20 years. The next step would be to receive permission to hire from the Board of Supervisors. Once permission is granted then a search committee and promotion strategy for listing the position would be coordinated. The goal is to have the person hired by April, 2024. Commissioners discussed staffing needs and the proposed timeline.
- **YourEconomy.org:** Eysink presented information for an annual subscription to YourEconomy.org which is a set of economic tools used to analyze economic trends in the US and at the local level. They track economic changes and provide data less than 6 months old on businesses and employment. This provides a more current source than free options such as the US Census. The data will help MCD track progress in the new strategic plan and assist other policy makers with business issues. The subscription will not only provide access to Marion County business data, but we will also be able to slice up the data via zip code to identify local trends as well. The cost for Marion County is \$750 per year. A motion was made (Stewart/Mitchell) to subscribe starting in January. Motion carried.

PROJECT UPDATES:

- **Leadership Red Rock:** The first session of Leadership Red Rock has been completed with 17 participants. The next session will be at Weiler focusing on business and the December session at Central College will focus on education & health.
- **CONNECT Quarterly Meeting:** The CONNECT Quarterly Meeting will focus on resources for small businesses and be held at 3014 East Main in Knoxville. The April meeting will focus on quality-of-life projects and tourism.
- **Housing Study:** The kick-off meetings for the Housing Study were held November 6 and 7. The consultant traveled throughout the county while here looking at some of the new housing projects underway as well as new housing built since our last study. The final report is expected in late spring.
- **Strategic & Marketing Plan:** Eysink will be meeting with the consultants to go through the input received at the stakeholders meeting. Once a draft has been developed, the small work group will review it before holding the second stakeholders meeting in early February.
- **Empower Rural Iowa:** Eysink shared that she has been asked by the Governor to co-chair The Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative. Eysink has served on the Task Force for several years. This group is a think tank for rural policy development and oversees several grant programs.

COMMUNITY UPDATES:

- Commissioners discussed the results of local elections.

- The Knoxville Chamber of Commerce has had several new businesses join including Blooms.
- Information was shared about USDA loan applications.

ADJOURN:

Next regular meeting Wednesday, January 10 on-line.