

Minutes
SKOWHEGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
REGULAR MEETING
May 6, 2020
9:00 AM
Online Zoom Meeting

Members Present:

Kurt Maynard, Chairman
Billy Finley, Vice-Chairman
Jason Gayne, Treasurer
Betty Austin
Kristina Cannon
Sally Dwyer

Members Absent:

Matt Dubois
Reid Gibson
Todd Smith

Others Present:

Dena Rich, Recording Secretary
Jeff Hewett, Director of Economic & Community Dev.

1. Call regular meeting to order.

Kurt Maynard called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m., quorum was met.

2. Discussion on ways to help Skowhegan businesses react to this major disruption of the economy.

Kristina Cannon said she would like to see SEDC do something for the business whether that be a low interest loan. She said there are a lot of communities around the State that are pulling funds doing what they can to help during this time. Kristina said she didn't have any particular ideas. She did say a week or so ago she sent some information out to the Board about what Brunswick is doing and potentially how we could do that.

Jeff Hewett said to let everyone know the RLF and Micro loans have to be brought to the Selectmen. The question that brought this up is could SEDC use some of its own funds to do some emergency relief. Jeff said that doesn't mean we can't go to the Selectmen for the RLF funds or potentially some of the TIF funds as well to supplement the emergency relief program.

Jason Gayne said but we could kick this off quickly by using SEDC funds.

Jeff Hewett said the information he sent the Board from Saco and Brunswick it showed the two different issues. In the Brunswick one it was up to \$5,000 for any business expense, with a very short application with no security. Saco is like our RLF with a lot more in review process and is accepting requests of \$7,500 to \$10,000. Jeff did say with

these funds it may be hard in these times to get security for these loans, so maybe we look at giving out grants. He just suggested that since we have a limited amount of money to give out but want to make a good impact for the businesses.

Sally Dwyer asked if we have had request for funding so far?

Jeff Hewett said no not at this moment.

Jason Gayne said he has talked with many businesses they don't want to take on more debit. Jason Gayne said he would feel more comfortable with having security.

Billy Finley said that in the Portland area Poland Springs and couple of other companies have put together some money to do small grants to businesses that are draw randomly. He was wondering if we had businesses strong enough like Sappi or Banks that would be willing to put up a fund of \$10,000-\$15,000. We do a grant to 15 or 20 businesses for \$1,000 or less that are drawn randomly with no pay back.

Kurt Maynard said Belfast is doing a mini grant program of \$500 to Businesses who certified they have lost 25% of its revenue.

Jeff Hewett did remind the Board that it is only Dena and himself in the office to review all the documentation that the Businesses send in.

Billy Finley asked Jason how many businesses would have a need for something as small as \$500-\$1000.

Jason Gayne said they would because when your looking at it right now one of their fears is rent. Even though a lot of the businesses are closed they still have to make their mortgage or rent payment. He used Beauty by Design for example they just reopened Monday, but they were closed for a month. They still have to make their rent payment but have no income coming in because they just opened up.

Billy Finley asked so the local landlord are not working with their tenants?

Jason Gayne said they are working with them a little bit. It's just like the bank though if yours struggling right now you don't have to make the payment this month but in two or three months you have to make three months' worth of payments. Hopefully by then the businesses will have rebounded to make those payments or they will be right back in the same position.

Billy Finley asked if any of the tenants have re-negotiated with their landlords for example, he has a couple places he rents but has negotiated down 50% for the next 6 months. No one is going to go in to those spaces if he leaves, so better for the landlord to get some money from the space then to not have a tenant in at all getting no income from the space.

Kurt asked do we have consensus if we want to look at this as a grant or loan?

Jeff Hewett said you could also split it, for example the first \$500 is a grant and if they needed more money, they could look into the RLF Fund.

Kurt Maynard said most businesses have been busy applying for the PPE and other government and bank funding programs, now they may be looking more locally for help.

Kristina Cannon said that they have had two businesses apply for the Technical Assistant program at Main Street on top of the others who have applied before COVID-19.

Billy Finley asked Kristina Cannon if that is a grant or a loan?

Kristina Cannon said that is a grant. Kristina said they had asked the local savings banks and credit unions to pool funds in the amount of \$5,000 to give out to businesses via a Technical Assistant Grant Applications. They have already award funds to Crooked Face Creamer and Bigelow Brewing Company. Crooked Face Creamer was to help with a purchase of a fridge to have more items in her retail store. Bigelow Brewing Company its helping towards a portion of their website redevelopment. There is still some funding available but she would like to see that go up a little bit to help more businesses.

Kurt Maynard suggested if Kristina is already doing grants why not make SEDC money available to your organization with your staff to handle these requests. So, we are not duplicating the programs.

Kristina Cannon said that there is a Business Enhancement Committee who meet and go over the grant applications. The Committee votes on the applications it is usually not the full amount requested because they have limited it to between \$500.00 and \$2,000.00 for the requests.

Motion by Billy Finley, seconded by Betty Austin to use SEDC funds to supply Main Street Skowhegan with \$5,000.00 to the Technical Assistant Fund for specific COVID-19 needs. Vote 6-0, motion carried.

Billy Finley asked how do we let people know that money is available?

Kristina Cannon said she will post it out to the news outlets, and best way would be to contact Kristina or go through Main Street Skowhegan website.

3. Old Business

a. Discussion of the future of the KVI Lot.

Kurt Maynard reminded the Board we had an offer from Amber Lambke and she has gone back to her offer of \$50,000. We received this offer about a month ago. Kurt Maynard is asking the Board do they want to accept or counter offer to Amber's proposal on the property?

Kurt Maynard said the Board saw his idea of SEDC having interest in the remaining involvement in the project, then we offer to deed the property off to whatever entity that Amber may form to do the Project. Then SEDC taking a centered ownership in the project to extent of our current monitory investment that is roughly \$90,500.00.

Sally Dwyer asked so what you are saying is that we deed it over no money changed but we keep an interest in the property.

The Board agreed with Kurt's idea, but would like the Sub Committee go back and discuss with Amber a partnership and bring back at the next SEDC meeting.

b. Discussion/decision on extending the suspension of RLF loan payment for May

Motion by Betty Austin, seconded by Kristina Cannon to extend the deferred payments for the RLF loan for the month of May. Vote 6-0, motion carried.

4. New Business

No New Business was discussed at this meeting.

5. Items by the Real Estate Sub-Committee Members.

The Sub-Committee is going to contact Amber Lambke for further discussion on the KVI Lot.

6. Project Updates

Broadband, Comprehensive Plan, Electric Car Charging Stations, Marketing of Southgate, Run of River

Electric Car Charging Stations - Jeff Hewett let the Board know that he has been struggling to get estimates finalized from contactors on the car charging site. No one wants to come out to the site he hopes to get estimates in the week or so to the Selectmen.

Comprehensive Plan - Jeff Hewett let the Board know that more work will start next year with everything going on right now.

Run of River – Kristina Cannon let the Board know still working on Run of River even in this lull period. She is just waiting to hear back from the new engineering firm and whitewater architect for a contract to submit to the Town. The next step would then be to have a meeting with all the permitting agencies, ask them about the adjustable surf wave; which they are now considering if it will work for the whitewater project. They are working with a firm to update/create a completely new rendering. They have been

working on getting some trail work done. There is an Americorp Program called N triple C where they send you a group of ten people to work on an infrastructure project if you are accepted.

7. Items by the Members

Kristina Cannon let the Board know that Skowhegan was accepted as a community Entrepreneurship pilot program Town. Main Street pulled together a team of local leaders that will sit on the Skowhegan Community Team. The Team will take a look at the current entrepreneurial support systems, figure out where we are doing well and figure out where some of the gaps are. The Maine Community Foundations has two grants that they are going to be giving to Skowhegan. Up to \$25,000 this fall and up to \$25,000 next fall to implement the projects that we identify as gaps in our entrepreneurial eco system.

Jason Gayne let the Board know there have been a couple emails go out about the Chamber raising a little bit of money right for a Skowhegan Regional Stimulus package. The money raised the Chamber will match gift certificates purchased to businesses in the area. Example someone comes in and buys a \$25 gift certificate the chamber will match \$25 to the same business so the person gets a \$50 gift card of their choice of business.

Billy Finley asked if they can purchase these online or have to come by the office?

Jason Gayne said he hasn't set it up on line yet. They are still trying to work through the logistics of doing that. Right now, it is person, there are volunteers in the office it has been open the entire time during COVID. Jason Gayne said they are willing to mail them as well if people call over the phone and do not feel comfortable coming to the office.

Jeff Hewett asked Jason how much funding do you have for that program?

Jason Gayne said right now they only have \$500 that's been raised. The goal is to raising \$5,000.00 so that it is essentially \$10,000.00 put back into the local economy.

8. Economic & Community Development Office Items

Jeff Hewett let the Board know the Energy Project is getting finalized.

Jeff Hewett let the Board know the lease paperwork is coming in soon for the proposed Solar Project for the Transfer Station. It will start the first quarter next year; DEP is pushing to see it used.

Jeff Hewett let the Board know our office is in the final stages of the Façade Grant together for the State that is due on June 5th. If you know any businesses that are interested in the program to go to the Town of Skowhegan website and send in the applications. The Mandatory Meeting will be scheduled at a later date. Applicants can call the office who are also interested in applying and can call into the office and talk

with either Dena or myself. We have so far received 10 business who have made application.

Motion by Billy Finley, seconded by Betty Austin at 9:57 a.m. to adjourn the meeting. Vote 6-0, motion carried.