

**CITY OF MASCOUTAH  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**MARCH 31, 2021**

The minutes of the Regular Combined (In-Person and Virtual) Meeting of the Economic Development Commission of the City of Mascoutah.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Donna Mae Schlueter called the meeting to start at 6:05 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

*Present:* Donna Mae Schlueter, Keith Cook, Tim Boyce, Tony Sax, Brent Bergheger and Bill Millikin. Charles Jefferson attended virtually.

*Absent:* None.

*Other Staff Present:* City Manager Brad Myers and Assistant City Manager Kari Speir.

There was a quorum of commission members.

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the March 2, 2021 Economic Development Commission meeting were presented and approved as presented.

**BOARD BUSINESS**

Schlueter announced the shelving has been removed from Fred's Hardware and asked about the business who purchased the building. City Manager confirmed that the fitness center would remain as is. He also stated that the business taking over the building would also get the car wash behind it.

Bergheger confirmed that his building is for rent, either renting the entire building or piecing it out. The renovation business has been forced to close due to COVID. The building next to Bergheger's has been cleaned and renovation work is taking place, however no business license has been applied for and it is unsure if they applied for a plumbing permit.

Schlueter stated the Smiths still own the building between First Federal and Meyer Appliance. Assistant City Manager stated the Smiths have passed away and the property taxes have not been paid on the property, and will eventually go to tax sale. City Manager stated there has been interest in the building, however the interested person wants City involvement, however doing so would be unethical. At this time, that property has sat vacant for several years. City Manager stated an inspection might need to be done, when it may be deemed uninhabitable and could be set for condemnation. Millikin suggested that it might go faster if the family could sell the property to First Federal for \$1 or donate it to the City, and then the City could tear it down. City Manager stated it was one lot with two addresses: one for a business and one for a residence. Millikin asked if there were land use grants for taking

down properties. Fire Appliance is now known as Under Pressure. Millikin would mention to their owner that the building next to him is vacant and if they were interested in expanding. Sax stated it could be torn down and turned into green space or the church could use that space for a community garden or playground.

Schlueter asked if City Manager has heard from Burger Fi, which he has not and will reach out again to follow up.

City Manager stated Darryl Stein's building is either for sale or for rent and he will entertain either type of offer.

City Manager stated construction would begin rather soon on Joe's Pizza. Boyce mentioned the franchising of Pizza Hut. Millikin stated Pizza Hut has not opened their indoor seating and was told that they may switch to a carry out/delivery only type of setup. Bergheger stated they are in no hurry to open their indoor seating as that is the majority of their costs.

Assistant City Manager reached out to Paul with the Great Streets Initiative; however, he was unable to make it. Schlueter presented Darryl Stein's plans/concepts for the area of the former mill. City Manager stated the stage will sit on the scale, and the building will sit on the two walls that are currently there. The Commission discussed the proposed building and the plans. Millikin stated that while the idea is great, it will eliminate any parking anywhere close to that area, and asked if this would end the possibility of development of the building with the mural, as parking would be eliminated. Boyce stated there could be a possibility. Jefferson stated a few years ago, there were many ideas of the use of the mural building on Facebook. Millikin asked if it might be possible to approach Stein to see if he would replace some of the broken windows and update the outside of the mural building. Boyce stated that to replace all of the windows would be too expensive. Millikin stated the building is somewhat of an eyesore and he would hope that he would at least install some single pane glass or board up the windows and paint them. Cook asked if there are any grants that may assist Stein with repairing the mural building, and Boyce stated Stein would not accept any assistance. Millikin stated that if it were another building with broken windows, they would be cited. Jefferson said the building was built in the 1800s and may be able to be designated a historical building, which would mean additional funding to repair it. Assistant City Manager stated the building is in TIF2B.

Schlueter said her and the Assistant City Manager discussed the Great Streets Initiative. Schlueter stated that if Stein is going to do his project at the former mill property, they could concentrate their First Impressions project in the area around City Hall and the four way stop at Main and Railway. City Manager stated the City has hired six part time workers for the summer that could assist with watering the planters as needed. Millikin asked if the Economic Development Commission was the only Commission that is working on the Great Streets Initiative, which City Manager stated at this time, yes, it is the EDC that is taking the lead on it.

Millikin discussed the top priorities and goals of the Economic Development Commission. Each member was asked to write down four ideas for goals to achieve and priorities. One of

the goals was to identify something that can be achieved and executed in about 6 months. Many of the goals and ideas are all part of the Great Streets Initiative. Potential ideas for rapid turnaround projects would be Haas Park updates, welcome banners at Route 4 and Main, and help activate vacant storefronts, and signage improvements throughout the City. Jefferson said his goals were to help generate more businesses and find resources to help find and bring business into Mascoutah. Jefferson suggested working with Fairview Heights, Swansea, and O'Fallon to discuss incubator ideas. Millikin asked if there was a cost associated with the incubator. Jefferson is unsure what the costs would be. Jefferson suggested the City could do some research regarding the cost. Jefferson discussed his experience with an incubator project. Schlueter commented that there are several home based and consulting businesses that do not have business licenses and asked if the City knows how many are actually registered. Assistant City Manager was unsure but stated the City could determine how many there were. Schlueter stated the City did an incubator survey approximately three years ago; however, the response was not very large. Millikin reiterated that Jefferson was discussing more of the idea of a virtual incubator, which would connect people to resources as opposed to a building, and Jefferson agreed. Millikin motioned to add a "virtual incubator" to their first and second quarter projects. Boyce seconded.

Millikin discussed the next idea of welcome banners on the corner of Main Street and Route 4, which will tie in with the general signage plans. Schlueter stated they did something similar several years ago, and it would be nice to do something similar with the new light poles on Main Street, especially with increased traffic of people coming through town. Boyce stated that the banners would need to be kept in good repair. Assistant City Manager stated that she believes the new poles are better equipped for this; however, IDOT does not tend to approve of these type of banners. Jefferson feels that only putting banners up for a short period would not be cost effective. Millikin suggested making this a twelve-month rotation project. Jefferson thinks this would be a good project for those people coming through town and for the residents as well. Millikin suggested some directional signage for that corner as many people coming into town only travel Route 4 and do not know what all Main Street has to offer. Sax has suggested some wayfinding signage that would point people to the business district. Sax also suggested Residential Landlord Management Assistance. Millikin discussed the benefits of assisting all landlords with finding quality tenants.

Millikin recapped the six to twelve month ideas from the Great Streets Initiative. These ideas were establishing a virtual incubator, the wayfinding program, the Residential Landlord Management Assistance program, and obtaining signage for Route 4 and Main Street. Millikin discussed the creation of an EDC grant and initiative summary program and assistance program for grant writing purposes. He asked for more information about curbs and sidewalks and wanted to know what the City has control on in regards to the discussion of the First Impressions incentive program. City Manager stated that updating the curbs and sidewalks on Main Street would not be a good idea at this time as IDOT will eventually come in and tear them out. Schlueter suggested calling elected officials to get some work done to Main Street. Boyce agrees that Main Street does need work; however, he feels that property owners along Main Street can also invest a little more into their properties. Millikin

suggested identifying three to four properties and approaching the property owners to inform them of different programs available to fix up their properties. Schlueter asked if there was a way to place information about the façade program into people’s utility bills. Bergher commented that there is more that will need to be updated than just sidewalks and there are no programs available to help with shrubberies and home conditions. City Manager stated that the City cannot assist individuals. Boyce suggested signs for those who had performed property maintenance. Boyce also said that the town could be improved by property owners taking down temporary signage. City Manager said that decision would have to be fair for all as to what would need to be taken down. Millikin called this the “We Noticed, Thank You” incentive program and will work on getting some signs and funding for this. Schlueter asked if a notice about the EDC programs could be included in the City utility bills. Schlueter also suggested contacting the 4H and Scouts to be volunteers to help those who would like to do improvement, but do not have the resources to do so.

Millikin discussed the planter program. He asked if it was in the budget to order several new planters to place along Main Street. City Manager suggested joining with businesses where the business would take care of the planters in front of their properties. City Manager thought the “Adopt a Planter” project could be a good project for the Chamber of Commerce. The EDC approved the purchase of several planters to place along Main Street.

Cook discussed the idea of utilizing Scouts and potentially construction apprentices to assist with property maintenance. Millikin wanted to know if the City owns any other properties along Route 4 and Main Street that is not being beautified that could be a potential location to address. He also discussed the vacant homes and properties that appear to be vacant. Millikin asked about how the City handles vacant and foreclosed homes. Boyce asked if there would be any way to put curbs and sidewalks in on Route 4, which City Manager said IDOT would have to give approval for the curbs.

Schlueter asked that the City put together an informational packet about Mascoutah. She also updated the Commission about the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Jefferson thanked Millikin for his work on the Commission’s goals and initiatives.

The next regular meeting will be on May 4, 2021 at 6 p.m.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

None.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn at 7:44 p.m. All were in favor.

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Julia Biggs, Executive Assistant