

Minutes of the Suffield Economic Development Commission
Regular Meeting
May 16, 2024

Members Present: Gayle Demko – Chair, John McGuire – Secretary, Maria Silvestri, Brian Banak. Jeff Girard

Also Present: Chad Kuzontkoski – Economic Development Specialist, Ellie Binns - Recording Secretary

1. Gayle Demko called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM, and appointed Ms. Silvestri and Mr. Girard to act as full members in the absence of Mr. Kelly and Mr. Henrie.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the April 18, 2024 regular meeting were approved unanimously.

3. Public Input – None

4. Commission Project Update: Art Trail

Ms. Demko reported that the Art Trail event is in full gear for this Saturday. There are volunteers from M & T Bank and the Suffield Ambulance will be on the green. Don Miner will be giving out information on opioid prevention and answering questions. Ms. Demko noted that partnering this event with opioid prevention is a great way to raise public awareness on this important issue. Mr. Kuzontkoski has flyers ready for distribution with QR codes that link to the website and maps. He has also printed a list of restaurants for out of town visitors. Ms. Demko noted that they will have a raffle to get contact information from people to follow up with a survey. The statues were delivered and installed yesterday and will be unveiled on Saturday and then will be on display for three months. Thus far there have been contributions totaling over \$5,000.00 from individuals and organizations making this a break even event. Ms. Demko noted that getting information out about the details of the event has been a problem and has been a stumbling block. There was discussion about addressing this in the future and the need for coordinated signage. This remains an issue that needs to be brought before the boards and commissions again to come up with better methods of getting information out and effective signage.

5. Update to Matching Sign Grant Proposal

Mr. Kuzontkoski reported that he is reviewing the current sign grant verbiage to come up with an updated version. There was discussion about looking at the current zoning sign regulations with the possibility of coming up with recommendations for a revised sign policy to present to the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC). Mr. Girard noted that there is an application from Hangar Pub and Brewery for an internally lit sign on South Street that will be before the PZC on Monday the 20th of May. The role of the EDC advocating for businesses for their signage was discussed.

6. Review of West Suffield Beautification Project

Mr. Kuzontkoski reviewed with the Commission a plan for beautifying the center of West Suffield that he has been working on. The plan would have a similar esthetic to the center of Suffield with the street lights, plantings, curbs and signage. Having a plan and a budget associated with it could make this a workable plan for applying for grants and sourcing funding to accomplish it. He is looking for feedback from the Commission members and it was also suggested that there be input from the West Suffield residents.

7. EDC Projects Report

Mr. Kuzontkoski distributed his written report which summarized the activities in the Light Industrial, Commercial and Town Center Village Districts for the month. He reported that an offer has been received for 1148 South Street with the purpose of developing the land into a recreation facility, but more information will be needed before it is ready for approvals. He also reported that the development rights for the 52.97 acre Najaka property on Blossom Street have been purchased, paid for by the State and Federal Departments of Agriculture. Mr. Kuzontkoski noted that with the success of the Tax Investment Fund (TIF) grant program, a second wave of grants is being considered. The event at the State Capitol on April 24th for towns in the Bradley Development League was very successful and is being considered for an annual event. He also noted that the North Central Chamber of Commerce is working with Suffield's Economic Development Department to hold a networking event up at Hilltop Farm early evening on June 20th. The EDC will have a table and there was discussion about possibly having food. A letter was received from the Travelers Aid at Bradley Airport looking for volunteers for the Traveler's Assistance Program. The information was posted on the EDC Facebook page.

Ms. Binns reported that the Suffield Farmers Market will be opening for the season on Saturday, June 22nd on the south green from 9am – noon.

8. Adjournment

With nothing further to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellie Binns, Recording Secretary