

Cedar County Economic Development Commission
May 9, 2017 – 5:30 PM
Cedar County Extension Office
Meeting Minutes

Roll Call

Board Members Present: Greg Wagner, Jon Bell, Jeff Kaufmann; Leanne Boots, Adam Sandberg, Jen VanOort; Roger Laughlin

Staff Present: Rod Ness, Lisa Decker

Guests: Sue Hall, Dave Fury, Mechanicsville Mayor

Chair Greg Wagner called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Roll call was taken.

Consent Agenda Additions/Agenda Approval

- Leanne made a motion, seconded by Jen, to approve the agenda, minutes (with minor corrections) and financial statements. All ayes.

Unfinished/Old Business

- The Director suggested going to new business, as it affects the unfinished/old business.

New Business

- The Executive Director reported ISU is not renewing his contract that expires 06/30/17. Adam Sandberg asked if the Cedar County Extension Office is continuing to support the program. The Director said they chose not to continue their partnership with CCEDCO because ISU decided to not continue with the program. Greg asked if the Supervisors still wanted to continue supporting CCEDCO. Jeff Kaufmann stated some cities are interested in continuing to support the program, some are not. Durant, Lowden, and Stanwood decided to not be part of the program after June 30. Roger added West Branch would not be willing to contribute more in annual dues. Jen stated Clarence has seen amazing things come from CCEDCO assistance, but they have also asked for help and gotten results. The Director stated in Jackson County, for example, the board members solicit donations from businesses, and that is how they have a bigger budget to operate. CCEDCO budget is relatively small compared to many other counties, and there is not a lot of money in the budget to give back to the cities. He feels a lot is delivered on the budget.
- Adam stated Mechanicsville would stay with CCEDCO if there were no increase in dues. He gave a report to the city council and they had a discussion whether to stay in. Rod added he did not think increasing dues is an option. He stated the Economic Development model has changed and it is not just about bringing in jobs and employers. The enthusiasm in Clarence is why things are happening there, and he feels CCEDCO is making headway.
- Adam asked the Director if he would be willing to stay on. The Director said he would but would need more enthusiasm, and is there the interest in the program, amongst the cities, to continue. Roger said West Branch is more non-interested than interested in continuing. Greg added that three are interested in continuing (Clarence, Mechanicsville, and Tipton). Since the contract is up with Cedar County Extension Office effective June 30th, CCEDCO will need an office. He feels it important for people to have somewhere to go, but will have to consider the cost for rent, phone, utilities, etc. Jeff added Cedar County might have office space for use at Community Action, as it is a county owned building. Also, if there is no CCEDCO, where/who is the point of contact for economic development in the county? However, Cedar County cannot carry the whole financial load. Rod stated a decision has to be made, because the uncertainty wears on morale. He has commitments and training to finish up and feels a June 30th end date is too soon.
- Greg asked what happens after June 30th. Does the city finish up everything? Jeff stated what the cities say has a great bearing on whether CCEDCO continues. Roger asked if the interested cities could possibly start their own Economic Development program in the county. Rod added there is reserve funds, but does not want CCEDCO to continue on that alone, but things it could continue without a physical office. Adam feels it cannot financially function without only three cities wanting to continue. Jon stated this

is county economic development and should represent the entire county. If he concentrates on fewer communities, which may bring others back. Jeff would like to get a definitive answer from West Branch and

find out what Bennett's intentions are. Roger wondered if ISU pulling out makes each city wonder about staying in. Rod stated Lowden and Durant are definitely not joining for next year. Jeff figured that would put the financial contributions down 25% without ISU/Extension and the cities. Greg asked if the three cities (Clarence, Mechanicsville, and Tipton) want to make a go of after June 30th? Rod stated there would roughly be \$207,000 (minus shut down costs) left in budget after June 30th. If CCEDCO does not continue, a percentage of each city's contribution would go back to them. We would probably need to continue CCEDCO insurance coverage. Jeff wondered if the Executive Director could see a way to make up 25% of the needed revenue. He stated that would have to be a discussion, he may have to look at his pay/benefits. It may be a challenge for him to perform his best, not knowing how long CCEDCO would continue. There is probably no guarantee he or the office manager would stay. This all needs to be part of the discussion; what would happen if CCEDCO continues but he or the office manager leaves? This creates an uncomfortable climate for employees.

- Jon stated he is not happy how the Extension Office handled things. He wishes they would have communicated to the board earlier, but it doesn't help to go backwards. Rod agreed saying no concerns were expressed from the Extension board to him. Jon stated he called the ISU Extension Vice Chair, but has yet to have a face to face with him. It never came to the table that Extension wasn't happy, but he heard word on the street. Rod added the previous Extension Regional Director enjoyed having this program part of Extension. The program has changed since its inception in 1988. Priorities have shifted. Greg asked for a motion one-way or the other from the Supervisors, Clarence, Mechanicsville, and Tipton to keep going or not. Rod stated June 30th is the end of the fiscal year, but there is no reason to have to close that fast. He would like more time to finish everything up in a professional fashion.
- Jon suggests an answer from the cities by the June meeting, a definite yes or no. It will give the board more direction on what to do. Rod will speak to the city clerks to have them put the issue on their city's agenda for their next meeting, so we can get a definitive answer. If it does not shut down each community has to do a resolution on when to extend the ending date. Roger added if West Branch is in, we are in good standing financially to continue. Jon asked the Director and Office Manager to run a few different financial options by next meeting, if CCEDCO is to continue. What would a budget look like with the number of possible cities that stay? We will know by then office space options.
- Adam made a motion to extend CCEDCO and continue until August 31st. Greg wondered where the office would move to after June 30th? Adam suggested finding temporary office space. Jeff wondered if Extension would allow CCEDCO to stay until August 31st? They may want to charge something if that happens. Jon thinks the county can come up with something. Dave Fury added something needs to be done to represent the county, to give answers to inquiries, continue in some fashion, whether it is full-time or part-time. Greg said a motion was on the floor from Adam to continue CCEDCO, at least, through August 31st. Jen seconded it. A roll call vote was taken with all ayes to have CCEDCO continue until August 31st. The Director will talk to Extension about allowing them to remain in their current office until then.
- Jon stated the Director's contract expires June 30th. Will his current contract have to be finished up? The Directors said yes. After that date he could maybe work under contract. Jon added when putting together budget options, if CCEDCO was to continue, before CCEDCO had a contract with ISU, the only benefit that was paid to the Director was health insurance. This will be part of the big picture. Greg asked if there is a computer available for him to use if we continue. The Director answered he will have to return the ISU issued computer he has been using, but could use temporarily use his personal one.

Executive Director's Report

- The ECIA Community Assessment Program in Clarence was well attended. He thinks it will have a good impact on Clarence and hopes to have the assessments done in the other cities. A partnership with ECIA helped fund this project. Board members can read his report to see everything else.

City Reports

- **Clarence** – They are using their city assessment as a road map for their future. A downtown building was purchase by a local business owner. The North Cedar art class is painting a mural on the food stand at the park. They are ready to submit their Main Street application. They need \$30,000 of pledges to apply, and so far they have received \$42,000.
- **West Branch** – They have four good candidates for the new City Manager. Would like to see a bike path in Cedar County to hook up with Cedar Rapids/Linn County.
- **Mechanicsville** - Lights and poles for the ball diamonds were purchased for \$15,000. They are also purchasing soccer nets.
- **Cedar County Supervisors** – Gravel is going on the roads.
- **Stanwood** – The Highway 38 project has begun. The main objective, while this work is being done, is to keep one lane open for traffic.

Announcements

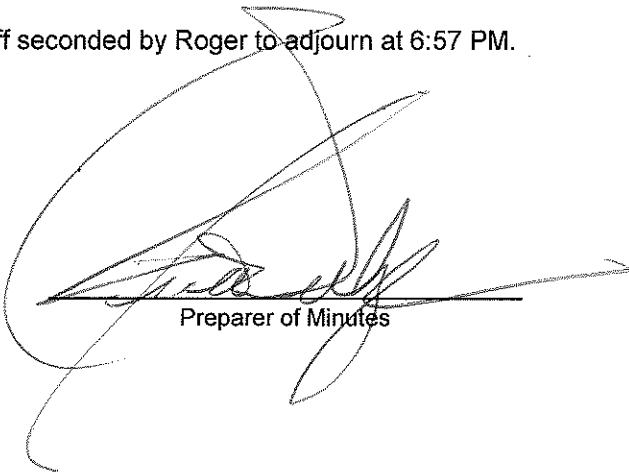
- The next scheduled meeting is **Tuesday, June 13th.**

Adjourn

- With no further business, a motion was made by Jeff seconded by Roger to adjourn at 6:57 PM.



Board Chair



Preparer of Minutes