

**MINUTES OF THE
WATERTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**
Regular Meeting Monday, March 23, 2020

Ken Grotbo
Cory Mitteness
Roxanne Wilmes
Deborah Everson
Lindsay Guetzkow
Steve Washburn
Michael Walters
Adam Pawelk

1. Roll Call

Chairman Ken Grotbo called the joint EDA and City Council meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. Monday March 23, 2020 in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

EDA members present: Grotbo, Roxanne Wilmes, Cory Mitteness, Deborah Everson and Lindsay Guetzkow.

City Council members present: Mayor Steve Washburn and Michael Walters.

Staff present: City Administrator Shane Fineran and Clerk/Treasurer Lynn Tschudi.

Guest present: Kyle Jarvis.

2. Adopt Agenda

EVERSON MOVED, GUETZKOW SECONDED A MOTION TO ADOPT THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. ALL PRESENT VOTED AYE. MOTION CARRIED.

3. New Business

A. Adopt Minutes of the February 7, 2020 EDA Meeting

GUETZKOW MOVED, WILMES SECONDED A MOTION TO ADOPT THE MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 7, 2020. ALL PRESENT VOTED AYE, MOTION CARRIED.

B. COVID-19 Response Tools for Economic Development

Executive Director Fineran said the EDA is gathered in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Executive orders were made last week by the Governor and have trickled down to local businesses in Watertown. Fineran has been discussing different ideas in how the EDA can support these affected businesses during this time. Fineran noted this is a rapidly changing situation. He believes that Minnesota is considering closure orders in the near future. Fineran reviewed the executive orders issued by the government which closed restaurants, bars, and salons. The Watertown EDA is uniquely positioned in that there are resources available to offer these businesses through this challenging time.

Idea #1: Provide a grant for a “Watertown Eats” website. The website would create a central place for businesses to connect online. This would involve a \$250 grant to the Watertown Chamber to develop the website and create the domain.

Idea #2: Technology Infrastructure Investment Grant – A grant program available to a business to

develop or enhance their online presence. This would help or enhance their ability to take or receive orders, or any other technology to become more efficient to operate. The grant would be a 100% match up to \$5,000. Currently this is written to grant the funds only to the businesses who are impacted by the executive order.

Idea #3: Emergency Pandemic Business Rebate Program – A property tax and utility refund program. This program could be available to businesses impacted by the executive orders for both utility bills and property taxes during the emergency.

Fineran noted that in some situations there are multi-tenant situations that need to be considered.

Everson asked if the businesses have been notified about these possible ideas. Kyle Jarvis said there are more executive orders coming for businesses in Watertown. He thinks this is a great start, but over the last seven days the situation has changed even more.

Guetzkow asked about changing language to incorporate language to add future executive orders for additional Watertown businesses.

Mayor Washburn asked the council and the authority what would happen if funds were disbursed to currently impacted businesses and not others with the events evolving daily. With this, Washburn would be more in favor of idea #1 or idea #2.

Walters suggested offering a \$25 per month utility rebate for residents for April and May and \$100 per month for businesses for April and May. Mitteness asked if the \$25 would show as a statement credit. Fineran said it would need to be researched. Fineran said any business subsidy needs to run through the EDA.

Jarvis suggested offering a percentage of the businesses' water bill.

Guetzkow would like to make sure any credits given to landlords are passed along to the business. Walters suggested issuing checks directly to the businesses. Fineran said a statement credit sounds operationally the easiest. Grotho asked Fineran to complete analysis on the business utility bills. Washburn stated he feels a percentage of the total bill makes more sense.

Jarvis expanded on the Watertown Eats program website. Mitteness asked why the Chamber of Commerce is not paying for the website development. Jarvis said this is for the entire city and Chamber members may not approve of their funds being used for a website that only promotes restaurants in Watertown. Washburn thinks the best way to promote this would be through Facebook.

Everson is more comfortable getting money back to residents so she is in favor of idea #3.

Fineran is not comfortable approving any resolutions as they are written today. Washburn does not want to push anything through quickly due to the struggles with accounting and utility billing software.

MITTENESS MOVED, WILMES SECONDED A MOTION TO DIRECT STAFF TO MAKE AMENDMENTS TO COVID-19 RESPONSE TOOLS AND BRING BACK TO DECISION MAKING BODY WITH CHANGES. ALL PRESENT VOTED AYE, MOTION CARRIED.

EDA and council discussed where to pull the funds from to pay for the residential relief portion of the emergency tool.

WALTERS MOVED, GUETZKOW SECONDED A MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 2020-45, AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF WATERTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL BUSINESS IMPACTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. ALL PRESENT VOTED AYE, MOTION CARRIED.

4. Adjournment

GUETZKOW MOVED, EVERSON SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 4:15 PM. ALL PRESENT VOTED AYE, MOTION CARRIED.

Ken Grotbo, Chair

Shane Fineran, Executive Director