

Winnebago County Industrial Development Board

Minutes for Meeting of December 17, 2020

County Administrative Building, 112 Otter Avenue, Oshkosh WI

Meeting held virtually via Zoom and Phone in

Board Members Present: Rob Keller, George Dearborn, Mark Harris, Linda Kutchenriter, Joel Rasmussen, Mary Krueger, Bob Warnke

Board Members Excused: Elizabeth Hartman, Shiloh Ramos, Mary Anne Mueller

Others Present: Jerry Bougie, Morris Cox, Art Rathjen, Tricia Rathermel, Dan Kesselmayr

Meeting called to order by Chair Rob Keller at 1:00 pm.

1. Approval of minutes from August 24, 2020 meeting. Joel Rasmussen made a motion to approve the August 24, 2020 meeting minutes, motion seconded by Mark Harris. Motion approved 7-0.
2. Update on Winnebago County Covid-19 Rapid Response Loan Program for Small Businesses. Art Rathjen and from GO-EDC gave a short power point report on the program to date. Since inception of the program 34 loans have been issued totaling \$313,000 distributed with \$437,000 remaining in the fund. Repayments of loans to date include 18 loan repayments secured, with another 8 loans deferred and 8 remaining loans that are newer loans that are still in the repayment process.
3. Board discussion and possible action on providing \$75,000 in funds to match GO-EDC's USDA Rural Business Development Grant application to establish a micro-entrepreneur revolving loan fund program in rural areas of Winnebago County. Tricia Rathermel from GO-EDC provided the Board with a report on GO-EDC's effort in applying for a USDA Rural Business Development Grant for \$75,000 to establish a revolving loan fund for small and emerging rural businesses in the County, which are defined as a business with 50 or fewer employees and \$1 million or less in annual gross revenue. To strengthen the grant application, Tricia said that a \$75,000 match from the County IDB would improve the ability of the grant to be approved by USDA. She indicated that if the loan program were to be established, it would be designed as more of a permanent program that would be managed by GO-EDC staff with oversight by the Greater Oshkosh Revolving Loan Fund Committee. The intent of the program would be to assist rural businesses by mitigating risk, helping with additional bank financing and providing gap funding to help get a deal done. She said eligible businesses need to be located within the USDA's eligible mapped area which for Winnebago County would include all rural areas generally outside of the metro areas of Oshkosh, Neenah and Menasha and parts of their contiguous townships.

Board members discussed the funding match for the proposed loan program. The consensus of the Board was that there were sufficient available funds in the current Covid-19 Rapid Recovery Loan program that could be shifted into the proposed revolving loan program and, in turn, it would avoid having to dip into the IDB reserve funds for the match. Tricia indicated that the timeline for the grant application includes submittal of the application to USDA in February, notification of grant award by USDA in June/July and potential launching of the program in August of 2021. She also mentioned that the USDA grant funding portion of the loan fund would be loaned out before the IDB matched dollars. A motion was made by Mark Harris to shift \$75,000 from the Covid-19 Rapid Recovery Loan program for the purpose of providing a match for GO-EDC's USDA Rural Business Development Grant application to establish a micro-entrepreneur revolving loan fund program for small and emerging businesses in the rural areas of Winnebago County, contingent upon the approval of the grant application and awarding of the grant by USDA. Motion seconded by George Dearborn. Motion passed 7-0.

4. Update on U.S. Internet Broadband project in Winnebago County and local funding matches for the project. Dan Kesselmayer from US Internet said they are in the process of installing the broadband infrastructure in the unserved/underserved rural areas for Phase 1 of the Light the Lake project pursuant to the 2020 grant award from the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC). Dan indicated they have submitted another grant (Phase 2) to PSC for 2021 to cover those areas not approved as part of the 2020 grant application. He also indicated that local town financial matching commitments were included in the PSC grant applications which better positioned the grant applications to receive PSC approval, however several of the towns anticipated using their County IDB funding allocations for their matches but they didn't realize they couldn't use the funding allocations at the time the PSC grant application was submitted. Jerry Bougie indicated the IDB originally was not open to allowing the towns to use their allocations for this purpose as the IDB provided a \$25,000 pledge as an overall County match for the project back in January of 2020. However, that pledge occurred before the Covid pandemic and the resulting importance for high speed internet service in the rural areas to work from home, e-schooling, e-commerce, etc. has become a significant need in the unserved and underserved rural areas of the county. Discussion pursued. Various Board members spoke in favor of allowing the affected towns to use their IDB allocations for their matching commitments for the US Internet project as a special exception due to the rising need and demand for high speed internet service and the overall economic benefit it would have for the rural areas. The Board was in general consensus to allow the affected Towns to use their 2021 IDB funding allocations for matching commitments for the US Internet project, however the Board will wait until they review and take formal action on all of the 2021 funding applications at their next meeting in early 2021. In addition, Board members were in general agreement that they should have a broader discussion at some point as to whether this should be an ongoing allowable use of the IDB allocations, limit it to 2021 only, or to allow it on a case by case basis.

5. Brief report on status of CDBG close funding project. Jerry Bougie reported that the County's CDBG close funding application has been approved by the state for the County Road Y project in the amount of \$807,000, and the IDB has contracted with MSA consulting to conduct the ongoing admin monitoring and reporting for the project. The County Y project will occur during the construction season in 2021.

6. Adjournment. A motion was made by George Dearborn to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Linda Kutchenriter. Motion passed 7-0. Meeting adjourned at 2:02 pm.

Submitted by,

Jerry Bougie, Recording Secretary