CALL TO ORDER
Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT
There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 1, 2018 LA CROSSE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND, INC.
MOTION by Holtze/O'Malley to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2018 La Crosse County Economic Development Fund, Inc. Motion carried unanimously; Augustine, Balacek and McKenney excused.

HISTORY OF TOURISM PROMOTION FUNDING
Brian Fukuda gave a brief history of tourism promotion funding.

- Initially (before the County had a Community Development Specialist), the Economic Development Committee had an application process that allowed various festivals/events/initiatives to apply for some funding to help them get started.
- After the Economic Development Committee and Business Fund were merged in 2006, the Community Development Specialist was asked to work with the tourism organizations (LaCrosse Area Convention and Visitors Bureau and Onalaska Tourism) to identify projects that would make an impact, that they would like to work together on.
- In 2010, the County Board made the decision to dedicate this funding to help the LACVB to operate the I-90 visitor’s center on French Island. This funding was then dedicated for this purpose until that center was closed in 2015 due to the I-90 road construction.
- For the next couple of years, most of the Tourism Promotion funding went unused.
- In 2017, staff contacted the La Crosse County Convention and Visitors Bureau to ask them to make a proposal on how these funds could best be leveraged to best promote tourism in La Crosse County. The LCCVB responded with the proposal in the next agenda item at the end of 2017, but since the event is in 2018, we decided to wait to bring it to the Board for consideration.

Amy Gabay, Director of Membership and Grants for Explore La Crosse, detailed the benefits of La Crosse County being a member of the LCCVB. The membership cost is $200/year.

FUNDING REQUEST FROM LA CROSSE COUNTY COUNVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU
This agenda item was tabled at the last meeting so that more details could be presented at today’s meeting. Attached in the packets was updated information on the request from the LCCVB to use the “Tourism Promotion” funding in our budget to help promote the Driftless...
Sports Convergence. Brent Hanifl, Director of Media and Marketing for Explore La Crosse, along with Amy Gabay, detailed how their proposal using $10,000 of county funding would be used for a Social Influencers (a new trend in marketing) Campaign for the Driftless Sports Convergence on May 19th at the Onalaska Omni Center.

Why use Social Influencers?
- Uses “every day” people to spread the word
- Fresh perspectives on the region
- Leverage authenticity for the County
- Showcase countywide stories and powerful imagery
- Gives the La Crosse County brand a “human face”

Outcomes:
- La Crosse County awareness – new audience
- Expanded reach – influencer provide authentic audiences
- SEO Boost – “Great Place to Visit” “Great Place to Live” “Great Place to Do Business”
- Evergreen Content – long lasting results from content that is always relevant
- Increased Sales
- Brand ambassadors – Social influencers will not risk their reputations on brands they cannot personally recommend

MOTION by Holtze/Wettstein to approve the request of $10,000 out of Tourism Promotion Funding in our budget to help promote the Driftless Sports Convergence (via Social Influencers) and to receive a report back with the results later in the year. Motion carried unanimously; Augustine, Balacek and McKenney excused.

CHALLENGING TRENDS DATA
Karl Green, Professor with UW Extension Community Resource Educator, presented his findings in Continuing Challenges in Housing. He has been adding to the data that he originally put together 7 years ago. Some of the areas presented today were:
- Total Residential Equalized Value/Capital for La Crosse Municipalities
- La Crosse Urban Housing Estimated Fair Market Value
- La Crosse Neighborhood Change in Owner-Occupied Housing Numbers
- La Crosse Neighborhoods Housing Sales Since 1990
- La Crosse County % Increase of Value
- La Crosse County Municipal Vacant Parcels (developable) 2017
- Existing Residential Lots Available w/Historic Average Annual Residential Development
- La Crosse County School Districts Total Enrollment
- Village of Holmen & Holmen School District Mill Rate vs. Real Estate Assessed Value
- Free & Reduced Lunch w/Property Statistics by Neighborhood School
- Flood/Non-Flood Values in 12 Sales Areas on the North Side

The entire presentation is attached to these minutes.

PRESENTATION ON THE PLANS & REGIONAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE LA CROSSE CENTER EXPANSION
La Crosse Center Director, Art Fahey, and President of the La Crosse Center Board, Brent Smith, were present to discuss the plans for the La Crosse Center expansion. They gave this presentation to the County Board a few weeks ago who referred it to the Executive Committee to discuss potential options for financial support of this project. The current expansion plan that they will be recommending to the City Council is $49.2 million; $37 million has been approved by the City; $5 million has been approved by a grant from the State. The La Crosse Center has a yearly impact of $40 million on the County.
The La Crosse Center was built in 1980 with an addition in 2000. In 2013, they looked to national consultants to determine what needed to be done going forward. The conclusion of the consultants was that because of the aging of the facility and the competitive market, it is a challenge to retain current tenants, and to increase the amount of business. The three main things identified to focus efforts on were:

1. Appearance of the building
2. Functionality
3. Uniqueness

The solution was to add on to the west side of the building which will include meeting space, ballroom space, and a balcony that will take advantage of the river and the park. The proposed design addresses these three areas, with the new area being 94,335 square feet.

Impact Assumptions:
- Total new economic impact $12,096,700
- 154 new jobs
- Total fiscal impact $1,039,000
- $665,000 sales tax generation;
- Est. County portion $60,000/year

Summary of economic impact estimates (averaged between years 2011-2015)
- Current La Crosse Center usage: average 176 events
- 23,5035 attendees
- Direct economic impact $16,465,614
- Direct sales tax revenues: $905,609;
- Total economic impact $41,164,034;
- Total sales tax revenues: $2,264,022.

It is the opinion of the Economic Development Fund that this is an important project for the community and encourages the County to play a role in the financial support of the project. This will be passed on to the Executive Committee for their next meeting.

**UPDATE ON RIVER STEEL**
Megan DeVore, Corporation Counsel, reported that there was a hearing on February 17th in Bankruptcy Court. The judge approved the sale that was being requested by Brennan, both of the real estate and the real property equipment auction. They did not address the question of Associated Bank’s attorneys’ fees. The next step in Bankruptcy Court is that Brennan’s attorney is working on their reorganization plan. They will be setting forth a plan to make payments towards some amount of the money that is owed on our loans, hopefully between $50,000 and $80,000 of the amount owed. Creditors will review the plan, and there will be a hearing on this plan in mid-May. If the attorneys’ fees are not resolved, there will be a hearing on March 29th for the Court to decide the attorneys’ fees.

**UPDATE ON COUNTY PROPERTIES**
- Lakeview Business Park –
  - The Park Development Review Board met and approved the plans for La Crosse Scale.
  - We received three bids for the railroad work to permanently repair the flood damage. We are working with FEMA as this activity appears to be grant eligible.
AGENCY UPDATES:
- Jim Hill distributed the annual building Permit report for all municipalities for the last seven years.
  - Seven Year Total Construction: $2,910,161,773
  - Seven Year Average Construction: $415,737,396.10
- Greg Flogstad indicated that they will be updating their Revolving Loan Fund Manual that hasn’t been updated in 20 years.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: None noted.

NEXT MEETING: April 5, 2018 at 7:30 a.m.

ADJOURN
There being no further business, MOTION by Wehrs/Nikolay to adjourn the meeting at 9:14 a.m. Motion carried unanimously; Augustine, Balacek and McKenney excused.

APPROVED May 3, 2018 - Terri Pavlic, Recorder