LA CROSSE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND, INC.
August 1, 2019
Administrative Center – Room 1107

| MEMBERS PRESENT: | Tara Johnson, Monica Kruse, Sharon Davidson, Patti Balacek, Mike Giese, Sharon Hampson, Dave Holtze (exc. at 8:01 a.m.), Debra McKenney, Laurie Miller, Joe Moua, Steve O’Malley (arr. 7:35 a.m.), Doug Weidenbach, John Wettstein |
| MEMBERS EXCUSED: | Gibran Augustine, Megan DeVore |
| OTHERS PRESENT: | Brian Fukuda, Charlie Handy, Jorge Beltran, Sam Bachmeier, Trent Milliken, Andrea Schnick, Robin Moses, Terri Pavlic |

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

PUBLIC COMMENT – there was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JUNE 6, 2019 LA CROSSE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND, INC. MEETING
MOTION by Weidenbach/Kruse to approve the minutes of the June 6, 2019 La Crosse County Economic Development Fund, Inc. meeting. Motion carried unanimously; Augustine, O’Malley and DeVore excused.

MEMBERSHIP/CONTRIBUTION INVOICES
Brian Fukuda noted that the LCEDF had previously approved the 1st Quarter payment to LADCO but had asked for follow-up discussions. Included in the packets is a letter detailing some initiatives and projects that LADCO is working on. Staff is requesting approval for paying the 2nd Quarter invoice as well as the remaining invoices for the year. These funds are budgeted for. MOTION by Hampson/Holtze to approve the 2019 LADCO Membership invoice for Quarter 2, as well as the invoices for the next two quarters. Jorge Beltram, Executive Director of LADCO, will give regular updates to the LCEDF on the progress of LADCO’s initiatives. Motion carried; Wettstein: nay; Augustine and DeVore excused.

CITY VISION 2040 PLAN
The City of La Crosse and Downtown Mainstreet, Inc. (DMI) are in the process of starting the City Vision 2040 Plan and have approached the County to participate in both staff involvement and a financial contribution. Andrea Schnick (City Planning) and Robin Moses (DMI) were in attendance to give an overview of the City Vision 2040 Plan. The objective of the plan is to prepare a comprehensive update of the City Vision 2020 Downtown Master Plan including a detailed strategic implementation program that lists specific prioritized actions. Two teams are being formed: a Project Management Team, and a Steering Committee. A few months ago, a Request for Expressions of Interest was sent out, and they are now starting to draft the basic RFP for a Planning Firm. They are in the process of obtaining funding and have commitments so far from the City of La Crosse for $100,000 and Western Technical College for $30,000. They have requested $20,000 from the La Crosse Community Foundation and La Crosse County from $50,000.

MOTION by McKenney/Balacek to recommend to the County Administrator to include a $50,000 line item in the 2020 budget that would be a contribution from the County for the City Vision 2040 Plan.
MOTION by Giese/Weidenbach to refer for 60 days to get a clearer direction on this request for funding for the City Vision 2040 Plan. Motion carries; O’Malley abstained; Augustine, DeVore and Holtze excused.

ECONOWATCH
Charlie Handy distributed and discussed a draft of the fall 2019 Econowatch. Some of the topics covered in the Econowatch were:
- La Crosse MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) Top 25 Jobs and Wages represents 29,790 jobs; a line was added for the cost of childcare (cost of one child);
- La Crosse County 2018 Regional Economic Competitiveness Comparison
- Number of Jobs by Sector, MRRPC Area
- Labor Force Participation Rate Comparison
- Propensity for Automation by Occupational Group
- Projected Population Change 2015-2025 - people aged 65 & older
- Demographics of Households with Severe Housing Cost Burdens

CONSIDERATION OF FUNDING FOR GEOFENCING PROJECT
There is a line item in the Economic Development budget for “tourism projects” for $10,000. We typically work with Explore La Crosse to identify projects that are in need of some funding to move forward. This project actually originated with Downtown Mainstreet, but will provide great data for tourism promotion, so Explore La Crosse will partner on the project. WEDC has offered an opportunity to some of their Mainstreet communities, as a pilot program, to access geofencing data for their districts by tapping into cell phone data and usage to help them better understand the demographics of their visitors. Attached in the packet was a flyer on the program. The package has a value of close to $12,000 and through this partnership with WEDC we are able to get it for $3,000. Staff is proposing to use up to $3,000 from this line item to participate in this pilot program with WEDC. MOTION by Kruse/McKenney to approve $3,000 for the Geofencing Partnership Project with WEDC through Cobalt. Motion carried unanimously; Augustine, DeVore and Holtze excused.

CDBG-CLOSE UPDATE
Brian Fukuda distributed an update on the CDBG-Close Timeline & Decisions. We continue to work toward closing our CDBG revolving loan fund in accordance with DOA’s CDBG-Close process.

CLOSE Overview: the Wisconsin DOA has received approval from HUD so the CDBG-CLOSE process officially started on February 1, 2019. For La Crosse County that means:
- We are no longer able to make loans out of our CDBG-Funded Revolving Loan Fund
- Prior to January 31, 2021, we must pay back all cash in that fund (Fund 230) to the State
- Prior to January 31, 2021, we must either buy out the existing loans or assign them to the State
- The funds that we pay back to the State will be set aside until January 31, 2021 for La Crosse County to apply for CDBG grants.

County Obligations/Decisions
1. Obligation – at some point prior to January 31, 2021, La Crosse County must take all cash in Fund 230 and pay it back to the WI DOA
2. a. Decision – prior to paying back the cash in Fund 230, La Crosse County needs to decide whether to buy-out the existing loans or assign them to the State
b. Decision – If we decide to buy-out the existing loans, La Crosse County needs to decide where to get the money to buy them out.

3. Decision - Once funds are paid back, La Crosse County needs to decide what CDBG Grant(s) we would like to apply for to use these funds, and we will need to submit application(s) prior to January 31, 2021.

Considerations Regarding Buy-Out of Existing Loans
1. We need to assess the risk of existing loans (Skipperliner, S&S Cycle, Lovechild)
2. We need to determine where to source the funds from the buyout, and whether that source would require ultimate payback of the funds
3. We need to make sure that there would be benefit in the buyout

Considerations Regarding CDBG-Grant Projects
1. To be eligible, projects must meet a HUD National Objective
2. Grants can be for a variety of CDBG-eligible activities
3. Projects cannot be within the City of La Crosse, since the City is a CDBG Entitlement Community
4. La Crosse County has very few LMI areas outside of the City of La Crosse, so the blight elimination objective is the most likely opportunity for La Crosse County.
5. After looking for various opportunities, staff is supporting the best opportunity to use these funds for the reconstruction of County Highway B through the Village of Bangor.

UNIVERCITY YEAR PROGRAM APPLICATION
This is a program we are looking at with a potential partnership with UW Madison. The University partners with communities across the State to incorporate community “issue areas” into actual University coursework. This is a potential opportunity to engage a wide variety of university students in our work with regard to the “child care crisis” in our community. We have submitted an application to the UniverCity Year Program. There is a local match financial requirement of up to $20,000. Depending on the scope of the project and if La Crosse County is selected, staff is proposing to use a portion of the funding that we have in the Economic Development Budget for Workforce Projects. More details to follow at a future agenda.

AGENCY UPDATES: none noted.

NEXT MEETING: September 5, 2019 at 7:30 a.m.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS
- Comprex – Innovation and Diversification Grant – request to amend Grant Agreement.

ADJOURN
There being no further business, MOTION by Miller/Wettstein to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 a.m. Motion carried unanimously; Augustine, Holtze and DeVore excused.

APPROVED September 5, 2019 - Terri Pavlic, Recorder