

***Pulaski County
Community Development Commission***

Tuesday, 11 February 2025
Winamac Municipal Utilities Complex
Winamac, Indiana

Minutes

Tuesday, 19 November 2024
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Members present: President Sheila Hazemi (County Council), Secretary Brian Ledley (Redevelopment Commission); Maurice Loehmer (Board of Commissioners), Claude LeMere (Economic Development Commission), David Scott (Tourism Advisory Council). Department of Community Development (D.C.D.) Executive Director Nathan P. Origer, D.C.D. Assistant Taylor Bailey.

Members absent: Vice-President Bill Champion (Advisory Commission on Industrial Development) [business]).

Guests present: Logan Jimenez, Lily Ledley.

Call to Order

President Hazemi called the meeting to order at 6:57 p.m.

Consent Agenda

With no requests for extraction having been made, the consent agenda was adopted.

Motion: President Hazemi; second: Mr. LeMere; no discussion: approval: all.

Financial Report

The director had projected a year-end balance for the Local Income Tax – Economic Development Fund about \$545,000 lower than the his forecast, with this decline partially due to the W.C.V. loan and an additional appropriation that had been requested to cover attorneys’ fees for solar-project litigation. Director Origer explained that he did not expect a full spend-down of the budget and noted that the donation fund had a fairly healthy balance of \$8,643.12. The Revolving Loan Fund had a balance of \$282,894.87.

President Hazemi asked if the Revolving Loan Fund was currently open; Director Origer responded that he had recently spoken to Colleen Deham at Tankersley Law, reporting that re-opening the fund had been in the works. The president also asked if the money from I.B.C.T. loan had been returned to the fund, and the director confirmed that it had.

The report was approved as presented.

Motion: Secretary Ledley; second: Mr. LeMere; no discussion; approval: all.

Strategic Plan Implementation Report

C.D.C. restructuring: Director Origer noted that the agriculture seat on the commission remained vacant, and that he had planned to fill this seat prior to the first meeting of 2025. President Hazemi suggested considering outgoing Council President Ken Boswell after his recent purchase of a grain-trucking company.

Director Origer added that he had hoped to reconvene with the Advisory Commission on Industrial Development (ACID) before the end of the year, noting that he would like to have an updated appraisal on hand given that the State law governing the sale or lease of land owned by the County through the ACID requires a lengthy process. In the event of a potential purchase of industrial land, having an appraisal on hand would help to streamline the process.

The Economic Development Commission would reconvene in February unless any new tax-abatement request would be made in the interim. Director Origer noted that Claude LeMere’s term would be finished at the end of the January, and, if he would wish to be reappointed, then he would be up for a four-year term beginning in February. Mr. LeMere expressed interest in continuing to serve; Director Origer would present Mr. LeMere’ to the Winamac Town Council for reappointment.

The Redevelopment Commission (R.C.) had recently met for a year-end check-in; members serve a one-year term, and all those in attendance had expressed a willingness to continue serving in 2025. One member had missed both meetings in 2024, so the director would consider seeking a replacement if the member could not make a stronger commitment in 2025. The R.C. likely would play a role in the proposed Pleasant View Village housing project.

The Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) had met in October, when discussions occurred regarding the marketing budget for 2025; the County Council had eliminated marketing-budget funds for TV advertisements, leaving the TAC to focus exclusively on print and digital marketing in 2025. Staff intended to allocate more attention to the County's tourism social-media presence and to utilize less-costly cheaper video content on various social-media platforms. Director Origer noted that the TAC would also be investigating the best way to update the TV commercial in hopes of seeing at least some of the television funding reinstated in 2026. Four of the members on the T.A.C. would be up for reappointment; Kelsie Zellers had previously represented Main Street Winamac, but had resigned from that organization and expressed interest in continuing to serve; the director noted that he would consider asking the Board of Commissioners to appoint Mrs. Zellers to replace one member who had not attended any meetings or responded to emails.

Aspirations-in-Action-based programming: Main Street Winamac had been slowly perking back up, including working toward applying to the State for first-tier recognition in 2025 and planning field trips to successful Main Street communities in the upcoming year.

The agreement for Pleasant View Village development had been wrapped up, but the director had been holding off on execution. A \$1,000,000 READI-2.0 allocation had been tentatively approved for the project, but the Winamac Town Council had continued to express concerns regarding the site in part due to the cost of extending utilities, and in part because the area is serviced by NIPSCO, and the Town has no interest in annexing and developing where Winamac Electric is not the service provider. Director Origer noted there a property on the north side of Winamac had been under consideration for this project, with the current landowner having proposed a dollar-for-dollar land swap; the county commissioners had authorized the director to have both properties appraised.

Sullivan Development would be holding a groundbreaking for the Willow Creek Villas project in the near future; the company had intended to commence construction in September, but financing and permitting issues had delayed progress to the fourth quarter. Secretary Ledley asked if the groundbreaking had to happen before the end of the year for Sullivan to remain compliant with State funding requirements; the director was unsure. Mr. Scott asked if this project is privately funded; Director Origer explained that the project's capital stack involved public funding in the form of a County loan, tax credits from the State, and developer and investor cash.

A broadband provider from Nashville, Indiana, had been pursuing grant funding in hopes of connecting every unserved and underserved square mile in Pulaski County with fiber internet. The project's viability could depend on a financial commitment from the County that may not be feasible, but future conversations would likely occur regarding the matter. Two applications had been submitted on the County's behalf for grants to support broadband-planning efforts.

Implementation, other: Director Origer expressed hopes of hosting a coffee hour before the end of 2024 and getting back on a quarterly schedule in 2025.

As part of the State's first-round READI-funding projects, a consultant had developed a regional entrepreneurship plan for the rural areas of the Northwest Indiana Forum's seven counties. The director had been working on tying up loose ends regarding budgeting; once completed, the plan would be published. As an optional add-on to this regional plan, the consultants had offered a localized addendum that would focus on the resources and needs in each individual county; the Commission had \$3,500 in the donation fund from MatchBox Co-Working Studio specifically to support entrepreneurial development, and Director Origer would like to pursue allocate those funds toward a Pulaski County-specific entrepreneurship strategic plan. The director would be checking in with MatchBox regarding another session of their free entrepreneurship workshop to be made available to interested Pulaski County parties in January or February.

Implementation of the regional ag-strategy had continued in partnership with the project's consultants. The Community Foundation of Pulaski County had taken the lead on childcare development, working with the Quality Childcare Coalition; the primary objective had been to acquire a building for a facility in Francesville, the community determined to be in the greatest need relative to available providers. Secretary Ledley asked about the status of the Winamac Early Learning Academy; the director had not heard of anything good or bad recently, but would investigate further.

The sidewalk project and installation of new streetlamps had continued in downtown Winamac; in Francesville, the UPTOWN Project had recently made façade improvements to the Montgomery Mercantile.

Old Business

Revolving Loan Fund matters — general updates: The County has successfully sold the property on County Road 200 South; unfortunately, it had sold for just more than \$100,000, about half of the price that

had been sought. After various expenses and back taxes had been paid, about \$77,000 had been deposited into the Revolving Loan Fund.

President Hazemi requested that a borrower spreadsheet be included in the packets that the director sends to the members in the future; Director Origer agreed and noted that there were currently only four borrowers. The new rules had not yet been adopted, and two borrowers had been sending their payments to the Treasurer's Office instead of the Community Development office, and this may cause the borrower spreadsheet to be a little off at times due to the timing of payments. President Hazemi asked Commissioner Loehmer if the commissioners could make a decision regarding re-opening the program in an upcoming meetings; Commissioner Loehmer agreed to have the discussion and would request that President Mellon add the subject to the next agenda.

Revolving Loan Fund matters — program review: The Board of Commissioners had authorized the attorney's final review of the new rules; the director had provided the documentation to the attorney, and it now awaited his approval.

Solar-energy development: Pulaski County had received a combined \$500,400 in pre-payments from Moss Creek and Mammoth; of that total, \$25,200 was essentially a penalty that Mammoth had agreed to pay for being behind schedule after they were unable to make their first payment last year. Mammoth would be making payments of \$350,000 in 2025 and 2026, with the first full payment expected in 2027. Moss Creek would be making a payment of \$100,000 in 2027, with the first full payment coming in 2028. The first full payment from Bottlebrush would be made in 2028. Doral, the developers of Mammoth, had begun preconstruction work on sites and expected to go full speed in late winter. The County Attorney and other County personnel would be meeting later in the week with V.S. Engineering, who had offered a proposal to serve as a solar-project manager for the County. V.S.'s services would be fully funded by the solar companies if the terms would be accepted as drafted.

New Business

2025 meeting schedule: Director Origer expressed that he would like to continue meeting on the second Tuesday of the second month of each quarter, noting that the pace seemed to work, although, due to the lack of a quorum in May 2024, meetings seemed to be too sparse. The director added that he would begin sending a monthly report to all members via email again to keep members up-to-date without between meetings. The members agreed to this schedule.

By consensus.

Other Pertinent Business

2025 budget: Director Origer reported that the Council had not authorized the creation of another staff position, but that the budget had otherwise been adopted as presented.

Extracurricular responsibilities: President Hazemi asked the director if he still wished to be in charge of live-streaming County meetings; the director explained that it is not much of a hassle because he typically attends these meetings to provide reports, but that, once the courthouse construction project had been completed, he would be more inclined not to manage this responsibility going forward.

Public Comment

Logan Jimenez: "Is this almost over?"

Adjournment

Motion: Mr. LeMere; second: Commissioner Loehmer; no discussion; approval: all 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Ledley, Secretary

Taylor Bailey, Assistant/Recording Secretary