

**Pulaski County
Community Development Commission
Strategic Visioning Committee**

Tuesday, 1 November 2022

Winamac Municipal Utilities Complex
Winamac, Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, 2 August 2022

Winamac Municipal Utilities Complex
Winamac, Indiana

Members present: Commission President/Committee Chair Sheila Jimenez (Winamac), Commission Vice President Maurice Loehmer (County Commissioners), executive-board member Kathleen Thompson (County Council); Lynn Johns (Francesville); Bill Champion. Executive Director Nathan P. Origer.

Members present by telephone: Commission Membership Officer Kelsie Zellers.

Members absent: None.

Guests present: Asher Risner.

Call to Order

President Jimenez called the meeting to order at 5:30 *p.m.*

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the May joint meeting with the Executive Board were approved as presented.

Motion: Mr. Champion; second: Councilor Thompson; no discussion; approval: all.

Strategic Plan Implementation

Community Foundation Aspirations-in-Action programming: Main Street Winamac had elected officers to begin leading the organization and been working toward 501(c)3 status and a public kickoff/callout meeting. Field trips to successful Indiana Main Street committees and committee-work-plan development would be forthcoming.

The director would be working with County Highway and the Board of Commissioners to review right-of-way-access permitting and guidelines; things had gone a bit quiet while communities and providers awaited the State's announcement of Next Level Communications grants.

The Housing Symposium, at which the consultants had presented the results of the market study and facilitated community conversations, had been a well-attended, successful event. Director Origer reported on considering County-owned farmland near the former County Home as a candidate for a housing development catalyst site, additionally noting that some infill development in Winamac might be pursued, and that the Taskforce would continue evaluating potential opportunities across the county. Councilor Thompson emphasized the importance of also considering the rehabilitation of existing housing units; she also suggested the possibility of establishing some kind of a down-payment-assistance program; the director briefly mentioned a program of this nature offered by the County's housing consultant. Director Origer proposed a possible housing revolving-loan fund, which perhaps could be funded with future solar-development revenues and which could potentially be used for down-payment support or to reduce upfront development costs.

General plan review/discussion – K.A.S. I, Marketing/Branding Business Development: The director had not yet scheduled a C.D.C. Coffee Hour, but anticipated doing so before month's end; he expected to relaunch the newsletter in October. Director Origer had conducted eight business-retention/-expansion visits to local manufacturers, some of them with his summer intern, who had developed a standard survey for such meetings for him. Additionally, he had added one more agribusiness visit as part of the regional ag-strategy project and hoped to continue including agricultural enterprises as part of future retention/-expansion-visit plans.

As part of strengthening regional alignments, the director had been developing a proposal for enhancing KIRPC's service to the region.

General plan review/discussion – K.A.S. II, Workforce Development: The director had been working with the Sheriff's Office and the County's architect on plans for the work-release facility and would be holding an Industrial Forum luncheon meeting in the following week dedicated to discussing ramping up the work-release program.

General plan review/discussion – K.A.S. VI, Business Retention and Expansion: Tools that would become available through the proposed restructuring could potentially allow the County to be more creative and flexible in offering more robust incentives for development in the future.

General plan review/discussion – K.A.S. VII, Tourism Development: The director and assistant Taylor Bailey had convened three informal meetings with local tourism businesses with the hope of re-establishing a tourism advisory committee and revisiting the tourism strategic plan with industry-partner input on the way to seeking the County's creation of a formal tourism commission and possible adoption of an innkeepers' tax, in which Councilor Thompson saw great opportunities in light of the AirBnB sector.

Significant interest in revisiting the conversation about hotel development had been expressed by manufacturing partners during the retention/expansion visits, with at least one person reporting a willingness to invest in such a project.

General plan review/discussion – K.A.S. VIII, Community Capacity Building: Director Origer highlighted the progress on this front being made through the aforementioned broadband- and housing-development efforts in conjunction with the Community Foundation. Summer intern Emily Rausch had begun researching and reporting on examples of economic-development agencies and local governments that had become more actively engaged in childcare, but this would be a slow-moving project. Director Origer highlighted the in-house-childcare program being piloted by Eastern Pulaski Schools. The second cohort of Leadership Pulaski County participants would be beginning their coursework in September.

General plan review/discussion – K.A.S. IX, Downtown Development: The director reiterated the Main Street Winamac efforts and noted that downtown-infill projects would comprise a part of the overall housing-development strategy. Councilor Thompson suggested the possibility of refurbishing existing buildings for a downtown hotel, and brief discussion ensued.

Key Action Step X., Institutional Capacity Building: Director Origer had begun a close reading of the relevant *Indiana Code* chapters pertaining to various development commissions and the viability of the proposed restructuring and spoken with a few attorneys and other Indiana experts on development commissions, but had not yet reached the point at which implementation would make sense. The director did not expect the restructuring to have any impact on office staffing, any increases likely to be proposed based on workload demands regardless of restructuring.

The director hoped to have Ms. Bailey's position made full-time for 2023 and would also potentially be seeking additional part-time position to his budget request, but did not believe that a second full-time position would be cost-effective at this time; the Council would be making budget decisions over the next two months.

The Board of Commissioners had included a request to fund a full-time information-technology director in its 2023 budget, which the director suggested would be a significant step toward smoother County operations.

Other Business

Council budget meeting: Councilor Thompson encouraged the members to attend the director's 2023-budget appointment with the Council on the next Monday in support of the Commission's future efforts. Brief discussion ensued regarding the requested budget.

Adjournment

Motion: President Jimenez; second: Mr. Champion; no discussion; approval: all.
5:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan P. Origer,
Executive Director/Recording Secretary