

***Pulaski County
Community Development Commission***

Tuesday, 1 November 2022
Winamac Municipal Utilities Complex
Winamac, Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, 13 September 2022
Fratco Production Plant
Francesville, Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Members present: President Sheila Jimenez (Winamac), Vice-President Maurice Loehmer (County Commissioners), Secretary Brandon DeLorenzo, Membership Officer Kelsie Zellers, board member Kathi Thompson (County Council); Bill Champion, Blake Kasten. Executive Director Nathan P. Origer.

Members absent: Lynn Johns (Francesville), Art Conley (Medaryville) [business], Doug Denton (Monterey) [civic]; Christy Coon, Brian Ledley [personal], Breann Wilson [personal]. Assistant Taylor Bailey [personal].

Guests present: None.

Call to Order

President Jimenez called the meeting to order at 6:06 *p.m.*

Consent Agenda

With no requests for extraction having been made, the Consent Agenda was adopted.

Strategic Plan Implementation Report

Community Foundation partnership: Main Street Winamac (M.S.W.) had established a board of directors, was in the process of incorporating and adopting bylaws, and would be holding a community callout meeting in the coming months. Money previously held by Wander Our Winamac (WOW!) and passed to another organization upon WOW's demise was expected to be transferred to M.S.W., and the Community Foundation had received a grant to hire a director in 2023.

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. The Board of Commissioners and Council had tentatively authorized Director Origer to work with the Town of Winamac toward possible annexation of County-owned farmland south of the Winamac Industrial Park for a housing development. He and one of the consultants would also be approaching the Town about financial support for some initial development-design work. The consultants would be holding one-on-one conversations with banks, major employers, real-estate professionals, and others to develop a clearer picture of housing needs and desires of potential candidates for relocation.

Providers that had been awarded State grants to expand service had been waiting for funds disbursement, and the director suggested that the County may need to review its right-of-way permit and permitting process to ensure that appropriate protections would be in place. Discussion ensued.

C.D.C. restructuring: The director conveyed that the research process had been slow-going, and that he had solicited input from a number of industry peers familiar with redevelopment and economic-development commissions before connecting with an attorney at Barnes & Thornburg who had provided some initial insights, but would need to offer additional recommendations in the near future, and suggested that establishing the redevelopment and economic-development commissions first would be worthwhile in and of itself, with additional steps to be implemented afterwards. Mr. Champion inquired as to the restructuring's impact on the budget, and the director suggested that it would have little to no impact until actual projects requiring consultants or investments were on the docket. The director then briefly reiterated the overall vision for restructuring.

Other efforts: The director reported briefly on business-retention/-expansion visits and the Industrial Forum; tourism-partner meetings; and the first coffee hour, which would be held at the end of the month in either Francesville or Medaryville and which Vice-President Loehmer volunteered to attend.

Old Business

Revolving Loan Fund matters — general updates: Other than I.B.C. Thermoplastics, borrower generally remained in good standing. The County’s attorney had been working toward a solution involving a local buyer, but the owners had been difficult collaborators, leaving progress slow and making the downsides of foreclosure look worthwhile; Vice-President Loehmer stated that the matter should be discussed at the next Board of Commissioners meeting.

Revolving Loan Fund matters — program review: The County’s attorney had provided a response to the proposed changes to the program’s rules and largely agreed with them, but a few points would need to be returned to the Commission’s Revolving Loan Fund Committee for additional discussion and adjustment before the attorney and the county commissioners could formally approve the updated policy. Vice-President Loehmer noted that his fellow commissioners felt that other matters should take higher priority than pressing to reopen the program until serious interest had been shown.

Solar-energy development: The two judges considering the challenges to the County Council’s determinations regarding tax abatements for the Mammoth and Moss Creek projects had ruled in the County’s favor, and the petitioners had filed appeals. All other legal challenges pertaining to solar projected had remained undecided.

2023 budget: The director presented an amended budget that it appeared the Council would be approving, including the reinstatement of the assistant position as full-time. Other than a cut to the professional-services line-item that he expected would lead to his requesting an additional appropriation in 2023, the director thought that it would be a workable budget. The Council had shifted a substantial amount of non-economic-development budget into the Economic Development Fund, but the director expected the Council to adopt a reallocation of the County’s income-tax revenue structure that would offset this and that the Council would later consider some larger-scale budget-structure changes for the 2024 budget. The end-2023 balance for the Economic Development Fund had been estimated at about \$2.1-million.

New Business

None.

Other Pertinent Business

Appreciation: Councilor Thompson expressed her gratitude to the director for “everything [he does] for the County”.

Community morale: Vice-President Loehmer suggested that the facilities improvements being undertaken by the County had been improving morale and civic pride in the community. Councilor Thompson added that she felt that the tenor of County Council conversations pertaining to these projects had improved over the last two years.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Motion: Vice-President Loehmer; second: Mr. Champion; no discussion; approval: all 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan P. Origer, Executive Director/Recording Secretary *pro tempore*
Brandon DeLorenzo, Secretary