

Minutes

Planning & Economic Development Committee

April 21, 2021, 6:00 pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Gerace Office Building, Mayville, NY

Members Present: Odell, Starks, Muldowney, Harmon, Ward, Rankin, Lawton

Others: Tampio, Ames, Keller, Aldrich, M. Bourke, Dennison, Carlson, Wurster, C. Bell, Chagnon, Pavlock

Chairman Odell called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Approval of Minutes (3/17/21)

MOVED by Legislator Starks, SECONDED by Legislator Harmon.

Unanimously Carried

Privilege of the Floor

Chairman Odell: Madam Clerk, do we have any correspondence for privilege of the floor tonight?

Clerk Tampio: We have no communications for privilege of the floor.

Chairman Odell: I will interject a little bit here this evening. I had the good fortunate to catch the Health & Human Services committee meeting ahead of this one. Legislator Pavlock made a really good use of that time with nothing on the agenda and had a great presentation and update on our COVID numbers and the plans going forward with Christine Schuyler and Brea Agett. They did a great job presenting some numbers. Overall it looks like we're at about, on the vaccination side, of 25% of the County residents having been vaccinated which equates to about 30% of those that are eligible. I bring that up here in this committee just because remember, this is Planning & Economic Development and economic development will go hand in hand down the pike as how we're perceived as a County as people looking to, where are we going to go this summer. I want to make sure our numbers are up and getting towards our goal, towards vaccinations so if you have not been through the process yet, it's highly encouraged. They do have plenty of openings, as we just learned. If anyone has an opportunity I would highly recommend watching a great presentation on that Health & Human Services just had at their 5:00 meeting. Moving on into resolution.

Proposed Resolution – Authorize Use of Lake Erie Management Commission Capital Project
H.8020.37011 Funds to Co-Fund Barcelona Harbor Dredging

Chairman Odell: This resolution has been pulled. The Town of Westfield do not have all their ducks in a row yet as far as grant funding and permitting in order to bring this resolution forward (*inaudible*) for funding. When the time is right, it will be brought back. So now onto the next resolution.

Proposed Resolution – Authorizing the Submittal of a New York State Community
Development Block Grant Application for Microenterprise Assistance

Mr. Aldrich: I'd like to introduce Chuck Bell, our consultant, who can provide more information and answer any questions. As you recall last month you approved resolution to hold a public hearing at next week's Legislature meeting for the grant application we plan to submit next month to the Office of Community Renewal from the State, the Microenterprise Assistance program. We plan on applying for \$200,000 of which there is no County matching share requirement. In partnership with CREDC, CODI, in the Small Business Development Center, that funding would provide, if awarded, grants to small businesses between \$5 and \$35,000, tied to job creation and investment targets throughout the County with the exception of the two cities because those are entitlement communities. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Chuck to elaborate and would be happy to answer any questions.

Chairman Odell: Thank Nate, go ahead Chuck.

Mr. Bell: He actually covered the broad points of the application and the proposed program as mentioned. It is a partnership with CREDC and with CODI which is essential. Any business that would apply for funding once the funding we're applying for is awarded, but apply for funding through the program would be required to take an entrepreneurship course that CODI provides which is a nice way to ensure that not only are we helping businesses through financial assistance but also technical assistance (*inaudible*). As Nate said, we're preparing the application now, doing the program design plan in partnership with CODI. I think it's shaping up very well. We can be in a position to submit an application by May 7th which would be the deadline to get considered for funding by the New York State Office of Community Renewal at their mid-June meeting. So that is the target at this point and time which would put us in a position to roll out a program this summer and that again would be a program for businesses, small businesses, (*inaudible*), total employees who are making investment allotted and this program, thankfully is pretty broad in that that can include working capital investments for businesses that may be had to kind of scale down operations and are trying to scale back up. But also, to startup businesses as well, are certainly eligible and actually encouraged for at least half of the funding if possible.

Additionally, as Nate mentioned, there is no equity requirement from the County but the businesses will have to make a relatively modest equity commitment. The reason it is relatively modest and the reason we can use these Community Development Block grant funds for this kind of programming is that it is designed to assist individuals who are low or moderate income. The two ways to do that here are either through the business creating jobs, at least one job that would be available to kind of an entry level as long as somebody is hard working and reliable, that job will be available and that would presumably assist beyond any individual of any income

level or the business (*inaudible*) could qualify by being low and moderate income. That's really the nuts and bolts of it and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chairman Odell: Thank you Chuck for that. To the committee, what do you think? We've already put this through the public hearing process. Any questions or comments from the committee at this time? Of course, it will be coming to the floor next week so we'll be passing this. Nate, Chuck, nice job with this. I mean, this is stuff that we go to fishing expeditions and I think this would be a good opportunity to bring this into the County. I am even more pleased that part of the requirements is the engagement of the Small Business Development Center. That's going to be key and critical. Never overlook the obvious and (*inaudible*) CODI can provide and may be seeing an opportunity that's been missed or overlooked, even if it's dotting an "i" or crossing of a "t", has a lot of value. Engaging other entities, we use this in a larger development such like airport (*inaudible*) plans, they are engaging similar resources out there at the SBA level to make sure again, everyone is in compliance and hasn't (*inaudible*).. Nice job guys, look forward to hearing when we get to the point that we accept this grant. All in favor?

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – Accept Grant Funds from the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo to Purchase Mobile Trail Counters

Ms. Wurster: Mr. Chairman, thank you. I'm going to let Matt take this one. He did a really great job writing this grant application and I'm going to let him explain it a little bit.

Mr. Bourke: Thanks Rebecca, thank you Chairman. This is a pretty simple one. We applied for grant funding from the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo to purchase some mobile trail counters. They are going to be funding us for two of these. These counters are kind of small plastic encased devices that you hang on a tree next to a trail. They've got a sensor inside that just counts how many people walk back and forth past the device. We have one that we're using currently on the overland trails that is providing some great data for us. This will provide two more that we can use on the trail system here in the County. We have an awesome trail system and quantifying how many people are actually using the trails and using that to justify future grant application or future funding is really a valuable tool and just generally having that data is really valuable for us. So, these two counters will enable continuing to collect as much data as we can.

Legislator Harmon: I have a question for Matt. These counters, will they recognize wildlife as well or is it just people?

Chairman Odell: Good question, I was thinking the same thing.

Mr. Bourke: That's actually come up before but as I understand it, it only counts people. I'm not sure what technology enables that but that's my understanding of them.

Legislator Ward: I'm also happen to be a board member for the Rails to Trails and I just sent a message to you guys and I think Rebecca just answered it but, we have the same needs,

although we're not exactly a County organization, we're a non-profit. These things will be available for us to use for grant hunting as well?

Mr. Bourke: I believe so. Rails to Trails did provide a letter of support to our grant application and one of the nice things about these counters is that they are mobile so we could move them around. The Rails to Trails are part of the amazing trail system we do have here in the County and our intention is to share them with that organization. We'll have to figure out the details of that but that is part of the intention certainly.

Legislator Ward: Sure and I'm happy to help with that in whatever way that I can. Thank you very much for this resource.

Mr. Bourke: Absolutely.

Chairman Odell: Good, so technology is similar to trail cams basically, we're just doing a mobile counter. I like that. Let me ask a question. I'm so glad that you got this and we're happy to accept this. How did we find out about it? Was it just a solicitation that we just happened upon or did you guys have to hunt?

Mr. Bourke: This was a grant opportunity. I think the Community Foundation had actually reached out to us a few years ago. The County Planning Department, apparently they had had some mandate that they needed to spend more money and kind of beyond Erie County essentially so they had been looking for opportunities to do that. It seemed that we had a good trail system down here and thought that there might be some opportunities. That's at least how I had first heard about them and the grant. I believe that other organizations in the County have applied for funds through this grant program before. Others may be aware of it through other means.

Chairman Odell: Thank you very much for that Matt and for following that through and to the Planning team for doing so. Any other questions from the committee?

Legislator Rankin: I'm kind of curious what kind of success you've seen other organizations have by using these trail counters.

Mr. Bourke: That's a great question. I'm not sure I've spoken to any other organizations that have had them. As I mentioned, we do have one, we had gotten some grant funding for a marketing grant for the overland trails a few years ago and as part of that, we did get one of these units and have had it out at 474 in Panama collecting data. Again, it's useful especially when combined with kind of the trail log data we have and collect. It gets a little more detailed information from folks using the overland trails. Kind of using those in combination can give us a little more powerful sense of how many people are actually using the trails.

Ms. Wurster: One example that I can give as well is, in the City of Dunkirk there is some trail counters that the City utilized and they were able to take that data put it into a grant application for a Complete Streets project on Lakeshore Drive and they received grant funding to do improvements to that which I know they are in the engineering and design phase on that

project. So, there is definitely showing in a need for some pedestrian amenities there and because we have the counter to show that data, I think that that's why the City was successful in getting those grant funds.

Legislator Ward: I can also speak to the efficacy of having a trail count in the first place. We applied for a grant to surface the web trail adjacent, between 394 and Morris Road last year. I was a trail counter so I can attest to the efficacy and I was the one. I can tell you that extrapolating that into something that would do it in a more efficient manner certainly is going to help bring funds, I think, almost immediately.

Mr. Bourke: Rebecca, thank you for bringing up the Dunkirk ones. I had forgotten about those and I think those might have been through a CCHN grant and those counters, it's the same company that we're purchasing these counters from so we know that they work well.

Chairman Odell: Yea, we make decisions based on data analytics everybody, especially in today's day and age so it's a great way collect, so nicely done. Any other questions from the committee on this one, nice job?

Unanimously Carried

Discussion - Food Policy Council Update – Linnea Carlson and Melisa Keller

Other

Chairman Odell – Update – Reactivation of Chautauqua County Energy Committee

MOVED by Legislator Starks, SECONDED by Legislator Harmon to adjourn.

Unanimously Carried (6:48 p.m.)

Respectfully submitted and transcribed,
Kathy Tampio, Clerk/Olivia Ames, Deputy Clerk/Lori J. Foster, Sr. Stenographer