

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

May 18, 2020

MONTGOMERY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

CALL TO ORDER

President Rebecca Huss called the Zoom Teleconference meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Present: Rebecca Huss - President
 Dan Walker – Vice-President
 Julie Hutchinson - Treasurer
 Amy Brown – Secretary
 Tom Cronin – Board Member

Absent: Arnette Easley – Board Member
 Bob Kerr – Board Member

Also Present: Richard Tramm – City Administrator
 Susan Hensley – City Secretary

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of April 20, 2020 Regular Meeting –

President Huss asked for comments on the minutes as presented. Mrs. Hutchinson made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Mr. Walker. All in favor. (5-0)

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

Report for April, 2020

Mrs. Hutchinson said she had not had an opportunity to speak with Mr. Lasky, the city's Senior Accounting Clerk, but informed the Board of Mr. Lasky's notes pertaining to the EDC's April financial report. Mr. Lasky noted the sales tax transfer of \$45,332.51 was received in April, but will show on the May financial report. Mrs. Hutchinson said since the figure appears on the April report, she believes Mr. Lasky is referring to the transfer into the Texpool account.

Mr. Lasky also noted a sales tax transfer of \$78,774.99. Mrs. Hutchinson said she spoke to Mr. Tramm, and they believe Mr. Lasky already knows the sales tax figures the EDC will receive in May and is simply passing along information. Mrs. Hutchinson said she will contact Mr. Lasky to clarify the notes.

Mrs. Hutchinson said sales tax increased about 10% from April of 2019. Mrs. Hutchinson said this April accrual actually represents sales made in February. She also said the sales tax amount for May is also increased about 10% from May of 2019. Mrs. Hutchinson said she expects to see these figure decrease beginning with the June financial reports.

Mrs. Huss said, since this is a quarterly report, this also includes the grocery stores which had an increase in purchases of taxable items beginning in March. She said these figures also include businesses such as McCoy's which has been continuously busy despite the shutdown orders.

Mrs. Hutchinson said she wanted to point out these figures are from before COVID-19 shutdowns and the Board needs to be aware the trend will not continue to move up once the June financials are released.

Mrs. Hutchinson also stated she will ask Mr. Lasky to begin including the TexPool activity on the Cash Flow Report.

Mrs. Hutchinson said \$44.98 in office supplies was booked twice and will be corrected.

Mr. Tramm noted the payment of \$222.79 was mistakenly billed as a MEDC expense instead of a city expense and will also be corrected.

Mrs. Huss said it would be nice to have an idea where the EDC stands for the rest of the year on mandatory expenditures such as debt service, General Fund transfers and sales tax accruals. She said she does not expect sales tax revenue to decrease more than 25%, but the Board should know what its mandatory expenses are in order to know the amount of funds available for spending on projects.

Mrs. Hutchinson said the Board created a very conservative budget for the current year.

Mrs. Hutchinson also asked for a timeline on the Downtown Improvement project. She said, despite the economic downturn, she still expects the MEDC to be able to significantly contribute.

Motion by Mrs. Brown, seconded by Mr. Cronin to approve the April 2020 Financial Report as presented. All in favor. (5-0)

CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

5. Report on Utility Grant Program to support local businesses in the City of Montgomery.

Mr. Tramm said two applications have been submitted and the applicants will be notified on May 19th of their approval. Mr. Tramm said the City has received a couple more phone calls but those businesses have not, as yet, followed up with paperwork.

Mr. Tramm said either May 19th or May 20th will be the last day to apply for this billing month. He said any applications approved after those dates will be entered into the system for the next month's billing cycle.

Mr. Cronin asked how long the application process will continue.

Mr. Tramm said there was not an end date specified by the EDC and it will continue as long as the Board decides it is valid. He said a business can only apply once, but depending on the water usage of a business, the grant can last anywhere from one month to four months.

Mrs. Huss asked Mr. Tramm if he or the utility clerk has been significantly impacted by the additional work.

Mr. Tramm said he does not believe the utility clerk has spent over an hour so far, and he has probably spent the same amount of time. He said the application process is fairly simple.

Mr. Tramm said he feels the application process should remain open as long as there is an emergency situation at hand, but that is entirely up to the Board.

Mr. Cronin asked how the grant was being promoted.

Mr. Tramm said notices have been placed on the website and Facebook. He said a notice could be placed in with the next water/utility bills.

Mrs. Hutchinson suggested adding a simple reference to the grant, with the insert of the water bill, directing business accounts to the website for information.

Mr. Walker asked if the City does not have a list of business accounts.

Mrs. Huss said it does have a list, but that would not necessarily include home based businesses. She said it would also include businesses which would not qualify.

Mrs. Huss said she agreed with Mrs. Hutchinson's recommendation of adding a note in with the water bill directing businesses to the City's website.

Mr. Tramm said that certainly could be a first effort. He said if that doesn't get enough communication in response to the insert, the Board can discuss further options.

No action taken.

6. Update on the Montgomery Mudbugs & Music Festival

Mr. Tramm said he has communicated with Charlie Diggs. Mr. Tramm said Mr. Diggs has pushed back the date for the festival and plans on continuing to push back the date until such time as the State and County authorities allow the event to go forward.

Mr. Tramm said Mr. Diggs plans on holding the event one to three weeks after receiving word from the State and County authorities.

No action taken.

7. Discussion regarding Southern Rum Runners Festival event.

Mr. Tramm said SRR has been moving forward with contacting performers and vendors. He said they have had difficulty with the closures of businesses.

Mr. Tramm said he also has received contract updates from the City Attorney. Mr. Tramm said he will get in touch with SRR to discuss the revisions and schedule a time for SRR to present a presentation to the Board.

No action taken.

8. Discussion of future marketing and tourism advertising options.

Mr. Tramm said the City's entire economic situation has changed significantly. Mr. Tramm said the City has recently separated from the Marketing and Tourism Director, Freida Joyce. Mr. Tramm said the position is funded by sales tax and given the economic situation, sales tax income is expected to be significantly lower than normal.

Mr. Tramm said it is difficult to know what the future will look like for marketing and tourism. He said social media has been discussed as a primary way to focus marketing. Mr. Tramm said this will also be a very cost-effective approach.

Mr. Tramm said there may be some contracting opportunities in the future.

Mr. Tramm asked if the Board had seen the new painted car-stops completed by the Public Works Department. Mr. Cronin said he had not seen it.

Mr. Tramm displayed a picture of one of the painted car-stops. He said this was an inexpensive project. He said the design took three to four hours of staff time in the City Hall office, and an hour and a half of Public Works time to complete.

Mr. Tramm said this speaks directly to the identity of the City as the Birthplace of the Texas Flag. Mr. Tramm said he has been asked by many people to extend this project through the downtown area.

Mrs. Huss said almost 2,500 people saw the picture on Facebook.

Mr. Tramm said this is an example of a project where the public image benefits are greater than the cost expended.

Mr. Tramm said Mike Muckelroy told him the total cost, including staff time, would be approximately \$50-\$60 per car-stop. Mr. Tramm said the Public Works Department will complete more as time allows in the department's regular schedule.

Mrs. Huss said as more are painted, social media can be used to promote the project and get viewers interactive by finding the new car-stops.

Mrs. Hutchinson said scavenger hunts have shown to be popular. She said SnoBalls had a scavenger hunt and it garnered a lot of attention.

Mr. Tramm said businesses may wish to have their car-stops painted and be willing to provide incentives for prizes.

Mrs. Huss said businesses could pay for the labor to have them painted, then the City could use the car-stops as advertising.

Mrs. Huss said public art in the city should be used to entice people to come to Montgomery. She said the city can be marketed as a socially-distancing-family-friendly destination. Mrs. Huss said small children can enjoy the games, while teenagers can take InstaGram photos with the public art.

Mr. Tramm said he is open to other suggestions for public art projects.

Mrs. Huss said the owner of the Montgomery mural on 149 has been very accommodating, but it would be nice to have another one on the West side of town.

Mrs. Huss said it would be interesting to have different representations of the Texas Flag around town for people to visit and take photos. Mrs. Huss said destination art such as this could be used to draw people around the city.

Mrs. Hutchinson said she has seen that idea used successfully in several cities.

Mr. Tramm said that would be a good way to turn the City's history into a living reality.

Mrs. Brown asked if there was a plan to distribute the information on these projects.

Mrs. Huss agreed there needs to be a marketing plan in place.

Mrs. Huss said the EDC's current use of social media is "gathering eyeballs" and not much in the way of building the brand. She said the current social media presence is not being utilized to its greatest potential by using videos and InstaGram Stories.

Mrs. Huss said the social media presence is certainly better than it was two years ago when the Mayor began pushing for a social media presence. She said there definitely needs to be a cohesive plan that goes along with some of these other ideas. Mrs. Huss said that plan should be in place before the EDC unveils larger projects.

Mrs. Brown said having a plan and a successful social media presence in place will also provide an immediate audience when larger projects are announced.

Mrs. Huss said it has taken two years to get 2,800 followers on Facebook.

Mr. Walker asked if the Facebook page has been promoted in the utility bill insert. He also asked Mr. Tramm if the EDC needs to monetarily contribute to the car-stop project.

Mr. Tramm said if the MEDC wishes to commit towards the cost, he can come back in June with an estimate of what it would take to do different amounts of car-stops across the city.

Mrs. Hutchinson asked if the car-stops are able to be salvaged if they need to be moved due to the proposed Master Plan for the city.

Mr. Tramm said he would see them collected and moved so they would not be damaged.

Mrs. Huss said there is the option of having citizens sponsor a car-stop and possibly adding the person's name to it.

Mr. Cronin asked what agenda item was being discussed.

Mrs. Huss said number eight.

Mr. Cronin said the discussion is more of a workshop discussion.

Mrs. Huss said the Board is discussing marketing options.

Mrs. Brown asked if the car-stops being painted are only city owned car-stops, not car-stops in private parking lots downtown.

Mr. Tramm said the plan is to only do city property. He said if a private business approached him, he would be willing to have the conversation.

Mrs. Huss said there are many internally generated marketing ideas, but there needs to be a plan to present them on social media.

Mrs. Brown said the EDC definitely needs to get a plan. She said the EDC can't just focus on Facebook. Mrs. Brown said the Facebook page is doing great, but there are other platforms that reach a different demographic.

Mr. Walker said the big question is how to get people redirected to the website.

Mrs. Hutchinson reminded the Board of Mr. Tramm's earlier statement of getting contract labor to handle the social media platforms.

Mr. Tramm said that is one potential option.

Mrs. Huss said the website may need to be contracted out. She said, it appears, MuniCode was not entirely truthful when they explained what the existing contract included. Mrs. Huss said what the EDC wanted, sounded like a Specialty Subsite. She said, at the time MuniCode said it was included, but recently stated it is not included because it is a Specialty Subsite.

Mrs. Huss said either the existing framework does not appear to be adequate to supply a tourism-type website, or neither the City or MuniCode have the skills to make it happen.

Ms. Hensley said she will get some additional information from MuniCode and see what can be done.

Mrs. Huss asked if anyone had any other items to discuss, or anything they wished to discuss at the next meeting.

No comments by the Board.

No action was taken.

10. Economic Development Report – Richard Tramm

a. City Administrator's Development Report

Mr. Tramm noted the city's sales tax figures from May 2020, which is a quarterly report month, is 12% down from the last quarterly period. Mr. Tramm said it is also up 11% for the year-to-date for the same quarter. He said this quarterly report was only partially affected by the COVID situation. Mr. Tramm said when the city receives the April report, it will begin to show a much stronger effect.

Mr. Tramm said he originally expected a 30% impact, but he is refining that number. He said, it is difficult to narrow down a number due to the lack of solid information.

Mr. Tramm said the June report will begin to show the April activity numbers.

Mr. Cronin left the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Report provided

b. City Engineer's Report

Report provided

BOARD INQUIRY

Mrs. Hutchinson asked when the Board would be getting an update on the Downtown Walkability Plan.

Mr. Tramm said he expects to have an update in June.

Mrs. Huss asked if the update could be emailed before the June meeting.

Mr. Tramm said he would try to get an update emailed.

Mrs. Huss said there are many steps to getting the project started, and every time the discussion is pushed back another month, the completion is also pushed back another month.

ACTION ITEMS FROM APRIL MEETING

| <i>ACTION ITEM</i> | <i>ASSIGNEE</i> | <i>RESULT</i> |
|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|
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ACTION ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

| <i>ACTION ITEM</i> | <i>ASSIGNEE</i> | <i>DUE DATE</i> |
|--|-----------------|------------------|
| Plans/options for outsourcing social media | Tramm | June meeting |
| Promotional note in utility bills concerning Utility Grant Program | Tramm | May utility bill |
| Estimate cost of painting car-stops for EDC contribution | Tramm | June meeting |
| Information from MuniCode on website | Hensley | |

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Walker, seconded by Mrs. Hutchinson to adjourn the meeting at 7:13 p.m. All in favor.
(4-0)

Submitted by: 

Amy Brown, MEDC Secretary

Date Approved: 06/15/2020





Rebecca Huss, MEDC President