

**OSSEO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
April 11, 2022**

1. ROLL CALL

President Poppe called the regular meeting of the Osseo Economic Development Authority to order at 6:00 p.m., Monday, April 11, 2022. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this meeting was held virtually.

Members present: Teresa Aho, Harold E. Johnson, Duane Poppe, Larry Stelmach, and Alicia Vickerman.

Members absent: Deanna Burke.

Staff present: Executive Director Riley Grams, Community Management Coordinator Joe Amerman, and City Attorney Mary Tietjen.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Stelmach, seconded by Aho, to approve the Agenda as presented. A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried 5-0.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 14, 2022

A motion was made by Johnson, seconded by Aho, to approve the minutes of March 14, 2022, as presented. A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried 5-0.

4. MATTERS FROM THE FLOOR

Grams reviewed a comment from Juliana Hultstrom at 808 1st Street NE stating she was chagrined that the EDA was stooping to a level given the fact this was the EDA and not a business club or chamber of commerce. She feared the EDA was swimming in spilled milk and a great deal of staff time had been spent on charts and graphs for a minority of businesses benefit. She believed there was a conflict of interest given the fact two business owners sat on the EDA. She indicated the report being reviewed this evening was not EDA business and the EDA should consider attending a development conference or attending educational training for themselves. She noted how the EDA had tried to hold a spring opener that failed on two separate occasions and suggested the EDA focus their efforts on other projects. She feared the EDA was trying to make insider gains and should no longer hold club discussions. She believed the matter being discussed this evening was a blatant manipulation of a decision previously made by the Council. She encouraged the EDA members to be further educated on how this body should be conducting themselves.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS – None

6. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Grams presented the EDA Accounts Payable listing.

A motion was made by Johnson, seconded by Aho, to approve the Accounts Payable. A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried 5-0.

7. OLD BUSINESS – None

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review 2021 Small Business Saturday Event

Amerman stated at the September 2021 meeting of the Osseo Economic Development Authority, staff was directed to make efforts in support of the local business community during the November 27 Small Business Saturday event. To that end, Staff planned a number of promotional efforts for the day itself, and then began to garner as much local business participation as was possible. Initially, these plans included the following:

- The city would shut down a one block section of Central Avenue between 2nd and 3rd streets. The intention was to create a pedestrian market atmosphere, allowing shoppers to move quickly from business to business.
- With the street shut down the city would then place a number of propane heating units, which would function as gathering points.
- Food trucks would be parked within the closed section of Central Ave. These would be parked near the heating units to add to the appeal of the gathering spots. By late October, two food trucks had been contacted and tentatively committed to participating.
- Finally, city staff created a raffle contest. Shoppers could pick up a 'passport' from City Hall, or from a number of participating businesses on Central Avenue. On Small Business Saturday shoppers could then take these passports to different businesses and get them stamped or signed by the business owners. Following SBS shoppers had a week to turn these passports into city hall and would be entered into a prize drawing. The prizes consisted of donations, valued at up to \$25, from local businesses.

Amerman provided further details on the work that was done for Small Business Saturday. He explained staff asked participating businesses to commit to donating to the prize pool, to remain open to walk-in business during the SBS hours of 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, and to create a deal or sale that would act as a special draw to their location. In return, Staff created a number of incentives, including:

- A unique post on the city social media for each participating business.
- One week of free advertising on the city gateway sign, on dates of their choice. The city normally charges a \$100 fee for this.

- Promotion on a newly created webpage hosted on the city website, directing visitors back to each business' webpage.

Amerman reported to promote the day to potential shoppers, and to the business community itself, staff:

- In late September sent a mass email to all businesses in Osseo for whom there is known contact info.
- Created a SBS specific web page on the Discover Osseo website.
- Began a social media campaign and created gateway signs advertising the event.
- Included an announcement in several Council and Committee packets.
- Included a supplemental advertisement in the 2021 3rd Quarter Utility Bill mailing.
- Sat for an interview with CCX media, which aired in their local news update.
- Spent 10 hours over three afternoons in late October conducting face to face outreach with local businesses.

Amerman commented by the beginning of November there were 22 businesses which had agreed to meet the three commitments listed above: a donation, remaining open, and creating an SBS special or sale. Staff then completed a Special Event Permit Application, a prerequisite for closing a city street, and submitted it for review at the November 8 meeting of the Osseo EDA prior to consideration by the City Council. At this meeting the EDA chose not to support bringing food trucks to Osseo, those agreements were canceled, and that component was removed from plans. At the Council meeting of November 22, the Council chose not to allow a closure of Central Avenue. This was largely due to concerns voiced by some business owners on Central Avenue, though as these concerns were never communicated directly to staff they are not addressed here. Instead, staff was directed to close a half block of 3rd Street NW, between Central Avenue and 1st Avenue NW. Unfortunately, on the morning of SBS Public Works was forced to further reduce the closure area so as not to block access to the drive-thru ATM at Premier Bank, which was seeing some use. Following SBS the city collected 23 'passports', from which two winners were randomly drawn. Staff commented further on the results from the survey that was conducted by staff and requested feedback from the EDA.

Aho asked if the survey that was conducted included businesses that were not actively involved in SBS. Amerman reported this was the case, noting businesses were canvased regardless of their involvement last fall.

Poppe questioned how many businesses were contacted for the survey. Amerman stated all of the businesses were included in the print out. Stelmach explained some businesses were busy and did not respond when he tried to reach them by phone, but noted 24 businesses had responded to the survey. He estimated staff spent three hours on this project and the remainder of the survey work was conducted by himself. He indicated it was a common business practice to conduct surveys after a new event was sponsored in order to collect feedback in hopes of improving the event going forward. He thanked staff for their assistance with the google doc that was created to assist with gathering the feedback that was collected from local business owners.

Aho thanked Stelmach and Amerman for their work on this. She indicated she appreciated all of the positive feedback that was received from the SBS event. She commented she spoke with a few business owners right after the event and she believed these businesses had good days and appreciated seeing patrons out on the streets. She appreciated the fact a recap had been done so the EDA can improve on this event for 2022. She understood it was hard for the City to reach every business, but believed more efforts could be made this year to ensure all businesses in the community are included.

Stelmach stated last year's event felt rushed and he appreciated the fact the EDA would have more time to plan for this year's event. He commented there were dental and doctor offices that didn't know what was going on and they may be interested in having balloon animals or some other activity this year in order to participate in SBS.

Vickerman thanked staff and Stelmach for putting this information together. She believed a lot of the people who made comments on the survey were interested in the event to begin with. She understood there was no road closure that would satisfy everyone last year and as a member of the EDA and Council this situation became difficult. She noted SBS was not an Osseo invention, but rather came from a credit card company trying to get people into small businesses the Saturday after Thanksgiving. She believed the EDA's role in SBS was to focus on ways to amplify the day that would help Osseo's small businesses through extra advertising and incentives. She was of the opinion the SBS was a success. She believed the food trucks were what people wanted for this event and helped with the promotion of Osseo's businesses. She indicated she did not want to be in the way when it came to Osseo businesses. She discussed the proposed road closure and how it started out larger and then became smaller and smaller which was then viewed as a block party for a select few. She stated she did not feel this was fair because it did not highlight or benefit all businesses in the community. She feared the event then became a party planning committee and those arrangements should have been made and presented to the EDA instead of the EDA being a part of them. She recommended going forward that the EDA stick to programs or events that focus on highlighting City businesses as a whole and not so much diving deeply into a street party.

Johnson asked how many businesses were located in the City of Osseo. Amerman stated he had contact information for 67 businesses in the community.

Johnson questioned how many businesses were signed up and given space on the gateway sign. Amerman reported 20 businesses were given space on the gateway sign prior to SBS through Christmas.

Johnson thanked staff for all of their work on this event. He indicated he had a problem with the food trucks unless they offered different food from the food provided at Osseo's local restaurants. In addition, he did not want the City to have to guarantee how many people would be in attendance at SBS in order for food trucks to show up. He stated he was happy to see the EDA talking about this event much earlier in the year. Lastly, he did not believe it was

the City's responsibility to provide all of the manpower to put on this event, but rather, should be run by an outside entity such as the Osseo Business Association.

Stelmach thanked everyone for sharing their thoughts. He stated he appreciated all of the efforts that were done to drive traffic to downtown Osseo for SBS. He indicated businesses were concerned about the last minutes changes that were approved by the Council. He explained he appreciated the comments received from Councilmember Vickerman and how she didn't want to do any harm. He reported harm may have been done last year, even if it was unintentional. He recommended the EDA collaborate with business owners in order to create an even better event for 2022. He explained he wanted to see businesses supported and recommended additional conversations be held in order to learn what their needs are. He anticipated food trucks could be brought back in so long as they were not directly competing with local restaurants. He hoped that the EDA could work with its local businesses in order to create an environment where they can thrive.

Vickerman stated if this was a group of business owners planning this event, she would not have had to change her mind. However, the plans for this event stemmed from the EDA. She commented no one had reached out to her after this event for further conversation. She explained she liked a good street festival as much as anyone else but she also knew it was hard to please everyone. She hoped that lessons could be learned and this event could be taken off the EDA a bit in 2022.

Aho commented going forward the City and EDA should consider collaborating on events like SBS versus sponsoring. She anticipated this would assist with taking the decisions away from the City and would place them more on the businesses.

Vickerman agreed this would be the right direction to move in.

Aho anticipated there would be even more businesses interested in participating in SBS in 2022 than in 2021.

Poppe asked if an SBS Committee should be formed to partner with the I-94 Chamber on this event.

Vickerman supported this recommendation, because this would take the decision making away from the EDA.

Poppe questioned if staff could reach out to local business owners to see if there was interest in forming an SBS Committee.

Stelmach reported there was a core group of business owners that already do this work. He suggested a quarterly coffee be held with elected officials in order to meet with local business owners to discuss issues business owners may be facing.

Aho stated she supported this suggestion.

Vickerman and Johnson supported this suggestion as well.

Amerman thanked the EDA for the comments and input that has been shared. He noted there was an interest from some business owners to be involved and these businesses could be contacted to see if they were interested in participating in an SBS Committee.

Poppe commented the 2021 event may not have been done exactly right but this could be improved going forward. He appreciated how residents were excited to participate in SBS in 2021 and how the event created an energy in the downtown area. He hoped the SBS Committee would be able to grow and improve on the event going forward.

Grams stated he would work with Amerman to lay down a framework for this event and would be including local business owners. He asked if any members of the EDA wanted to participate or should this event be strictly staff/committee led.

Poppe reported National Night Out and Minidazzle had subcommittees in place to plan these events. He recommended a subcommittee be put in place to shepherd this event along.

Stelmach and Aho volunteered to work with staff on this event.

Poppe thanked the EDA for discussing this item. It was his hope that because of this discussion the SBS event would have an even better outcome in 2022.

9. REPORTS OR COMMENTS: Executive Director, President, Members

Amerman stated Staff began using some of the Business Initiative Grants last week.

Aho reported Twin Cities Live featured Osseo last week and a number of local businesses were featured in a positive light on this program.

Poppe stated this was a great event that would benefit all of downtown Osseo.

Vickerman indicated she would be resigning from the EDA in order to allow other members of the community to serve.

Stelmach thanked Commissioner Vickerman for her service to the City on the EDA.

Stelmach discussed the comments that were made to the EDA during Matters from the Floor. He clarified Staff spent two to three hours working on the SBS survey. He indicated Commissioner Aho was asked to assist with the planning of this event but did not fill out any of the documents for the SBS event. He noted this was done by a staff member. He reported this was not a specific gain for anyone. He commented on the number of business conferences President Poppe attends on a yearly basis. He indicated he finds great value in attending the League of Minnesota Cities and Ehlers training. He stated he was confused by the anonymous majority comment. He discussed the comment that was made about breaking State Statute and encouraged the public to make a public data request for July 19, 2018, or

November 27, 2021, as there may have been someone else that may have violated Minnesota Open Meeting Law. He noted this event was reviewed and was found to be nothing. He indicated there was no illegal use of office for personal gain because the forms were filled out by staff and one member was made a point of contact. He encouraged all members to do their best to look out for Osseo and not just themselves. He reported he did not see business feedback as a waste of time. He was of the opinion surveys were a common practice in order to learn how to do better for the public. He was also of the opinion the members on the EDA knew what this body was and what its role and function was for the community.

10. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Vickerman, seconded by Aho, to adjourn at 7:08 p.m. A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Guenther
Minute Maker Secretarial