

City of Moorhead
Economic Development Authority
Meeting Minutes
March 26, 2012 at 11:45 AM
1st Floor, Council Chambers, Moorhead City Hall

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a regular meeting of the Economic Development Authority was held in the 1st Floor, Council Chambers, Moorhead City Hall, on March 26, 2012, at 11:45 AM.

Roll call of the members was made as follows:

Board Member:	Les Bakke	Present
Council Member:	Brenda Elmer	Present
Board Member:	Jeff Frider	Present
Council Member:	Steve Gehrtz	<i>Absent</i>
Board Member:	Werner Golling	<i>Absent</i>
Board Member:	Ray Grefsheim	Present
Board Member:	Robert Remark	Present
Board Member:	Jon Riewer	<i>Absent</i>
Board Member:	Jim Steen	Present
Board Member:	James Taylor	Present
Board Member:	Mark Wallert	Present

Others Present:

Scott Hutchins, Director of Community Services	Jeff Manuel, Pactiv
Peter Doll, Development Services Manager	Amy Thorpe, Community Services Planner
Terry Dalbec, DEED	Bob Zimmerman, City Engineer
Peggy Harter, MetroCOG	

1. **Microsite is LIVE! Check it out at www.makemoorheadhome.com**

2. **Call meeting to Order / Roll Call**

3. **Agenda Amendments**

Minutes: Chair Wallert moved Item 5 and 6 after Item 7 and 8.

4. **Approve Minutes**

A [February 27, 2012](#)

Motion to Approve made by Les Bakke and seconded by James Taylor
Approve minutes from February 27, 2012.

Motion Passed: For: 8; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Absent: 3

5. **[Citizens Addressing the Board](#)**

6. **[Commissioners' Reports](#)**

Minutes: Commissioner Frider stated that at the February meeting of the EDA, the board authorized staff to enter into a listing agreement with Coldwell Banker First Realty Encore. He inquired why the larger, 5-acre Aggregate sites were not listed as well. Doll responded that listing of city property with a realtor was a trial to see how the arrangement would work. He stated that the Aggregate site was a larger, more complex site and there would likely be multiple developers needed for the large site. He added that the RFQ-RFP process used for the redevelopment of downtown had been the preferred option by the EDA to obtain a quality

redevelopment project(s). Frider stated that the property should be brought to the market sooner rather than later. Hutchins responded that the long term goals were to receive multiple, comprehensive proposals from which to choose and evaluate based on City's objectives. If the objective was only to sell the land, listing the property for sale would accomplish that. Board members asked for an updated timeline and to add this topic to next month's agenda.

Elmer stated that the Home Builders Association hosted their city night last week. She stated that it was well attended by Moorhead City Staff and Council. She said there was a lot of energy and enthusiasm from attendees. They were excited about the new marketing plan and micro site launch. She stated that the City will host a Development Summit on April 11. And a tour of new development on May 3. She stated that the second council retreat was held last week. One idea brought forward was to conduct town hall meetings to get citizen input.

7. **Pactiv Update - Jeff Manuel, Plant Manager (11:45a - 12:00p)**

Minutes: Hutchins introduced Pactiv's plant manager, Jeff Manuel. Manuel began by thanking the Moorhead Fire Department and the eight other fire departments for the excellent job they did to contain the fire at the Pactiv plant. He stated the fire was contained to one warehouse. He stated that all of the equipment below twelve feet was unharmed by the fire and heat but that all of the overhead electric wiring had to be replaced. They had an aggressive timeline to have the plant producing by Friday (3/23) but with the electrical work completed over the weekend, it was likely to have production start as early as Wednesday. Employees were already back on the payroll and working their regular shifts. Employees were relieved to be back to work so quickly. He added that Pactiv's expansion plans would continue to move forward. Hutchins stated that the staff and Pactiv were working with Moorhead Public Service to move forward with the expansion.

Commissioners asked if the economic impact to Pactiv was known at this time. Manuel stated that it was too early to tell what kind of hit was taken by the company but that local contractors were used to repair the damaged plant and in that way had a positive impact on the community.

8. **DEED / City Partnership - Terry Dalbec, MN Dept. of Employment & Economic Development**

Minutes: Hutchins introduced Terry Dalbec from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) who was in Moorhead today to monitor two of Moorhead's Contamination Cleanup Grants. He stated that Dalbec had been the City's key contact for the cleanup grants on several of Moorhead's most recent redevelopment projects. Doll added that Dalbec had been an excellent resource for him during the cleanup process and acknowledged their good working relationship.

Dalbec stated that he was happy to have played a part in Moorhead's successful redevelopment projects. He stated that funding for cleanup and redevelopment grants came from different funding sources. He stated that cleanup funds were budgeted in DEED's general fund budget but that redevelopment funds usually came from bonds which carried more restrictions. He stated that bonding restrictions that the redevelopment project be "for a public use" made it more like an infrastructure grant. He added that redevelopment grant money was currently in the Governor's Bonding Bill for \$8 million. New on the horizon, DEED is considering establishing a "demolition loan program" which would be a low interest loan to cities to demolition blighted and abandoned facilities. There may also be a provision included to forgive 50% of the loan if redevelopment occurred. He stated that "general fund" money was needed for the program to work.

Commissions asked if the different grant programs could be used together. Dalbec responded that it is common for a project to apply for and receive both cleanup and redevelopment grant funds.

Commissioners asked staff if there were any opportunities for redevelopment of the MPS Power Plant. Staff stated they had not heard of any interested parties but that TIF options had been kept open.

9. Planning/Investment in Moorhead's Gateway Corridors

A [Downtown Corridor Studies Update - Peggy Harter, MetroCOG](#)

Minutes: Peggy Harter, MetroCOG, stated that there were currently three major corridor studies being conducted in Moorhead: Trunk Highway 10, Trunk Highway 75 and Center Avenue Corridor Studies. She stated that MetroCOG would hold a public input meeting on Tuesday, March 27, at the Courtyard by Marriott, 5:30-7 to review preliminary alternatives that have been developed for these corridors. She encouraged EDA members to attend the public input meeting and provide their ideas. She stated that the downtown portion of the study had been a challenge to allow for traffic mobility and also provide for continued economic development. She summarized a number of items to be discussed at the public input meeting including changes to the Trunk Highway 10 designation to extend further west to 11th Street shifting truck traffic to the 11th Street railroad crossing and to improve the affected intersections. MnDOT would then become a potential funding partner for the grade separation crossing of the existing rail lines at 11th Street. MetroCOG will ask for a recommendation from the EDA before the plan is taken to the City Council. She stated a draft report will be presented to the City Council late summer.

Wallert added that a "by invitation" focus group would be meeting from 1-4 at the MetroCOG conference room. He stated that he would not be able to make the meeting and invited any EDA member who is available to attend.

B Downtown Railroad Preemption System Update - Bob Zimmerman, City Engineer Presentation: http://www.cityofmoorhead.com/city_services/engineering.asp

Minutes: Zimmerman began by encouraging board members to go to the public input meeting and show their support for the jurisdiction swap. He stated that one major benefit of the swap is the City would gain a funding partner for the grade separation project at 11th Street and the new intersections which allow a wider turn radius than the current 8th Street location.

Zimmerman provided a brief summary materials found in the packet which were also presented to the City Council at their March 19, 2012, meeting. In summary, Zimmerman stated that there is no one single thing we can do downtown to make traffic better.

Board Members :

- A study had been completed several years ago with one possible solution being to combine tracks to create a "Y" and wondered what had changed to suggest that the situation would get better. Response: Extreme cost was cited as the reason that idea had not been pursued. Implementation of the recommended improvements was possible without great cost and should improve traffic wait times. Staff was directed to provide board members with a portion of the aforementioned study.
- Wasn't there a law which allowed fines for blocking an intersection for longer than 10 minutes? Response: There is a law but the difficulty is enforcement.
- Explain why there a difference between traffic delays in Moorhead vs. Fargo? Response: Fargo has multiple underpasses in or close to their downtown area and the tracks veer apart in Fargo for greater separation of areas of potential congestion.

10. ["Opportunities in North Dakota & The Bakken" Conference - Doll/Grefsheim](#)

Minutes: Commissioner Grefsheim attended the conference with Justin Pearson, GFMEDC, and Peter Doll. He reported that the conference was a great opportunity to showcase Moorhead.

Doll added that attendees were exposed to the opportunities in "The Bakken" at a conceptual level and Moorhead received exposure while they were thinking about it.

Hutchins stated that co-sponsorship at the conference was a cooperative effort with GFMEDC and was part of developing a long-term strategy for Moorhead's industrial park.

He stated that the new president of GFMEDC was now on board and that he and the City Manager had a meeting scheduled with him this week and anticipated discussing the benefits of a joint metro area study.

11. Legislative Update – Hutchins

Minutes: Hutchins provided board members with a legislative update as highlighted in the packet materials.

Commissioners asked for clarification of the 2-year property tax exemption language. Hutchins stated that the main difference between this language and the former law was that this was an exemption not abatement and that the State will not be reimburse the City as it had previously. He stated the bill has the same threshold levels as the law that expired December 31, 2011. There is also "this old house" language to provide a two-year exemption for qualifying remodel projects of \$10,000 or more. He stated there is "opt in" language requiring the City Council to approve participation in the program. Commissioners asked if there was a "Plan B." Hutchins stated that there is a statewide abatement law that allows the city to abate its property taxes but not that of those other taxing jurisdiction unless they choose to participate. Commissioners requested that a Plan B be ready for consideration should this legislation fail.

12. Information / Update

13. Adjourn

Minutes: Meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm

APPROVED BY:

ATTEST:

Mark Wallert
Chair

Jim Taylor
Secretary

The proceedings of this meeting are digitally recorded and are available for public review.

*Respectfully submitted by:
Amy Thorpe, Community Services Planner*