

# **BIG LAKE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2011**

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

President Doug Hayes called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **2. ROLL CALL**

Commissioners present: Richard Backlund, Raeanne Danielowski, Jim Dickinson, Doug Hayes, Mike Hayes, Chuck Heitz, Jerry Parks and Jim Stahlmann.  
Commissioners absent: Dave Gast.

Also present: Community Development Director Jim Thares and City Administrator Scott Johnson.

### **3. ADOPT AGENDA**

Commissioner Heitz motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Parks, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

### **4. APPROVE BLEDA MEETING MINUTES FROM JANUARY 10, 2011**

Commissioner Stahlmann motioned to approve the January 10, 2011 BLEDA minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Danielowski, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

### **5. JOINT CITY/TOWNSHIP EDA BUSINESS ITEMS**

#### **5A. BIG LAKE RAIL PARK**

Community Development Director Jim Thares reported that staff is continuing to monitor the Big Lake Regional Rail Park proposal development status; noting that the closing transaction for the 227 acre +/- parcel, which is a key part of the concept, has not yet taken place but that any additional information pertaining to the land transaction would be brought before the BLEDA when it is received. Commissioner Danielowski asked when the closing will take place and how much money was put down on the project. Jim Thares responded that a closing is expected in early March and that \$230,000 has been put down on the project. Mr. Thares also noted that a large industrial firm is reported to be reviewing the site information for one of the large parcels of the proposed Rail Park. Chair Hayes asked if they were only looking at the rail site. Mr. Thares responded that they are looking at multiple sites.

## **5B. PROJECTS STATUS REPORT**

Mr. Thares briefly reviewed the six (6) items listed in the February 2011 Project Status Report and answered questions of the Board. No action was required or taken by the Board.

Commissioners Stahlmann and Danielowski recapped the business retention visit that took place on February 11<sup>th</sup> with Paragon Store Fixtures. Paragon provides store fixtures for retail customers. During the recession a large number of their clients changed to lower quality Asian products, but some are returning because of the better quality. The meeting and tour went well.

## **5C. PROSPECTS REPORT**

Mr. Thares reviewed the February Prospects Report and answered questions of the Board. Mr. Thares reviewed the multi-tenant prospects that are looking in the transit oriented development area of the City. BLEDA members discussed the possibility of not providing assistance for multi-tenant projects after a certain number of units are built. Mr. Thares also reviewed an industrial park prospect and a junior box retail prospect. No action was required or taken by the Board.

## **5D. BLEDA BUDGET**

Mr. Thares briefly reviewed the BLEDA budget documentation with the Commissioners. The BLEDA was updated on the letters that were sent regarding late payments. BLEDA will review default cures and timelines at their March meeting. No action required or taken by the Board.

## **5E. 2011 BLEDA ORGANIZATIONAL (OFFICER) APPOINTMENTS**

Mr. Thares reviewed the February 9<sup>th</sup> memorandum pertaining to the 2011 BLEDA organizational appointments, noting that the Board is required to annually make appointments to the positions of President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Commissioner Dickinson motioned to make the following appointments to the BLEDA Officer positions for 2011: President – Doug Hayes; Vice President – Chuck Heitz; Treasurer – Dave Gast; and Secretary – Jim Thares. Seconded by Commissioner Parks, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

#### **5F. 2011 BIG LAKE BUSINESS EXPO – ATTENDANCE AT BOOTH**

Mr. Thares reviewed with the Commissioners the information on the upcoming Big Lake Business Expo scheduled to be held on Sunday, March 6, 2011, noting that the hours of the Expo will be from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The Commissioners were asked to review the schedule of hours available to attend the booth at the Expo and to contact Economic Development Assistant Sandy Petrowski by Friday, February 25<sup>th</sup> with the time that they would be able attend the Expo on behalf of the BLEDA. No action required or taken by the Board.

#### **5G. DISCUSSION OF OVERALL ECONOMIC TRENDS/BIG LAKE CONTEXT & C-I SITES/RETAIL DEVELOPMENT/COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS STAKEHOLDER EVENTS/TIF/ETC.**

Mr. Thares reviewed information from the Ehlers Conference and TIF information regarding current districts in Big Lake. Jay Demma from Boonestroo will be at the April BLEDA meeting to discuss the other information that was in the packet. Commissioner Dickinson requested information on the City's Tax Abatement Agreement. Mr. Dickinson also requested that BLEDA look at comparison percentages from past TIF Districts for future requests and offer less loans in the future. Commissioner Danielowski asked about possible redevelopment options for the old Paragon building. Jim Thares stated that there are challenges with the site and other options will need to be discussed.

Mr. Thares informed the BLEDA that based on the Ehlers Conference that developers do not expect great things in the industrial sector because there are significant vacancies in the market. Commuter rail has not become a driver at this point for development and it will take time to build ridership. Few industrial properties have sold without heavy discounts and it is important to cultivate the community for industrial prospects. It may take 3 to 7 years or more before industrial properties begin to sell. Mr. Thares also did not think that the heavy industrial park being proposed in Becker would provide competition for the proposed rail park in Big Lake because they cater to different industrial users.

#### **6. CITY EDA BUSINESS ITEMS**

The BLEDA discussed different options and opportunities for expansion or to bring businesses into Big Lake. Some of the options included: White Bear Clothing expansion, encouraging local business owners to relocate to Big Lake, growing businesses into larger facilities, holding a business meeting to invite and educate area businesses about the opportunities in Big Lake, looking into starting an incubator project, and run a spreadsheet to determine what discounts are feasible on the industrial park property.

**7. OTHER**

**7A. FYI: UPCOMING STRONG TOWNS “CURBSIDE CHAT” PRESENTATION**

Mr. Thares briefly reviewed the February 10<sup>th</sup> memorandum pertaining to the upcoming City Council Workshop scheduled for February 16<sup>th</sup> which will include a Strong Towns “Curbside Chat” Presentation and to which the BLEDA is invited to attend (it is anticipated that the Presentation will take place at approximately 6:00 p.m.). He further noted that also during the February 16<sup>th</sup> Workshop, Senior Planner Katie Larsen will be providing a brief review of the Knight Foundation “Soul of the Community Report”; this report summarizes the surveyed respondents in selected cities in the U.S. to discover what emotionally attached people to a community (i.e., economic and community attributes, including physical beauty, social and educational opportunities).

For information only, no action required or taken by the Board.

**8. ADJOURN**

Commissioner Heitz motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Hayes, unanimous ayes, meeting adjourned.