

WATERVILLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING

February 13, 2017, 6:00 p.m.

There was a special meeting of the Waterville Economic Development Authority held at 220 Paquin Street (Former Senior Center) at 6:00 p.m. on February 13, 2017 to gather ideas from citizens on how the City can move forward with residential and/or commercial development.

Present: Sue Cutts and Sue Myers and Chairperson Alan Schmidtke

Absent: Richard Davis (arrived 6:01 p.m.) and Jennifer Grobe

Also Present: Administrator/Clerk Teresa Hill and Alex Jermeland of MN Valley Council of Governments

Also Absent: None

1. Call to Order. Chairperson Alan Schmidtke called the meeting to order noting that all EDA members were present except Jennifer Grobe and Richard Davis (arrived 6:01 p.m.). Also present City Administrator Teresa Hill and Alex Jermeland of MN Valley Council of Governments.

2. Agenda Approval. Motion by Myers, seconded by Cutts to approve the agenda as is. Unanimous vote. Motion carried.

3. Promotion and Revitalization of Waterville.

A. Introduction. Chairperson Schmidtke advised that the following Citizens were present at the special meeting: Bill Walz, John Peach, Chuck Dorenkemper, Kathy Hoy, Chip Mack, Art Sorgatz, Bruce Marzahn and Lori DeMars. Also present was Alex Jermeland of the MN Valley Council of Governments. Chairperson Schmidtke thanks the Citizens for being present and advised that we will be talking about promoting and what we can do to make our City better.

B. Citizen Input Session. Kathy Hoy said if you can keep your youth involved in your community you will get your youth to stay in your community. Ms. Hoy said that in Waseca they did a service project which there is grant money available. They worked collaboratively with the schools on homecoming week and once in the spring where grades 9-12 they would look for projects for the kids to do, such as washing windows downtown, pulling weeds downtown, putting the benches out, raking leaves, any kind of community service project that we can do in our community. They did painting on any buildings that needed it. The teachers would supervise the group. They tried to keep the youth in their community and involved in their community. Ms. Hoy suggested putting the buildings that we have for sale making it more prevalent either on the Chambers' website or the City's website the square footage of the buildings. Ms. Hoy suggested putting posters in the windows that are empty to

make them look like they are not empty. John Peach said what are we looking for? Are we looking for aesthetics? What are the core issues of the City whether it is housing or are we just looking at beautification and trying to bring people into town. How are we going to build the tax base, get people in town, and building houses. Mr. Peach said they have done some research on the median house value and the median age of the residents in Waterville. At that time the median house value was between \$80,000 to \$90,000. The average age was at least ten years older than a half a dozen or seven communities around us. There is an issue where we are not attracting young people to town. Mr. Peach asked what the identity of our City is. Are we looking for commercial business or are we heading towards tourism. We have to find a direction before we can address the core issues. Mr. Peach suggested looking at other cities that have been successful in promoting their city. Mr. Peach said there has to be a cooperative effort to make things work. Bill Walz asked with the new sewer plant is there a lot of expansion room. Ms. Hill said when the City looked at the sizing of it we actually looked at the lake areas and going further out for future development that would be in the area. Ms. Hill said before we didn't have capacity. When the new treatment plant is up and running we will have capacity. The availability to expand and develop will be shortly. Chairperson Schmidtke said it won't be long before the residents in Hileman's Addition will want to hook up to City water and sewer. Lori DeMars said we have two primary resources, we are a seasonal town and we have a lot of agricultural around us. We should look at other towns that are similar to us and find out what their ideas are that have been successful for them. Ms. DeMars said Superintendent Whitehurst is doing a state of the school address and they are talking about some of the same things that we are talking about tonight. That being what are they looking at as far as enrollment, financial types of things. Ms. DeMars said at the last EDA minutes she said that there has been talk about collaborating with the school and working with them and try to understand what the District is facing because they are one of the larger employers in the town. Ms. DeMars said when people come into town they are looking at what type of house they can afford and what type of school district we have. Ms. DeMars asked if there is a long range plan in place and if so how often is it revisited and hold ourselves accountable to what we put in the plan and the work that we do with that. Ms. Hill said that the City has a strategic plan and it has been reviewed each year. It is a never ending process. Ms. Hill said one of the big things was the wastewater treatment plant which will spur development and other opportunities. A lot of things have been completed on the strategic plan. Discussion held regarding what is on the market for sale that is appealing. Mr. Dorenkemper said there is not good housing available in this town. Ms. DeMars said the two generations that are looking for housing right now are millenials and baby boomers. Mr. Chip Mack said people come to Waterville for two reasons, it is an inexpensive place to live compared to other towns. They come to Waterville to live. Mr. Mack said our industry is tourism. We need to have places for them to live. Discussion regarding ways to get housing developments in Waterville. Ms. Cutts said the reason people come to Waterville is for the lakes and getting away from the City traffic. Discussion regarding nuisance properties that need to be addressed to attract people to town. Mr. Walz said sewer and water is very important in

developments. Alex Jermeland said what type of house do you want to pull in? Duplexes, townhomes or actual single family homes. Mr. Jermeland said townhomes or duplexes seem to be very popular with the millennial generation. How do we attract a group of people who have quite a bit of debt, make a moderate income, how do we get that affordable housing and bring that in. Mr. Walz said one level townhomes on the market move very fast. Ms. Cutts said she thinks that rentals are very important. Mr. Davis said housing is a big thing in getting people here. He has found that the duplex, triplex thing is really big. They are one level two bedroom units and you are finding the older people are buying those and selling their houses to the younger people. It would be a good trade off for what we need here. Mr. Dorenkemper said that there is no place in Waterville for older people to move to. Ms. Myers said we need to find some developers with some money. Mr. Davis said in Northwood they are buying old run down houses, tearing them down and building on that lot. They buy two lots together, take the property down and convert it to townhomes. Ms. Cutts asked if there is a place to find these developers? Mr. Jermeland said you should contact Greater Mankato Growth. They have a regional economic development association and he believes Le Sueur County is a part of it. You would want to talk to John Considine. He might be able to connect you with some developers, which would be a starting point to move forward. Discussion regarding where there could be potential developments. Mr. Marzahn asked if there could be some signage put up along Highway 60 that would show what places that are in town for gas, food, etc. Discussion held regarding the signage. The state regulates the signage.

C. Session Review. Mr. Jermeland said that we have touched on what type of development the City would like to bring in, the life stage housing where you have options for every single life stage, not just single family but also duplexes or townhomes, one level, maybe two-level options. The second thing was multi-family. Are there developers interested in Waterville. You may have property available, how do we make that property known to the developers. Mr. Jermeland said Greater Mankato Growth would be a very good option to connect with. At the very least they can give you some advice. Are land owners interested in selling land. The City has to clean the town up and make it look attractive. Ms. Hoy said that working with the School on the blight properties would work. Mr. Jermeland will present the EDA with the information that we have gotten tonight and make into a document that will remind us of what we talked about and after it is presented to the EDA we can bring it back to the group and formulate where we want to go. Mr. Mack suggested that local contractors be invited to the group session of the EDA. The EDA will meet with the group again on March 13, 2017 at 6:00 p.m.

4. Adjourn. Motion by Cutts, seconded by Davis to adjourn. Unanimous vote. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned 7:15 p.m.

Alan Schmidtke, Chairperson

Teresa Hill, Administrator/Clerk