

**City of Battle Lake  
Economic Development Authority  
Tuesday, June 5, 2025**

The Battle Lake Economic Development Authority met in a regular session on Tuesday, June 5, 2025, at 7:00 a.m. with Rich Bullard, Randy Dorn, Rob Nudell, Steve Young, Sharon Casey, Josie Thomopolous, and Majorie Quammen present. Also present were Val Martin, Clerk/Treasurer/EDA Director, and Reba Gilliland representing the Battle Lake Arts Advisory Committee. Visitor Brian Embree was present. Leigh Shebeck was present to go over the business surveys that he has been working on.

**Visitors**

Leigh Shebeck was present to go over the information he gathered when doing in-person interviews with business owners. Some items of significance and follow-up discussion:

- Majority of business owners stated they had a small increase in revenue but also had increases in expenses.
- One business stated marketing was an obstacle for them.
- Some of the businesses were considering expansion.
- A couple of businesses were considering selling them.
- The commissioners continued to discuss the information received and how we can help business transition.
- Casey has reached out to some businesses to assist them connecting to the Lakes Connect website.
- One of the businesses stated that all the events seem to happen in the downtown area, this should be expanded to other areas of the city.

Nudell made a motion to approve the agenda. Young seconded. MCU Casey made a motion to approve the minutes. Bullard seconded. MCU Casey made a motion to approve the financials as presented. Nudell seconded. MCU

**Other Updates:**

- Lionseed will not be open this summer due to some personal issues.
- Casey asked where the EDA Commissioners consider our area. It makes sense to market as a region, not just the city. Is Beach Bums, Corner Store and Zorbaz too far away? Other commissioners agreed that this is a good point, but we need to see more interest from them. Casey noted that Corner Store was in the coupon book this year. Martin will check to make sure they are all on the email list.
- Casey toured the available commercial space at the Hatchery. There are two spaces available for rent. Also discussed was the availability of space that Everts Lumber owns, which was the old chiropractic building. Martin will be in contact with them to get specifics so they can be posted on the City's website.
- Martin stated that she was contacted by Kristi Kuder of the Art of the Lakes regarding the Creative Art Center. They have enough funds until the end of summer and would like to stay but they do not have the financial resources to do this. She is asking for help in brainstorming ideas to keep it going or partner with another entity to help pay the expenses.
- Consider reviewing the Business Retention and Expansion goals and outcomes.
- Marketing was discussed. The brochures in art alley continue to be filled and additional brochures have gone out with the Otter Tail Lakes Assoc. magazines. There needs to be a new kiosk at Halverson Park and the items in the brochure holders are outdated. Martin said that this has been a goal for public works.
- A conversation on the start of the season was held. Most agreed that it seems to be weather-related. With the loss of Stub's and Stella's not opening yet, it will be interesting to see how that affects other businesses.
- More year-round residents are needed. More and more people are buying homes for use a small part of the year or as short-term rentals. We also need to embrace who we are and capitalize on that.
- A conversation on the work of the EDA started. Shebeck stated he would not have purchased a business in Battle Lake prior to Martin working for the City. A continued conversation on how the City has become more "business friendly" and some of the setbacks that happened years ago.

**Business Improvement Grant Program** – Letters have been sent to the successful grantees of the program. Shebeck said he was appreciative of the program and it will help him with a project or two, depending on what the Dairy Queen franchise allows. Martin, Quammen, and Bullard reported on comments from the City Council and their issues with the EDA going over the \$20,000 amount that was originally decided on by the EDA. Bullard, Martin & Quammen said they explained the reasons for going over the \$20,000 and explained how the EDA is different than other committees with their own bylaws and enabling resolution that allows them to spend their specific funds within legal limits. Martin also reviewed the minutes with the council and explained that the council was approving a resolution that allowed them to apply for matching grant funds to the Otter Tail County CDA. The decision was not on the dollar amount.

**Housing Update:**

Martin reported that Krenz project will only move forward and a plat rather than a project that would include construction of housing. We will not be submitting a grant application to Minnesota Housing this year for infrastructure.

**School Updates:**

- 28 graduating seniors – 100% of the class.
- They are working with North Point Professionals on increasing school enrollment. A marketing project has begun. Thanks to Sharon Casey for helping with that.
- They will be meeting with Ashby school in the near future. No specific agenda at this time but looking at ways that it might make sense to collaborate on.
- There has been continued conversation on the school mascot and whether it is considered offensive to the indigenous community. Nudell has been trying to locate a “list” of schools that are required to change their mascot. If the school is found to be one of the schools that need to make a change, they can ask for an exemption and they would have to request approval from their nearest tribe. At this point, there does not seem to be an actual list, other than something a radio station in Duluth had put together with what they thought were possible districts that need to make a change. Until the school find that Battlers is on a specific list of school mascots that need to change, they will not rush into doing anything but they will keep monitoring the situation.

**Other Updates:**

- Ninja Anywhere event had about 450 kids in attendance.
- Reba Gilliland reported on the Talking Trails project. There will be a self-guided tour that features up to 30 of the City’s art, recreational and historic site. Recordings are being done by locals. Gilliland plans to meet with the communities of Ashby, Ottertail and Perham to gauge their interest in partnering on this project. A regional project along Highway 78 may draw more interest. Help from the Otter mascot to promote the event might be a great way to get the word out.

Adjourn at 8:07 a.m.

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Val Martin, Clerk/Treasurer