

**City of Battle Lake
Economic Development Authority
Tuesday, December 17, 2024**

The Battle Lake Economic Development Authority met in a regular session on Tuesday, December 17, 2024, at 7:00 a.m. with Rich Bullard, Randy Dorn, Rob Nudell, Steve Young, Sean Belmont, and Majorie Quammen present. Also present were Karalee Brandner, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer, Reba Gilliland representing the Battle Lake Arts Advisory Committee, Sharon Casey representing the LACC, and Amy Baldwin Otter Tail County Community Development Director. Leigh Shebeck was also in attendance.

Bullard made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of Amy Baldwin OTC CDA Director. Nudell seconded. MCU

- Amy Baldwin, Otter Tail County Community Development Director presented an update on progress of the Lincoln apartments. This building will have 10 apartment units with tuck under garages. They will be 2- and 3-bedroom units. The project was supported with a loan from the MN Department of Housing Loan as well as private funding, and a loan from the CDA of \$490,000.
- Baldwin presented information to the commission on programs available through the CDA and HRA. She shared literature for Otter Tail County Housing Finance Programs outlining programs for Homeowners, Homebuyers, Builders and Landlords. Dorn inquired if there have been any current surveys or studies to identify needs for our area.
- Baldwin shared information on a project that was just completed in Dalton that will be operated through the HRA. This was a small affordable senior housing unit with 6 units. This project came about as a need was identified for seniors wanting to stay in their hometown as they age. They are hopeful that as the apartment units fill up there will be single family houses coming onto the real estate market as well.
- There was discussion on the Labor Force, Employment & Unemployment Rate for Otter Tail County. Baldwin was optimistic as the number of workers is consistent. They were anticipating more of a drop as the baby boomers age out of the work force. Baldwin gave a brief overview of the Empowered Worker Program. This program helps to connect workers with barriers to employment such as a criminal record, housing instability, limited English proficiency, and poverty with employers. The program provides readiness and skills training, career exploration, and job placement, and navigator and success advocates. She shared a success story of helping an individual obtain training, pass their CDL test, and obtain gainful employment.

Dorn recapped the minutes and requested the correction of a spelling error. Nudell made a motion to approve the corrected minutes. Young seconded. MCU

Commission reviewed and discussed the financials. Discussion was held regarding the request for an additional \$500 requested by AMS Digital. Dorn requested this item be added to the January agenda for further discussion. Quammen made a motion to approve the financials. Bullard seconded the motion. MCU

- Leigh Shebeck summarized the Business Surveys that he had met with businesses to discuss. He spent ½ hour to 45 minutes with each business going through the survey. Many businesses reported a slight increase in sales. Cost of supplies was identified as being the largest obstacle, following that was staffing, marketing, and other factors. The majority of businesses surveyed had no plans for changes at this time.
- Nudell expressed his thanks to Leigh for his time and dedication to doing these surveys. Dorn referenced changes of legislation in Minnesota making it difficult for small businesses. Added employment expenses are hard for business owners to absorb.
- Sharon Casey with the LACC reported that the board had met and the new online calendar was approved.

The Commissioners moved to the discussion of the annual meeting. Rob offered to host the meeting at the school. Amy Baldwin suggested inviting Ian Calmstrom, Regional Director of West Central MN SBDC to speak. Discussion will continue in January to finalize details for the meeting.

- Request Approval – Utilize balance of COVID Funds for Business Grants – tabled until January

- Follow up – Ambulance Service – no discussion held.
- Follow up – Meeting with Townships – no discussion held.
- January meeting will be Tuesday, January 7, 2025, then the regular meeting time will be the first Thursday of the month at 7 am.
- New Year’s cards with annual meeting invitation – Val will send out in January
- City Christmas Party will be held at Boathouse, January 12, 2025 with social hour at 4:30
- March 26, 2025 – College and Career Fair at School

Adjourn at 8:25 a.m.

Karalee Brandner, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer