November 2017 Rugby JDA Directors Report

It has been another busy month at the JDA office. The Comprehensive Housing study is fully underway and should be completed as scheduled. The agenda for the housing conference is coming together and, as always, I welcome and value your suggestions and input. I have reserved the Cobblestone meeting room and am working on agenda items. Daunne Heilman, board member and owner of iDesign, has agreed to help with some of the marketing. I will be personally contacting lenders, realtors, contractors, and investors about the upcoming conference.

The last “What’s on Your Mind” event was small but quite fruitful. Discussion with representatives from the hospital, local business owners, Chamber and CVB Director Miriah Koenig, Fr. Tom Graner, City Auditor Stewart, and myself discussed ideas ranging from improving business downtown to community facilities. The Main Street initiative and strategic planning was also highlighted. Suggestions for multi-purpose/multi-use facilities, tech training, and ideas for improving retail were also discussed. Bringing arts and culture downtown and a bowling alley were also suggested. The armory facility hours available for public use were discussed as was the future of use of that facility in meeting both the public and the school district’s needs. The deferred maintenance of the armory and the pool were also of importance. The advantages of year round pool including swimming lessons and physical therapy were also emphasized. Access to wellness facilities and the importance of youth amenities that add to the quality of life in our community were also discussed. Also noted was the need to have as much input as possible so that it may be included in the City’s next 5 year comprehensive plan to be finalized in 2018. All of this input is valued! Our next “What’s on Your Mind” is scheduled for Tuesday, December 12th, at 7:00 PM to be held in the Rugby Armory Classroom.

A Community Mental Health Services and Facilities Roundtable the 1st week of November. The roundtable was held to provide input on services currently available, what services are needed, as well as identifying facilities to serve these needs. Recent public surveys conducted by Rugby Job Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and Rugby Convention and Visitor’s Bureau indicated that Mental Health services ranging from addiction counseling to child and adolescent services as being the highest priority needs within our community among those surveyed. Access to care, school-based care, in-patient, outpatient care, treatment vs. incarceration are immediate needs that our community is facing. Minutes are available from the meeting. The next roundtable discussion is scheduled for December 4th at 11:00 AM.

Our COOP student has been working diligently on our website. We have many new additions to the new site. She and I have been researching Economic Development/JDA websites from across the state and region. We would like your input on what sets Rugby apart from other communities, what you feel makes us unique, and why business should choose Rugby. Why Rugby? Pictures, ideas, and comments are always welcome. Please check out our updates! Our website is now appearing at the top or near the top of the search engines. https://www.rugbyjobdevelopmentauthority.com/.

Fr. Tom and I had the opportunity to attend the Economic Development 101 course offered by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) in Minot. The City of Minot has arranged for the course to be held here – all at no cost to the attendees! To have the International Economic Development Council in Minot for a training course is a very rare opportunity. We were invited as a part of a targeted list of community leaders that have a vested interest in economic development for our region. The information presented was aimed at strengthening Minot’s economic development strategy. Rugby is part of Minot’s economy and part of the same planning council region (Souris Basin Planning Council). Highlights of the topic discussed were: thinking strategically about your local economy and the future; economic resilience and why it matters; developing vacant properties; revitalization; workforce development for economic development; and business retention and expansion. Take-aways that we should be working were determining the economic engines that drive our community, sustainability, strategy – review of existing practices, strategic planning – what is our road map? Strategic doing – What should we do? What can we do? What will we do?

Student Loan Assistance Program – We have 7 applicants as of today, those will be turned over to the committee for consideration and approval.

The Lyric Theatre has applied for a Main Street Expansion Grant for $10,000 to promote beautification, tourism, and increase wealth for Rugby, the region, and North Dakota. They need matching funds for $10,000 and are requesting matching funds from the JDA. The Rugby JDA does own the building. The CVB and Chamber will commit marketing funds, fundraising efforts, and volunteer to move the project forward. The project would be in 2 phases to update marquee, replace the windows on the upper level, and make improvements to the façade of the building. The estimated project costs for the first phase is around 26,000. The second phase will be covered by fundraising efforts. The project is scheduled to begin in 2018 if funding is awarded.

Natural Gas meetings will be held once a month on the First Friday of every month at the JDA office.

What’s on your mind will be held on the 2nd Tuesday of every month.

Lots of work to do!!

Looking forward,

Liz Heisey, MBA

Executive Director Rugby JDA