RUGBY JOB DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

UNAPPROVED MINUTES REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday August 12th, 2020 – 12:00PM

**Members Present**: Terry Hoffert, Gary Kraft, Jodi Schaan, Susan Steinke

**Call-In:** Susan Selensky – Led meeting

**Members Absent:** Blair Brattvet, Rob St. Michel

**Also Present:** Liz Heisey – Executive Director, Matty Koenig – Administrative Assistant, Sue Sitter – Pierce County Tribune

**Call to Order/Roll Call:** Selensky called the meeting to order at 12:08

**Consideration of Agenda - amendments, additions, deletions to the agenda**: There were no amendments, additions, or deletions to the agenda. Motion by Schaan to approve the agenda. Seconded by Kraft, no further discussion was held, vote was unanimous to approve, motion carried.

**Consider Approval of Minutes for July 8th, 2020 JDA regular meeting**: Motion by Hoffert to approve the minutes for the July 8th, 2020, JDA regular meeting. Seconded by Schaan, vote was unanimous to approve, motion carried.

**Treasurer’s Report**: Bills/finances were reviewed by the board. Heisey stated that first bill for the livestock barn was received and the check will go out the following week. A payment also went out for the physician recruitment. Second quarter wages are included as well. The new Chalmer’s Addition signs were put up. Several board members commented on how nice they look. Motion by Schaan to approve the bills and financials. Second by Kraft, vote was unanimous to approve, motion carried.

**Director’s Report:**

**August JDA Directors Report**

The summer is disappearing fast, sifting through the sea of COVID-19 information that continues to evolve on a daily basis. Press briefings, webinars, zoom and go to meetings are the norm. In spite of it all, Rugby still facing challenges, is resilient and strong. Individuals, investors, new business, and expanding business are looking towards Rugby for the future. Optimism remains strong in our community, our county, and our state. Key partnerships at the local, state, and federal levels are important to the success and growth of our community. We asked, we listened, and we provided input through multiple surveys. We boldly represented our community in think tanks, input platforms and lots and lots of virtual meetings. Thanks to these partnerships, many businesses, right here in our community, have found needed capital through SBA’s disaster loan programs, the Bank of North Dakota, and our local banks. The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program have helped businesses pay their employees and monthly bills by offering low interest rates, longer terms and the potential for loan forgiveness. In North Dakota alone, lenders have assisted small businesses, agriculture producers and non-profit organizations obtain more than 20,000 PPP loans for over $1.7 billion dollars. For June Pierce County had an unemployment rate of 4.8% directly attributable to these programs and lending programs, our unemployment rates are far below the national average of 11.1%. The unemployment rate for Pierce County this last year at this time was 3.6%. 4.8% is still a very low unemployment number. The Department of Commerce, with input from our community and others across the state, have developed an Economic Resiliency Grant Program. Eligible applicants for the ERG may qualify to receive grant funding up to $50,000 per business and up to $100,000 per business with multiple locations in North Dakota for direct investments that help create a safe environment for both employees and consumers. Input matters! Assistance in navigating through all of the COVID-19 Relief programs is being provided to multiple businesses both directly and indirectly. We are here to help!

**Rugby JDA Student Loan Repayment Program – nomination**

As part of a ND Main Street Champion Community, the Rugby JDA has been nominated for the 2020 ND Mainstreet 21st Century WorkForce Award for the Rugby JDA Student Loan Repayment Program. Recognizing that attracting and retaining a skilled workforce is essential to success of our community, the Rugby Job Development Authority Board of Directors and staff developed the Rugby Student Loan Assistance Program. A student loan repayment program designed to encourage those who have invested in college or technical skills to begin or continue their careers within the community. The Rugby Job Development Authority is committed to helping attract and retain the brightest talent within our small North Dakota community by extending financial assistance to lessen the student loan burden of their participants.by providing a student loan repayment incentive. Identified needs within the community revealed workforce attraction needs at all skill levels. The Board of Directors and staff have been proactive in helping to address the community's workforce needs. Workforce attraction remains one of the largest obstacles for businesses and organizations within the community. The simple student loan repayment program began in 2016 with 6 participants. Each individual agreed to work in the community for 2 years in return each participant received $125 a month for 2 years paid directly to their student loan account. The Rugby JDA has now expanded the program to 22 participants and has also now partnered with North Dakota University System Career Builders Program in their student loan repayment program. The budget has increased from $6,000 a year to $50,000 a year for student loan repayment incentives. The Rugby JDA’s program and partnership with NDUS is now an example for other communities across the state. We have been asked to provide testimonials on how we implemented our program as well as the Career Builder’s program within our community.

Teachers, healthcare workers, law enforcement, individuals in the banking and insurance industry, an electrician, an automotive technician, radio broadcasters, diesel mechanics, agronomists, an eye doctor, and child care workers are just some of the skilled workforce benefiting from the program. The Rugby JDA recognizes that small investment in these individuals is also an important community investment. This program helps participants in the pursuit of their personal career goals and also to thrive in our community. These individuals are the future of our community. They are buying houses, raising their families here, they are working to help shape our community into a better place. They are staying, they are growing roots, they are now our teachers, our healthcare workers, our law enforcement, our service technicians, and our child care workers.

**Defending Economic Development! Property tax incentives!**

Property tax incentives for commercial properties within the City boundaries provide long term economic stability. Leaders should not be focusing on the 1 to 5 years, they should be looking at the long run – 6 to 30 years. One commercial property can generate the equivalent of multiple residential properties. Commercial properties subsidize residential properties. Even a commercial parking lot can generate more property taxes than a residential property. Encouraging more commercial property growth within our city helps fund schools, public safety, parks, roads, recreation facilities, community programs and other vital community infrastructure. Commercial growth brings in other revenues to the community including but limited to wages and increased spending within the community.

**Rugby JDA remains committed to following priorities:**

* New Business & Entrepreneur Attraction
  + Business Friendly Environment
  + Resources for Business & Entrepreneurs – GET THE WORD OUT!
  + Identify what business and services are needed – Encourage new ideas!
  + Economic Diversification
* Business retention and expansion
  + Build relationships with business owners and/or upper management
  + Identify companies with plans to expand
  + Identify companies at risk of closing, leaving the community or downsizing
  + Identify company and community problems
  + Provide assistance and make connections
* Encouraging Retail Ventures
  + Encouraging Retail Ventures can act as an anchor business attracting more diverse retail opportunities.
  + The Rugby JDA will support and encourage all retail projects within the community through any qualifying Rugby JDA program or through partnership referrals
* Increasing Tourism potential
  + Encourage “new money” spent in the area due to an event or activity.
  + Tourism related expenditures typically include hotel rooms, meals, transportation, and other services.
* Job Development
  + Recruit businesses that enhance and fit into the community and encourage new ideas and ventures all of which lead to jobs that provide for an appropriate standard of living.
  + Provide resources to existing businesses to address job loss
* Workforce Development Strategies
  + Retention
  + Employer Training
  + Student Loan Incentives
* Workforce Shortages
* Recruitment
* Automation
* Growing our own Workforce
* Employee Training opportunities
* Community based Adult Learning Opportunities
* Access to Childcare
* Financing programs

* Resource programs
* Community Development
* Quality of Life
* Attracting new workers
* Mitigating Outmigration
* Housing – All income levels
* Arts and Culture
* Diverse Dining & Retail
* Recreation opportunities – Indoor and Outdoor
* Education Pathways & Career Readiness
* Access to Healthcare
* PEOPLE-Focused Development

Chalmers Addition Signs

The new signs are up at the Chalmers Addition! Check out the fresh new look. All lots have markers with the Block, lot, and size. Thank you to i Design and City of Rugby’s public works crew! Pictures are posted on social media.

P.S. Don’t forget to take the Census, your community is counting on you!

Liz Heisey, Executive Director

Discussion was held on the student loan repayment program. Hoffert asked if we have an idea of how many individuals who have utilized this program have stayed in the community after the payments had been made on their loans and suggested that this would be a good thing to keep track of. Schaan reiterated the objective of the program is to not only recruit workers in our community, but also to retain those workers. Discussion was held about local businesses being able to use this program as recruitment tool of their own.

Discussion was held on the purpose, focus, and mission of the JDA overall. Heisey stated that the JDA is a resource bank. We provide all of the resources that businesses and entrepreneurs need. It is also up to us to keep the communication lines open with the state so that they are aware of what our needs are. Hoffert stated that the broad spectrum of tasks the JDA is faced with is the reason that our mission is so hard for people to understand.

**Old Business**

**Preliminary Budget—latest projections:** Heisey stated we received updated numbers on the tax levy and it should stay the same until they have the final numbers on utilities. The final budget will be on September 10th.

**New Business**

**Technology updates Requests—Laptops for office:** Heisey explained that with the current times and all of the uncertainty we would like to have the capabilities to use video conferencing in the JDA office. It is currently difficult to go out and talk to our local businesses face to face with the COVID restrictions. Our current office equipment does not allow video conferencing as well as working from home if the need arises. Heisey stated that there is money in the budget for conventions since we have not been able to attend in person that we could utilize.

**Correspondence Received, Special Meetings and Reminders**

1. **2020 Regular Meeting – September 9th, 2020**

**Adjournment:** 12:48