City of Scottsbluff, Nebraska

Monday, January 7, 2019

Regular Meeting

Item Reports7

Council to receive an update on Economic Development Activities.

Staff Contact: Starr Lehl, Economic Development Director

Economic Development Update
01/07/2018

In keeping with goals set forth by the Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan completed in November of 2014, we have been working on the core recommendations of the study and have made progress on the following:

- Build a Consensus Coalition – this has been accomplished through WNED and needs to continue with a reorganization including new members and new leadership.
- Convene to Encourage Tourism Collaboration – As an appointed member of the Tourism Commission, I have been attending the Western Nebraska Tourism Commission meetings making sure Scottsbluff has a strong voice with the group and also sharing the state perspective with members. I will be helping to man the Nebraska Tourism Coalition booth at the National Western Stock Show promoting western Nebraska as a tourism destination
- Forge the Scottsbluff-Gering Highway Initiative
- Expand Current Business Retention and Expansion Program – this program is being updated at the state level with a different survey form, but in the meantime, we are in the process of setting up business visits starting with the largest employers and working through the list.
- Grow Entrepreneurism and Small Business Development – a revised small business and entrepreneur section of the LB840 Plan is ready to be reviewed by a joint meeting of the LB840 Citizens Advisory Review Committee and the LB840 Application Review Committee. Recommendations, if any, will be brought forward to city council as needed
- Revitalize TCD Board Development – the City of Scottsbluff is no longer a member of TCD
- Cultivate Existing Talent – Manufacturing Day this year helped to connect students with local manufacturers in the area and we continue to have a good working relationship with Scottsbluff Public Schools and WNCC
- Drive Talent Attraction – this is being done by continually working to make Scottsbluff a destination and creating a "sense of place" for young families and an attractive location for our workforce. Support of community activities and celebrations as well as continuing to make downtown Scottsbluff a safe and welcoming gathering space helps to accomplish this goal
- Establish A Talent Pipeline – several businesses in the community have started apprenticeship programs creating the talent pipeline. There may be something the city could do to assist with this program by utilizing funds from LB840.

Since the last report on 08/20/2018, the following businesses have been successful applicants through the city's LB840 Economic Development Program:

Der Topfer Gallery and Studio	$10,000	Grant for Marketing and Equipment
Bytes Computer & Network Solutions	$100,000	4 FT Jobs w/benefits

Bsquared Farming & Trucking	$150,000	11 FT Jobs w/benefits

The first phase of the East Overland Façade Improvement Program has been completed. The city's funds of $153,500 were matched with over $1.2 million of private funds by the property owners.

The city has $100,000 in this year's budget for additional assistance to property owners on East Overland. I have applied for a Greater Good Grant through the Panhandle Partnership for $50,000. The Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA) has amended the guidelines and application and will be included on the 01/22/19 agenda after receiving comments from the East Overland Steering Committee. Plans are to open the next round of funding after the council has approved the revised guidelines and application.

We are working on developing "shovel ready" sites within the city limits and zoning jurisdiction planning ahead for TIF Districts and utility placement.

The recruitment team from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development made a trip out to western Nebraska for a tour of available sites and buildings. The tour included a total of eleven sites and buildings in Scottsbluff and three in Gering. Other community amenities in the tour were: Western Nebraska Regional Airport, Regional West Medical Center, Western Nebraska Community College, and Scottsbluff High School Career Academy.

The Opportunity Zone guidelines have been released by the IRS and I'm planning to have a representative from Invest Nebraska come out to present information to the banks, accounting firms and financial advisors. Scottsbluff had one of 44 sites approved in the state and the only one west of North Platte.

The City of Scottsbluff and WNCC hosted the 2nd Annual Manufacturing Day on October 5th. Five area schools were represented along with several local manufacturers. Tours were attended by the students and speakers from Dream It, Do It and Nebraska Advanced Manufacturing were able to talk to the students about careers in manufacturing. The attraction of new and growth of existing manufacturing in the region is a priority as well as the interest and training of a skilled workforce.

The city was notified in June that the U.S. Capitol Tree would be making a stop in Scottsbluff on November 18th. I served on a committee to coordinate the arrival of the tree as well as the Annual Christmas Parade. The Scottsbluff stop was mentioned in a Washington, D.C. news story as one of the favorite stops by the crew and was one of only 22 stops made by the tree. The last time the tree came through our area was 2002.

09/13/2018 – attended NDEQ Small Business Citizen's Advisory Panel meeting in Lincoln. This panel helps to advise the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality of ways to streamline their processes to make it easier for small businesses apply and comply with state and federal environmental issues.

10/15/2018 through 10/18/2018 – attended Annual State Tourism Conference in Nebraska City representing the City of Scottsbluff as well as District 11 as a Nebraska Tourism Commissioner.

10/23/2018 – attended Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) Rural Workforce Housing Workshop and was able to bring back several ideas on how to implement housing into the city's LB840 plan and application.

As Economic Development Director, I continue to represent the city at meetings of the Western Nebraska Economic Development group (WNED), Heartland Expressway Association, attend Panhandle Area Development District Meetings, Ambassador with the Scottsbluff/Gering Chamber, and am a member of the Western Nebraska Development Network (WNDN), Nebraska Economic Developers Association and represent western Nebraska as a District 11 Tourism Commissioner. Recently began serving on the Community Vitality Industry Council for the Blueprint Nebraska Program. I am assisting with the coordination of activities with our Adopt-A-School Partner, ESU 13 Meridian School.