

City of Scottsbluff, Nebraska
Thursday, January 27, 2022
Regular Meeting

Item 1

for meeting of November 17, 2021

Staff Contact: Starr Lehl

CITY OF SCOTTSBLUFF
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION REVIEW COMMITTEE
November 17, 2021

A meeting of the Economic Development Application Review Committee was held on November 17, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. at City Hall, 2525 Circle Drive, Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

Present were Committee members Dave Schaff, Dennis Haden, and Jim Trumbull. Also present was Starr Lehl, Economic Development Director, and Adam Hoelsing, Deputy City Attorney.

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Schaff at 1:00 p.m.

It was moved by Vice Chairman Schaff and seconded Member Hadden to approve the Minutes of the November 17, 2021 Application Review Committee Meeting. Voting yes: Schaff, Trumbull, and Hadden. Voting no: None.

The next item on the agenda was consideration of an Extension Request from Factory Crimp Services, Inc. Factory Crimp Services had previously been provided a grant which included job credits against the grant over a term of years. Due to the Pandemic and the following supply and delivery shortages, the Applicant has been unable to effectively hire employees as originally anticipated. Work orders have been provided to the Applicant and there is a sufficient demand for the product. However, supplies and shipment of supplies for raw product have been unavailable, and the Applicant is currently dealing with a 72-week lead-time for some materials. The Applicant has fulfilled a few orders without hiring additional employees, but has been unable to hire any employees full-time due to the lack of raw materials. Following discussion, it was moved by Member Trumbull and seconded by Member Hadden to recommend the extension of the job credit effective date for the Applicant to January 1, 2023. Voting in favor: Trumbull, Hadden, and Schaff. Voting no: None.

The next item on the agenda was consideration of an Economic Development Grant Application from Inventive Wireless of Nebraska, LLC dba Vistabeam. Present on behalf of Vistabeam was its majority owner and CEO, Matt Larsen. Mr. Larsen stated that the broadband business of Vistabeam has been growing exponentially since the Pandemic, due to large demand for wireless access as well as incentivized government funding programs. The Applicant had previously opened a Scottsbluff location in 2020, and the Scottsbluff location is now full, as the Applicant has grown to a current full-time employment level of 40 employees. It is time for the Applicant to consider the hiring of additional employees to accommodate a larger workforce, including an HR director, a safety director, and more personnel working directly in the field.

Mr. Larsen stated he desired at this time to access the City of Scottsbluff Economic Development funds for upgrades to existing facilities as well as for working capital related to future job creation. The Applicant would like to upgrade the facility in Mitchell, Nebraska to accommodate a field workforce and efficiency out of that facility. The Applicant would also like to move additional jobs to the Scottsbluff facility and make capital upgrades to the Scottsbluff facility. Finally, the Applicant would like to upgrade the Gering facility, including general

expenditures for differed maintenance and other similar capital repairs. For the operating capital necessary for new hires, Mr. Larsen stated that financing was needed for equipment, training, employee's vehicles, and other working capital items that may come due in the process of hiring new employees.

Vice Chairman Schaff asked Mr. Larsen about the source of government funding programs recently. Mr. Larsen stated that Vistabeam has been able to take advantage of CARES Act funding through Nebraska and Wyoming, for a total of roughly \$5,000,000. The funding has been used to expand Vistabeam's fiber network in relation to connecting its tower locations, and the funding has been used for broadband wireless infrastructure gains as well. All the funding was forgivable and helped the Applicant expand by 13 employees since the beginning of 2021.

The Applicant was asked what it was seeking in funding from Mitchell and Gering. The Applicant stated that he was not, but on further questioning, the Applicant did state that he is in process of obtaining commercial lending from private lenders for other necessary purposes of the business, including business expansion, growth, infrastructure, equipment, and fiber installation. The Applicant desires access to City of Scottsbluff Economic Development Program simply for the purposes of the deferred maintenance upgrades to its Gering, Scottsbluff, and Mitchell facilities, as described, and to defray the operating capital costs of taking on more employees.

Following Mr. Larsen's presentation the next item on the agenda was discussion of possible addition of retail, including limiting parameters, to the City of Scottsbluff Economic Development Plan. Following the previous meeting of the Committee, the Citizens Advisory Review Committee had met and had discussed approval of a recommendation to city council for the inclusion of retail as a qualifying business under that Economic Development Plan, for retail businesses not greater than 20 employees and only following a review of further parameters and guidelines adopted by the Application Review Committee in order to provide a framework for such assistance. This Committee then discussed possible assistance avenues with limiting parameters, including a program similar to a small business assistance program utilized in Alliance, Nebraska, whereby small business assistance is provided up to a limited dollar amount, generally for capital purchases, and only with the financial match of the Applicant. And it was also discussed possible limiting working capital parameters of a retail applicant, such as the payment of the Applicant's rent or mortgage payments or utilities for a certain amount of time in order to assist the Applicant with initial startup costs. The Committee discussed the possibility towards adopting such similar parameters, and directions were to staff to compile examples of limiting parameters for retail that the Committee could consider in writing.

Following discussion of the addition to retail, it was moved by Member Trumbull and seconded by Member Hadden to approve the application of Inventive Wireless of Nebraska, LLC as presented. The application requested \$100,000 as a grant over with a job credit component, and \$100,000 as a loan, repayable with monthly payments over five years. The \$100,000 grant would have a job credit effective dated January 1, 2022, and the Applicant would receive \$2,000 per fulltime employment position per year, for all employees over the base 40 full-time employees at the current time. Voting in favor: Schaff, Hadden, and Trumbull. Voting no: None.

Thereafter, the Meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:57 p.m.



Starr Lehl, Economic Development Director