

MEETING MINUTES  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
FEBRUARY 17, 2021 8:00 AM

**CALLED TO ORDER BY:** The Economic Development Corporation Meeting was held electronically and called to order by Chairman Cantor at 8:10 am.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Lew Cantor (Farmington Hills, MI), Mark Zachos (Farmington Hills, MI), TR Carr (Farmington Hills, MI), Scott Elliott (Southfield, MI), Fritz Beiermeister (Farmington Hills, MI), Sam Slaughter (Farmington Hills, MI), Kimberly Lindsey-Feagin (Detroit, MI), William Hartsock (Las Vegas, NV)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** John Anhut

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Gary Mekjian, City Manager (Farmington Hills, MI); Ken Massey, City Council Member/EDC Liaison (Farmington Hills), Samantha Seimer, AKT Peerless (Oxford, MI), Joe Licavoli, Resident (Farmington Hills, MI)

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

- Chairman Cantor suggested the addition of a City Manager Update and Council Liaison Update after Business on the presented agenda, respectively.

Motion by Beiermeister, support by Slaughter to approve the agenda as amended.

Yeas: CANTOR, HARTSOCK, LINDSEY-FEAGIN, ZACHOS, CARR, ELLIOTT,  
BEIERMEISTER, SLAUGHTER  
Nays: NONE  
Absent: ANHUT  
Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 8-0

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Motion by Beiermeister, support by Carr to approve the meeting minutes from January 20, 2020 as submitted.

Yeas: CANTOR, HARTSOCK, LINDSEY-FEAGIN, ZACHOS, CARR, ELLIOTT,  
BEIERMEISTER, SLAUGHTER  
Nays: NONE  
Absent: ANHUT  
Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 8-0

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**

- The 2020 slate of officers was Cantor as Chair, Hartsock as Vice Chair, and Elliott as Secretary.

Motion by Carr, support by Beiermeister to maintain the presented 2020 slate of officers for 2021.

Yeas: CANTOR, HARTSOCK, LINDSEY-FEAGIN, ZACHOS, CARR, ELLIOTT,  
BEIERMEISTER, SLAUGHTER  
Nays: NONE  
Absent: ANHUT

Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 8-0

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:**

- Chairman Cantor congratulated Mr. Mekjian on his recent appointment to Farmington Hills City Manager.
- Chairman Cantor talked about the Business Incubator, now known as the Innovation Center, and that Place Dynamics has completed the survey. Chairman Cantor said at this time the presentation of Phase I to Council has been placed on hold.
- At the January 20, 2021 EDC Meeting the Board discussed making payment to Place Dynamics although their involvement in the presentation to City Council has not yet been made.
- Ms. Seimer stated that she and Mr. Mekjian had a discussion and feel it is appropriate to pay Place Dynamics 75% of their contract since the EDC does have copies of the expected deliverable per the contract and withhold the remaining 25% of payment until such time a presentation is made to City Council and the contract is fulfilled. The Board was okay with this decision. Any appropriate permissions/approvals are to be sent to purchasing for payment. Member Zachos had questions regarding if Place Dynamics is done, how are they paid and if a motion from the Corporation is required. Chairman Cantor stated that the cost was \$18,000 and recommended payment of the first 75%. Mr. Mekjian stated a motion should be made. Subsequently it was made, seconded, and passed.

**BUSINESS:**

**New Business**

**Meeting with Geater Farmington Area Chamber of Commerce:**

- Chairman Cantor provided an update regarding progress on an advocacy program initially introduced at the January 20, 2021 EDC Meeting where it was suggested that the EDC write a letter as an advocate for businesses having made fee payments in 2020 that were not utilized due to subsequent business closure. Those business requests would then be considered to determine if the EDC and other appropriate partners could have a positive effect in requesting those fees be rolled over to 2021 for small businesses. Council Liaison Massey suggested a joint effort with the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Development Authority.
- Since the last meeting of 1/20 Chairman Cantor and Council Liaison Massey met with Mr. Connor Osborne of the Greater Farmington Area Chamber of Commerce to discuss a joint communication piece that solicits information from the business community about specific fees that impacted their business throughout the course of the pandemic in 2020
- Mr. Zachos restated his concerns from 1/20/21 that he was not comfortable with the position as outlined and felt that more investigation was needed from the EDC about regulatory and licensing authorities and the potential impacts and implications the Board may face by getting involved. He suggested more time to review and better understand the position of the Board to this concern, Ms. Seimer clarified that the approach to the advocacy initiative is first to gather feedback from the business community and determine if there is a need for involvement. The second step might entail communications with licensing and regulatory boards. Chairman Cantor confirmed and stated that phase two may not be deemed necessary depending on initial feedback from the businesses.
- Council Liaison Massey stated that the concept is to first send a letter to the businesses to understand what type of regulatory authorities the businesses use, and how certain fees associated may have been impacted over the course of the shutdowns during the pandemic. The EDC is taking an advocacy approach to support the business community and create an awareness around the EDC.
- Mr. Zachos stated that he is comfortable with the first phase, however, feels that phase two will need further clarification if appropriate. It was agreed upon that that is our objective.
- Mr. Slaughter noted that this initiative, if anything, shows that the EDC supports the business community and communicates the value that the EDC brings to Farmington Hills

**Student Involvement in EDC:**

- Mr. Cantor referenced an article initially published in the Farmington Voice that he sent to the EDC about Farmington High School and an opportunity to get students more involved in the EDC specifically, those students aware of and interested in business growth and innovation.
- Council Liaison Massey highlighted challenges associated with the creation of a position within a City Board or Commission, however the meetings are open to the public and the EDC could acknowledge said individual as an unofficial standing member through a motion passed by the Board. Mr. Slaughter added that the individual could be an ex-officio member.
- Mr. Hartsock spoke about a mentorship program the EDC had years ago and was more in favor of this initiative.
- Mr. Licavoli discussed his involvement with Junior Achievement in Southeast Michigan where he had support at the high school and middle school level with specific classes and teachers. The students had assignments to complete too.
- Mr. Carr suggested that students would benefit from understanding the role of entrepreneurship in the economy. The EDC could communicate values that drive entrepreneurship.
- Mr. Beiermeister notes that this is a bigger initiative that should be explored further and could be developed as a series of classes.
- Chairman Cantor asked the Board if a few members would be interested in leading the program. Mr. Hartsock, Mr. Slaughter and Mr. Beiermeister volunteered their time. Mr. Beiermeister stated that he will schedule a follow-up meeting with the sub-committee.

**EDC Marketing:**

- Chairman Cantor discussed updating marketing materials more specific to the EDC and what it can do for companies as well as further opportunities available in Farmington Hills. Ms. Seimer stated that the materials were created as part of a large marketing and branding initiative in the community more than likely in the late 2000-2010 time frame. Mr. Elliott offered to look at the current materials and potential for his marketing team to get involved in assisting the EDC for a refresh. A copy of the current piece has been sent to him.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- Mr. Zachos noted that he has the files regarding the Connected City program from Ms. Seimer. He and Mr. Beiermeister will be meeting the week of 2/21 to discuss further. The program will be re-visited in our March 2021 meeting.
- Mr. Beiermeister reminded the Board that this stemmed from what was initially a large-scale push from Oakland County that seems to have halted. Farmington Hills subsequently scaled back its approach on the Connected City project to first discuss connection to the business community, with a secondary focus on autonomous vehicle technology and connected car programs.

**CITY MANAGER UPDATE:**

- Mr. Mekjian thanked members of the EDC for their strong support of him during the City's search for a new City Manager.
- Mr. Mekjian informed the Board that internally, they are working to backfill the Assistant City Manager and Economic Development Director positions. Additionally, they are working through the goals and objectives set by City Council in January given a backlog of study session topics that have yet to be covered due to challenges throughout the last year. The EDC's need for a meeting with City Council regarding the Hawk will be addressed ASAP. All are aware of the importance of maintaining momentum in this important project with such high potential for positive impact on our business community.
- Planning Commission is reviewing a "Texas wrap style" apartment complex at 14 Mile and Northwestern Highway. The Holiday Inn on Hamilton Court has a proposal to convert its facility to senior living. There is a site condo residential development proposed at 9 Mile and Haggerty.

February 17, 2021

- The Planning Commission is updating the ordinance to allow medical marijuana within light industrial zoning areas that ordinance revision is expected in the month of March.
- Mr. Elliott stated that Farmington Hills is becoming **overbuilt for senior living**. He noted that the Sarah Fisher site redevelopment proposed compliments senior living because it is a skilled nursing facility with more extensive care and inpatient rehabilitation.
- Mr. Beiermeister and Mr. Slaughter had to leave the meeting.

**CITY COUNCIL LIASION UPDATE:**

- Council Liaison Massey informed the Board that the Broadband Task Force reported out to a joint study session of the City Councils of Farmington and Farmington Hills. The initial program was to provide each household with 1GB of internet, however the program would cost \$107 million. It is a forward-thinking concept, not currently actionable yet something to keep in mind.

**BOARD MEMBER'S COMMENTS:**

- Chairman Cantor asked about the ability to get a certificate of occupancy on the third floor of The Hawk with construction. Mr. Mekjian stated that when construction is completed on floors 1 and 2, those floors will have certificates of occupancy. It was stated that the third floor may be considered for occupancy throughout construction so long as the areas under construction are contained, there are functioning restrooms with ADA capabilities, life-safety measures are met and the building official is comfortable with allowing the public to utilize the facility.
- Mr. Mekjian added that City Hall is open to the public again. Also, he extended an invitation to the EDC to tour the Nissan Crash Test Facility with City Council. An exact date has not yet been determined.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

- None

**ADJOURNMENT:**

- The next meeting of the EDC is scheduled for March 17, 2021 at 8:00 AM.

Motion by Hartsock, support by Carr to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 AM

Yeas: CANTOR, HARTSOCK, LINDSEY-FEAGIN, ZACHOS, CARR, ELLIOTT,

Nays: NONE

Absent: ANHUT

Abstentions: NONE

MOTION CARRIED 6-0

Minutes drafted by: Samantha Seimer