CITY OF FREEPORT
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

430 North Brazosport, Freeport, TX
Tuesday, May 14th, 2024, at 6:00
p.m.

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

FEDC BOARD MEMBERS: Quorum Present

Directors:

Josh Mitchell	President
Sandra Loeza	Vice President
Ken Tyner	Treasurer
Shonda Marshall	
Mark Parker	
Ronnie Martin	

Robert Johnson: Executive Director
Lance Petty: City Manager
Jerry Cain- City Liaison
Paige Bailey: EDC Attorney
Rachael Cohen: EDC Staff

I. **Call to Order**
Josh Mitchell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

II. **Invocation and Pledge**
Ken Tyner led the invocation and Shondra Marshall led the pledge.

III. **Citizens Comments**
There were no citizen comments.

IV. Consent Agenda

1. **Approve Meeting Minutes for April 9, 2024**
2. **Approve Special meeting Minutes for April 16, 2024**
3. **Approve Financials**

Ronnie Martin made one correction for clarity on the April 9th meeting minutes. The taxes under the Four Corners Parking Lot request were specific to property taxes. This was the only recommended change.

Shondra Marshall made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mark Parker seconded.
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

V. Discussion and Action Items

1. **Discuss and take possible action on the Four Corners Parking Lot resurfacing project.**

   During the meeting, Robert Johnson presented the draft of internal guidelines, which were discussed upon request (refer to external paper). He clarified that this draft does not pertain to business improvement. The criteria outlined include jobs created and the number of businesses supported, with the goal of establishing a transparent and robust support system.

   Josh Mitchell noted that the draft addresses many questions that attendees had.

   Shandra inquired about the specific receipts required.

   Robert Johnson responded that tax records and a firm count of employees at each establishment were needed.

   Josh Mitchell added that this information seemed useful and suggested moving on to the next agenda item.

2. **Discuss and take possible action on the Parks Project.**

   During the meeting, Robert Johnson presented the new estimate that came in today. He mentioned that he and Lance Petty have been working on the parks project and received $50k from Phillips 66, with a tentative commitment from Dow. Dow would like to see who has contributed and join in at the end to address any remaining needs. Lance Petty received an offer good for 30 days, which covers the renovation of three parks: Peppermint, Arrington, and Steven F. Austin Park. With the Phillips 66 donation, the project total is $249k (see Lance Petty's email). Robert Johnson invited Cathy to discuss the budget impact.

   Cathy explained that when the budget was created, $400k was allocated to the project fund, primarily for potential parks projects, but nothing has been moved yet.

   Josh Mitchell thanked Robert Johnson and noted that not having parks could have a ripple effect.

   Robert Johnson emphasized that, as a Type B entity, parks are something the EDC can move forward with. He stated that the total amount is firm and asked for the board's pleasure. He expressed his support for the program, noting the requested amount could update the equipment and address injury reports that were received. He mentioned the need for ADA-accessible equipment and said they could still move forward with the other portion of the project.

Lance Petty explained that the project is through ByBoard pricing, with all equipment in stock locally and covered by warranties. It's a turnkey project, including installation and warranty. Although scaled down, it's a start. He mentioned a recent incident where a child fell and skinned his face, highlighting the importance of the updates. (Josh Mitchell reiterated this information for Shondra Marshall.)

Sandra Loeza asked if the packet they received was the same as in the agenda packet.

Robert Johnson clarified that it was an old bid, now obsolete because they received it outside of the packet being sent.

Sandra Loeza inquired about warranties and maintenance.

Lance Petty detailed the warranty: 100 years for collapsed structures, 15 years on rails, 5 years on cables, and 3 years on minor items attached to the equipment. He mentioned daily inspections and that anything wrong would lead to park shutdown and a warranty call.

Ken Tyner noted that a meteorologist predicts a very active hurricane season.

Lance Petty assured that all city property is insured and covered under their insurance plan.

Ronnie Martin agreed with the ADA compliance and mentioned the Lions Club offers a 100k match for grants, requiring 90 days. He promised to provide the paperwork.

Robert Johnson acknowledged the benefits of the second component fitting into their mission.

Ronnie Martin emphasized the importance of making parks inclusive and sensory-friendly, especially for blind children, and offered to get the necessary paperwork.

Shondra Marshall asked about the safety level of other parks not being addressed.

Lance Petty confirmed that the city invested in 2017, with Velasco House spending most of their money. The parks being addressed first had less attention and upgrades and were most utilized.

Sandra Loeza asked about the companies approached and their responses.

Robert Johnson listed the companies: Phillips 66, Dow, Chevron, BASF, Freeport LNG, MEGlobal, and AT&T. He stated that only Phillips 66 and Dow responded affirmatively, with Dow asking for follow-up. Other contributions would not disrupt progress.

Josh Mitchell inquired about the additional required components.

Robert Johnson said fencing and sidewalks were the most expensive, totaling $50k each. He promised to email the details to the board tomorrow.

Josh Mitchell estimated an additional 300k would be needed.

Shondra Marshall asked if park costs were equal or varied.

Josh Mitchell explained that costs varied, with Arrington Park being the largest due to basketball courts and other equipment.

Shondra Marshall asked about the timeline for responses from other companies.

Robert Johnson stated that only Dow remained open for response, and it would be at the end of the project. If the board approves, the EDC and Phillips 66 contributions and remaining needs would allow continuation with the project.

Shondra Marshall asked about the EDC's commitment amount.

Robert Johnson answered, according to the information Lance Petty sent, it would be $249,789.85 for phase 1.

Sandra Loeza noted it’s shy of 300k because of the 50k contribution.

Robert Johnson confirmed.

Josh Mitchell asked if they should approve tonight or wait.

Robert Johnson advised moving forward due to the tight timeline, expressing confidence in the project's current status.

Lance Petty mentioned the current 50% discount on equipment, prompting his outreach to the company.

Sandra Loeza asked if the same company would handle the second component.

Lance Petty replied it would be a different company. He explained that Peppermint, the smallest park, could be redesigned for affordability, with Public Works installing the fence to reduce costs.

Shondra Marshall asked if the 50k donation went to the EDC and was included in the 249k.

Josh Mitchell confirmed the 249k was their part.

Shondra Marshall asked about the project completion timeline.

Lance Petty said the longest part would be getting the crew down, but the equipment is in stock and ready to ship.

Ronnie Martin noted that such equipment typically goes on sale once a year and accepted the motion.

Shondra Marshall asked if a contribution from Dow would return money to the EDC.

Robert Johnson answered: No, Dow funds would be added to the amount available for use but not to reimburse the EDC for funds spent.

Josh Mitchell made a motion to approve the requested amount of $249,789.85. Ken Tyner seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

3. **Discuss and review the Terracon grant award.**

   Mark Parker noted the EPA is awarding this grant and we will be following the guidelines.

   This is a discussion and review, so no action was taken.

4. **Discuss and take possible action on the grant application from Mark Cambria for his Five Cottages Business Improvement Grant.**

   Robert Johnson stated that Mark Cambria could not be present to present the grant. He mentioned that it was a well-written grant and that Mark Cambria is very thorough. Essentially, Mr. Cambria is improving the business. Robert Johnson pointed out that previously, the property had been awarded a grant for projects, but Mr. Muti had to withdraw, and nothing was spent. Robert Johnson deferred to Paige Bailey on whether they needed to shut it down or rescind it before proceeding. Mr. Cambria wants to make improvements to the façade, property improvement, landscaping, and signage. He is submitting for everything but signage. Mr. Cambria doesn’t have the required estimate for that but could get up to $30k. With the numbers he has, he would hit the a possible threshold. Robert Johnson then asked the Board for direction related to possible limitations on the number of grant categories participants could be awarded. Previously, you could only do three grant category applications, but Mr. Cambria submitted four. Nowhere in the contracts, does it state that limitation is restricted to four categories, only that one mega grant be given per year. Robert Johnson asked if there was a limit set previously.

Josh Mitchell remembered that being stated but noted it was never in any official documentation. He said it was something they had always abided by.

Robert Johnson continued by saying that page 48 spells out the improvements and receipts. He noted that all items on the checklist were addressed, but final approval is required from the board. He emphasized that it's a good grant, a good plan and that Mr. Cambria has all the estimates for the project, making it well-prepared.

Ken Tyner replied that he was trying to picture 8 South Ave B. Lance Petty clarified that it's near Velasco. Ken Tyner asked if it was a building. Robert Johnson explained that it's cottages. Josh Mitchell asked if it was near the school or the street. Lance Petty confirmed it was the street.

Robert Johnson added that the cottages themselves were in very poor condition but seemed fixable. He mentioned that he has seen this scenario before and advocated for Mr. Cambria, stating he has a plan to spruce them up.

Josh Mitchell asked what the reason for the grant was. Ken Tyner inquired how long Mr. Cambria had owned the property. Robert Johnson noted that Kevin Muti had been approved for grants for those same cottages before. Josh Mitchell asked if Robert Johnson knew the amount previously approved. Robert Johnson replied that it was $29k.

Josh Mitchell asked if they needed to cancel the previous grant before proceeding. Paige said she would be interested in reviewing before advising. Robert Johnson asked if they could proceed tonight with this grant. Paige confirmed that they could.

Mark Parker made a motion to approve the request as stated in the application. Ronnie Martin seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

5. **Discuss and review the UTSA Project status.**

Ana Silbas provided an update**.** She mentioned that she and Robert Johnson met with Ian Caine. The next community session is set for July 18th from 6-8 pm at RiverPlace. They are currently working on creating the flyer and advertisement, and the flyer should be provided to Robert Johnson and Rachael Cohen. This second session will allow for the presentation of draft work to the community and address downtown master plan guidelines. The planning exercise is still in development. The final document should be submitted by August 2024, with the expectation to have it in hand by the end of August.

Ian, the principal of the project, mentioned flexibility up to September. On behalf of Main Street, Ana thanked the EDC for being a collaborative partner and participating in the meetings thus far.

Josh Mitchell thanked Ana for her dedication and asked if there were any questions or comments. As there were no questions or comments, the Board moved to the next topic.

6. Discuss and take possible action on Kidfest sponsor request.

Ana Silbas provided an update on the upcoming event. She announced that the event will be held in August with the theme "Wildlife Adventure" and she is seeking sponsorship from the EDC. Typically, sponsorships cover marketing, t-shirts, entertainment, and special activities. A flyer was sent with different sponsorship levels to allow for various commitments. Currently, there is a $1k sponsorship from Texas Gulf Bank. Additional sponsorships include contributions from the Breakfast Club for hotdogs, as well as collaboration with the bird observatory and Edith Fisher to engage community partners. The event is free for kids, and the Mainstreet program is seeking a total of $5k in sponsorships. Ana presented a t-shirt draft and mentioned Ms. Robin with Roscoe Imprints and Embroidery. Ms. Silbas expressed appreciation for any support.

Josh Mitchell reminded the board that this sponsorship would come out of the marketing budget due to carryover funds.

Robert Johnson commented the EDC has done a great job partnering with Main Street, and this sponsorship would align well with the EDC and Mainstreet efforts. He also noted the successful Cinco de Mayo event and Ana’s efforts in revitalization.

Sandra Loeza asked about the event's time frame.

Ana replied that the event would be from 3-7 PM, noting that the Sea Center also has an event until 3 PM, and the timing would allow for cooler evening temperatures after 3:00 PM. She reiterated the sponsor form details and again mentioned other sponsors.

Josh Mitchell asked if the EDC sponsor was at the $5k level, where the logo would be displayed.

Ana responded that the logo would be displayed wherever possible and mentioned discussions with Robert Johnson about extra funds for entertainment purposes with acoustics to enhance the event experience. This includes addressing sound within the event boundaries, main stage integration, and sound projection to outer perimeters. She highlighted innovative ways to grow events, including custom audio programs and sponsored messages, which could also be used for emergency management and child safety.

Ken Tyner inquired about the animals that would be brought and the company involved.

Ana explained that they aim for an interactive experience, working with a wildlife refuge and other community events to bring animals back to their event.

Josh Mitchell asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

Sandra Loeza made a motion to approve the amount requested. Josh Mitchell seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED 6 to 0 with one abstention.** *(Ronnie Martin recused himself)*

VI. Board and Executive Director Comments

Shondra Marshall: Thank you, everyone, for coming out tonight. You are doing an excellent job of working together. It has been a great pleasure working with this board. Our president has done a great job of providing, and I thank you for your services. I hope we continue to work together to bring prosperity to the City of Freeport. I am looking forward to seeing even more development, more businesses, and more job opportunities. I hope we can continue to work together to make the city great.

Mark Parker: I want to thank Ana for all the work she has been doing with the Main Street program. Some of the things she goes through are incredible, and I love the Kidfest and Cinco De Mayo events. I think our primary focus needs to be on housing in Freeport. However we achieve that, it is a primary task we need to have.

Ken Tyner: I appreciate the folks I visit and talk to. They know me and they like what we are doing. I have received a lot of positive comments from the board and everyone. Nothing negative, all good things, and it makes us feel better when we receive comments.

Sandra Loeza: I want to mimic Mark Parker and thank Ana for her partnership with Main Street. There are a lot of events, and no other surrounding cities come close to our city's events. This shows how we want people to come and visit, not just for adults but for kids as well. This is a perfect example of going above and beyond. We want people to visit Freeport and downtown. I wasn't here at the last meeting, but I want to welcome Ronnie Martin to the group. We have a good mesh. It takes all of us to have a good vision and work together. Again, this is great. I am looking forward to what is coming up. I want to congratulate Jarvus, Winston, and Cain.

Josh Mitchell: I want to remind those watching about the community engagement session. We encourage people to give suggestions and edits. I am excited to see how we can improve that project. I agree that we need housing. We have jobs but no housing. If we could have any input or influence on acquiring housing for professionals working within the city, that would be great as well. I feel we have done a lot. I work with kids, and having equipment and places to play makes a difference. The work we do here is good and meaningful. I hope we keep that momentum going forward.

Robert Johnson: I want to congratulate Mayor Cain and those elected moving forward. I think the board should be very proud of themselves tonight. The parks project is going to be very special. We will have our business breakfast on July 11th. Jennifer Finney from SBDC and Kacey Roman will be the guests. It will be a topical breakfast, discussing what they do, providing great resources, continuing education, and food. We are working with Company X on another green hydrogen manufacturing facility on the outskirts of town. This is probably the fourth green hydrogen plant we have talked to, and it is to relocate to the industrial side. President Mitchell signed the contract for the demo location downtown. The delay was due to some concerns and back and forth on the construction contract. It was signed by President Mitchell and will be signed by Turbeville tomorrow, with a start date of early next week. I also met with Matt Covey of Grass Masters, to whom we awarded the mowing contract. We walked the EDC properties to discuss what we want to see moving forward and improving communications. There will be improvements in mowing. One issue is with Realty World, where we were advised of overgrowth. This involves a one-time mowing and cleanup charge. Mark Parker, you, and I have been out there and are familiar with the overgrowth and dirt buildup. Me, Shondra Marshall, Lance Petty, and Ana met about the TIRZ. A lot of research was set up to collect the money it should, but aside from downtown and the 8.8 acres, there is little in the project plan portion of the report. On the TIRZ, you usually have different plans. The bad news is there is nothing there, but the good news is the same. Through discussions with Lance Petty, Ana, and Shondra Marshall, we have concluded that following their guidance and the UTSA plan will provide us with infrastructure projects. We have contacted UTSA to let them know we will be looking for infrastructure projects within the report. A meeting will be scheduled a meeting soon. The EDC Board is auto-appointed to the TIRZ, and two other members are on the TIRZ board.

VII. Executive Session- Adjourn into Executive Session

It is now 7:07 p.m. and I hereby recess the regular session of the Freeport Economic Development Corporation meeting and do hereby convene into executive session in compliance with Texas Government Code: Section 551.071 (Consultation with Attorney), 551.072 (Deliberations about Real Property), Section 551.074 (Personnel Matters)

1. **Update on Pending Litigation: Realty World and A&T**
2. **Update on Pending Litigation: Music Case**

Reconvene into an Open Session

Board President’s statement:
It is now 7:24 p.m. and I hereby close the executive session of the Freeport Economic Development Corporation and do hereby reconvene the regular open session and take possible action on items mentioned in the executive session.

VIII. Adjourn

Josh Mitchell requested a Motion to adjourn the board meeting. Sandra made the motion, and the motion was seconded by Shondra Marshall. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Josh Mitchell adjourned the board meeting at 7:25 p.m.