



**Coles Together
Operations Committee Meeting
July 31, 2023**

Members Present: Doug Abolt, Mike Stanfield, Rick Hall, John Inyart, Carlos Ortega, and Bob Shamdin

Members Absent: Brock Ashley and Brandon Combs

Others Present: Angela Griffin and Kasey Considine

Call to Order: Called to order by Doug Abolt at 7:30 a.m.

Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve the June 2023, board meeting minutes was made by Mike Stanfield and seconded by John Inyart. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Griffin provided the June 2023 Treasurer's Report. Griffin stated revenues in June were slightly higher than budget and revenue on a year-to-date basis is \$26,317 higher than budget. Expenses in June were about \$11,000 above budget for the month due to the payment of real estate taxes in full in June rather than paying them as budgeted in two payments; one in July and one in August. This should result in operating expenses being lower than budget in both July and August. Griffin stated the organization began incurring expenses related to both the RISE grant and the ARPA grant which will skew monthly activities as compared to budget since both grants are paid on a reimbursement basis and the lag time between payment of expenses and reimbursement by the State of Illinois for RISE and the county for ARPA could be as much as two-three months. However, there should be sufficient funds in the checking account to float these expenses until reimbursement is made.

Request Date Change for September meeting

Griffin requested the date of the September 2023 Operations Committee meeting be moved from the last Monday in the month of September to the following Monday, which will be October 2. Griffin will be attending a conference on September 25. Additionally, this will provide for more time to compile the year-end financial statements with reports that can be run with an end date closer to the end of the fiscal year.

Operations Committee Meeting Minutes

July 31, 2023

Page 2

Approval:

A motion to move the September 25, 2023, Operations Committee meeting to October 2, 2023, was made by Rick Hall and seconded by Mike Stanfield. The motion passed.

President's Report

Griffin stated she has been working with Mike Smith, a solar developer from Indiana who represents a company building large solar installations in the range of 20-40 MW. He also develops smaller installations of around 1 MW on his own. Smith is looking for 70–100-acre sites for his large client and 5-7 acres for his own installations. He met with Ameren and had positive preliminary discussions about locating a development in the Mattoon Enterprise Park on the rocked, former lay-down area still available in the park. Agracel already has an option with another solar developer for 24 acres in the park and both view dual developments of solar in the park as a positive.

Griffin has been working confidentially with Ken Feldman, the developer representing Sonic that has made an offer on a building site in Charleston. Feldman indicated that once a building permit is issued from the city, they will proceed to close on the site and anticipate opening in February 2024. They plan to hire six full-time and 15 part-time employees. Since the company is eligible for enterprise zone benefits under the new commercial eligibility structure, Griffin has been working with the company to get the certificate at the same time the building permit is issued.

The Davis project in the Coles Business Park is nearing close. The contract for sale has been executed and the title commitment policy issued with one final condition which is the passage of a Resolution of this board. The vote to sell that we captured in the minutes was not sufficient and a formal resolution is needed. Jake Smallhorn, the attorney handling the closing, is drafting a Resolution that will satisfy the title insurance company. Griffin stated when the draft is received from Smallhorn's office, she will circulate it in email for a vote.

The online process to apply for the ARPA grants we are administering has gone live and the first grants are being awarded during today's meeting. Mattoon Precision Manufacturing and Elevate both received awards. Several other applications are in process and the office continues to share information about the available funds to county businesses. Griffin said she consulted with the organization's auditors about her ability to process the grant funds and issue checks and was told as grant administrator she has the ability to write checks associated with grant expenses without requesting a vote each time those expenses or grants exceed \$2,000 which will help get these awards out quickly and also allow us to pay expenses quickly.

Activities associated with the RISE grant have also picked up pace now that all grant agreement documents and processes are in place and approved by the state grant administrators. We had our first meetings with everyone working on the grant including the Ohio partners and the consultants doing the surveys and outreach. Locally, we began informal preliminary outreach to

Operations Committee Meeting Minutes

July 31, 2023

Page 3

introduce the project and give companies notice they may be contacted and surveyed by the consultants. This process should take two months, after which all the data collected will be compiled into a report that we can use to begin the training and match-making phase of the project.

Notifications to restaurants and hotels about Back to Business (B2B) grants were issued beginning last week and continue into this week. The creative arts awards are still on hold. We expect a list of successful grant applicants to be issued soon. If applicants receive a denial letter, they are able to appeal and if the chambers or cities receive calls from companies that have been denied, they can be referred to Coles Together for help navigating the appeals process.

Attendance and feedback about the informational meeting on the Illinois Paid Leave Act was terrific. There were a lot of live, in-person questions and also many questions in the chat from the online attendees. Unfortunately, the chat feature had been accidentally disabled but the recording captured all the questions, and they will be answered and circulated this week. Also, a recording of the event will be available for anyone interested.

Upcoming meetings and conferences include an all-day event this Thursday with the Ameren local and statewide economic development team to tour the county's Ameren-served sites and talk about future capacity needs and priorities. Griffin has registered for the carbon conference in September and is hoping to travel to one of GDB International's existing operations in August. The company president and vice president have said they want to demonstrate what they plan to do at the Charleston facility. Also, in September Griffin will attend the Illinois Public Airports Association Conference September 24-26 and that is why Griffin requested the September meeting be moved to October 2.

The June unemployment statistics were issued, and the Coles County rate went up to 5%. It was 4% in May and 4.7% a year ago in June. But for Mattoon and Charleston specifically, employment INCREASED by 775 jobs compared to a year ago. So the zip codes in the county outside of 61920 and 61938 saw overall job losses but Mattoon and Charleston saw an overall increase in payrolls compared to a year ago. The sectors that saw gains were educational and health services, government, construction, manufacturing and services. Losses occurred in professional and business services, leisure and hospitality, and financial activities. Interestingly, in June the "government" had an increase of another 125 positions. Griffin was able to finally get some feedback to help explain why that number has climbed so much the past three months. During the summer months, particularly after school is out, the government number grows as park districts, cities, universities, and other government entities add staff for outdoor activities. Also, in the summer government-funded youth programs kick off requiring seasonal workers. For instance, most swimming pools, and therefore swim programs, are run by a community. As Griffin began to apply this logic across sectors, it was noted even the airport authority, a governmental entity, increases its workforce when mowing of the property begins. Griffin suggested watching the category to see if it comes back down in the fall.

Operations Committee Meeting Minutes

July 31, 2023

Page 4

Marketing Report

Considine gave the marketing report and stated she has been reviewing RFIs received, serves as a director and on the marketing committee of the Mattoon Emerging Leaders (MEL) group, is working to update the Coles Together website and add a page for “Investor Spotlight,” and has continued to make social media posts about the programs, applications, and events Coles Together sponsors.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Carlos Ortega, Secretary