



COLES Together

The economic development organization for Coles County

Coles Together Operations Committee Meeting November 29, 2021

Members Present: Mike Stanfield, Mike Taylor, John Inyart, Blake Pierce, Doug Abolt, Steve Grissom, Bob Shamdin, Brooke Keefer, and Rick Hall,

Members Absent: Jerry Groniger, Brandon Combs, and Brandon Bell

Others Present: Angela Griffin and Kasey Considine

Call to Order: Called to order by Michael Stanfield at 7:30 a.m.

Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve the October 2021 Board of Directors meeting minutes was made by Rick Hall and seconded by Blake Pierce. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report:

Taylor stated the October 31 financials have not been completed by Gilbert Metzger and Madigan. He mentioned that during the October meeting he walked through the overall trends over the year. To reiterate or highlight the position at September 30, which is the year-end--so 12 months were completed--the revenues were higher than the previous year and higher than budgeted. However, expenses were also higher than the previous year and higher than budgeted. The income statement ended at a slight loss position for the fiscal year, but balances are strong in terms of fund balances and balance sheet items

President's Report:

Griffin reported that during the month of November staff received two RFPs and were able to submit a proposal for one of the requests based on the needed project specifications. Project Marinara represents a food manufacturing company searching for an existing building or a greenfield site. We submitted three greenfield sites for consideration, the Coles Energy Center, the Mattoon Enterprise Park, and even the Coles Business Park just to have a third option and get as many sites as possible in front of the consultants. If the Coles Business Park were a contender, we could combine lots on the north side of the park to have enough land for a 50,000-70,000 SF building. Jobs are modest at 90 new positions. Project Recipe was also a food related company but the client company is only interested in existing buildings that are 250,000 SF or larger and there are no available buildings even close to that size in the county.

Griffin stated she was contacted directly by consultants with the accounting and consulting firm of Grant Thornton who represent a client company considering sites in Coles County. The company self-selected the county and tentatively hopes to tour sites in mid-December. They have asked for 30-acre sites in the

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enterprise zone but have not given us any additional parameters. The consultants are going to provide the additional details this week so we can put together a list of sites to tour.

Three companies are still evaluating the Coles Business Park for new construction, two of which would be new operations in Coles County and one would be an expansion from an existing location in the county. The owners of one of the new operations wanted to have a proposal ready in early November but they are still putting their numbers together. This company is solely focused on new construction in the business park. The remaining two are looking at other sites in the county in addition to sites in the park where they could build. It's worth noting, all three operations are professional services providers, but are not healthcare related.

Our work as part of the Community Navigator Program has started to pay off and many local businesses have received Back to Business (B2B) grants with several others pending approval in the pipeline. Griffin provided the list of the grant recipients (below) and the amounts they have received. Somewhat surprisingly, of the five surrounding counties who are all part of our Navigator group, only one award has been made outside of all those noted below in Coles County. One company in Effingham County received an award. To date, none of the other counties have had successful applicants. Understandably, some of the economic developers in those counties are frustrated and are reconsidering whether they are going to continue to participate in the program. It does take a lot of marketing time and administrative work and not receiving any awards has put them in awkward positions with their business community where they have used a lot of goodwill encouraging businesses to apply. Many are of the opinion it has been a waste of time and a waste of the goodwill they built and may not participate in the extension of the program through June. The program managers at the state have asked the Navigators to help get the word out about other programs and to consider extending our grant agreements to June so we can help with new grant programs they plan to announce early next year. Our Navigator make-up may change if some of the counties opt out, but at this point we are planning to stay engaged and hope to extend our grant agreement. We also hope to announce even more award winners after the first of the year. The grant portal shows several larger businesses, including a couple of manufacturers, have been approved and are waiting for a final review. We are hopeful they are included in the next round of announcements.

Award winners to date:

Gavina Graphics, Charleston	\$150,000
Back to Health Physician's Group, Charleston	\$55,000
Byrd's Cleaners & Laundry, Charleston	\$15,000
Dirty's Bar & Grill, Charleston	\$10,000
Feudin Hillbillies, Charleston	\$20,000
Fry Guys, Charleston	\$10,000
Home Again Consignment Shop, Charleston	\$10,000
Lincoln Garden Family Restaurant, Charleston	\$40,000
Mac Enterprises/Uptown Cellar, Charleston	\$25,000

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Joey's Place, Charleston	\$5,000
Mike & Stan's 504 Club, Charleston	\$15,000
The Winning Stitch, Charleston	\$15,000
Unique Suites Hotel, Charleston	\$135,000
Angelo's Pizza, Mattoon	\$10,000
Artsy Chic Studio, Mattoon	\$5,000
Dust Investments, Mattoon	\$140,000
Hair Force One, Mattoon	\$5,000
Jack & Bills, Mattoon	\$20,000
Juanito's Mexican Cocina, Mattoon	\$10,000
Mattoon Super 8 Motel, Mattoon	\$20,000
Little Mexico, Mattoon	\$25,000
The Ice House/Triple Nickel Saloon, Mattoon	\$40,000

We are also working on a marketing piece with Intersect Illinois to include information about Coles County in economic development trade magazines. Intersect is showcasing the State of Illinois and highlighting communities and regions in downstate Illinois.

Washington Savings Bank has joined the organization and new subcontractor applications have been processed for enterprise zone benefits for the Hilton project which have also generated revenues.

October unemployment numbers show Coles County's rate at 3.9% compared to 5.6% one year ago. Employment gains were posted in government (+425), construction (+150), financial activities (+100), educational and health services (+75), leisure and hospitality (+75), and information technology (+25). Payrolls decreased in trade, transportation, and utilities (-100), professional and business services (-125), and after posting gains for several months there was a net loss (-50) in manufacturing; and a loss in "other" services (-50).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 AM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Blake Pierce, Assistant Secretary