



COLES Together

The economic development organization for Coles County

Coles Together Board of Directors Meeting June 26, 2023

Members Present

Doug Abolt, Mike Stanfield, Mike Taylor, Rick Hall, Brock Ashley, John Inyart, Matt Webb, Matt Smith, Jack Turner, Amy Borntrager, Ashley Cobb, Brooke Kieffer, Matt Webb, Steve Pankey, Jason Tucker, and Erica Boone

Members Absent

Carlos Ortega, David Glassman, Bob Shamdin, Todd Vilardo, Josh Bullock, Tim Condron, Darrin Hite, and Brandon Combs

Others Present

Angela Griffin, Kasey Considine

Call to Order

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

New board members (pending a later vote), Erica Boone and Jason Tucker, introduced themselves and shared their background. Board members then introduced themselves and their organizations to the new members.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the May 2023 minutes was made by Mike Stanfield and seconded by Brock Ashley. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Taylor gave the financial report and stated the financial statements reflect seven months into the year. Year-to-date for the period shows a positive \$21,000 even though it appears lower than last year. This is because the accountants historically booked contributions from city of Mattoon and city of Charleston in the month of May after the cities pass their budget, but the new accountants are spreading those revenues out monthly so there will be a timing difference for a while. As monthly revenues are captured it should begin to accrue back on a year-to-date basis and reflect previous years by the end of the year. For the month of May expenses are running a little higher than last year but very close to budget. Several small amounts are contributing to that higher number including community navigator expenses which will be fully reimbursed. Also, salaries and taxes are higher this year than last. Compared to budget, expenses are about \$3,000 higher but most of that should be reimbursed through the grant as they are grant-related expenses. Griffin agreed and said grant expenses related to advertising have been much higher as the organization took out a lot of ads, including a full-page ad in the local newspaper to market the Back to Business grants.

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Taylor stated the balance sheet reflecting the statement of financial position for the organization is strong.

Approval of Treasurer's Report: A motion to approve the May 2023 financial statements was made by Mike Taylor and seconded by Amy Borntrager. The motion passed.

Board Member Nominations

The nominations committee met by zoom and made a recommendation to the Operations Committee, which voted at its May meeting to recommend to this full board the following board members for the 2023-24 year.

Doug Abolt and Carlos Ortega have both completed a three-year term and are eligible to be re-elected to another three-year term.

Vacancies existed with the exit of Jerry Groniger and completion of a term by Mike Taylor.

The recommendation before this board is to re-elect Abolt and Ortega to a second three-year term and to elect Erica Boone and Jason Tucker to the vacancies created by Groniger and Taylor.

Vice Chair Mike Stanfield called for a motion.

Approval to re-elect and elect board members: A motion to re-elect Doug Abolt and Carlos Ortega and to elect Jason Tucker and Erica Boone was made by John Inyart and seconded by Mike Stanfield. The motion passed.

The Nominations and Operations committees also voted and recommended the following slate of officers for a one-year term for the upcoming year:

Chair: Doug Abolt

Vice Chair: Mike Stanfield

Treasurer: Brock Ashley

Secretary: Carlos Ortega

Assistant Secretary: Brooke Keefer

Approval to elect officers: A motion to elect the slate of officers as presented above was made by Rick Hall and seconded by Jack Turner. The motion passed.

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President's Report

Griffin stated the former GE plant in Mattoon was purchased by Phoenix Investors, the same company that purchased the former LSC Communications/RR Donnelly facility in Mattoon. Phoenix has signed one new tenant that will use 36,000 SF at the GE plant and they are in the process of applying for a permit from the city to renovate and rehabilitate the rest of the building for additional tenants. Griffin has been working with Phoenix on the company's enterprise zone application and since the signed tenant is industrial and the other leads they have are also industrial clients, they will qualify for a sales tax exemption on building materials and a 10-year abatement on any increase in assessed value.

The Corridor Review Committee met and approved the construction of the John Davis Implement facility in the Coles Business Park. The project was then approved by the Charleston Zoning Commission and the Charleston City Council. The Coles County board also passed a resolution to sell the recently replatted 2.1 acre lot so Davis can build a new 12,000 SF facility. We are now working with legal counsel to draft the contract for sale and schedule the closing. The metal building has been ordered and should be delivered in early September so Davis would like to start prep work at the site as soon as possible.

Griffin provided background explaining the county owns the unsold land in the business park. Under a marketing agreement with Coles Together from the early 1990s, Coles Together markets the park, handles the sale of lots, and pays all the development expenses, including the real estate taxes on the unsold lots. This entitles Coles Together to a portion of the sales proceeds of each lot. This lot will sell for \$40,759. Coles Together will retain \$29,349 and the county will receive \$11,409.

Griffin said Coles Together has just entered into another partnership with the County. The finance committee and the county board have approved our request for ARPA funds to establish and operate a grant program for county businesses. Griffin will set up the program like the one we established and operated during the pandemic for MAID. ARPA funds can be used to help businesses still experiencing economic loss or added costs due to COVID and the pandemic. The program is operated as a reimbursement grant so Coles Together will make the grant and then submit proof of payment and a claim for reimbursement to the county. Griffin brought the hard copy of the grant agreement to the meeting and asked that board members sign in the designated signature block. The agreement was circulated for signature.

The application cycle has closed for the state's Back to Business grants for restaurants, hotels and cultural arts programs but unfortunately the state experienced glitches in the eligibility ranking system and the final award announcements have been "paused." Many businesses were told they were ineligible when in fact they were eligible. Unfortunately, this means the programs that were to follow are going to be delayed. We have been waiting for these programs to open for

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more than a year and are targeted to businesses that started after the pandemic or businesses that renovated a shuttered space.

Griffin talked to the broker selling the NCI Facility and he said there are two offers on the building. One of the leads interested in the facility has confirmed they put in an offer. Griffin is also aware of another offer that was made and stated if one of the two offers she is aware of becomes the successful bid, it would mean a positive investment in the county. This business owner has a lot of activity in Douglas county and a terrific business that employs many people. He has been a solid professional to work with. With his support and input Griffin prepared a proposal using the site for one of the new leads we received this month from the state.

RFIs for three new projects were received this month. As mentioned, the NCI facility was submitted for project Altixis which is a plastic injection manufacturer conducting a search in the Midwest for a site to open a new operation where they would employ up to 60 people. The facility and the community met all the site search criteria, and with the potential new owner we were able to write in language about lease options which is what this client company is looking for. Each state is allowed to submit two sites and since the state is still reviewing all the sites that were submitted by communities.

The remaining proposals were code named Project Tupelo and Project New Wave. Tupelo is an electronic waste recycling company that processes electronic waste into metals. Capital investment is \$12-\$14 million with 30 new positions. New Wave project needed 500 acres and significant utility infrastructure that had to be on site and ready for connection. We wanted to submit the Coles Energy Center site. Even though we were just shy of the number of acres required, we would have submitted if that had been the only issue. It is likely we could re-option adjacent land we had optioned at one time to acquire a total of 500 acres. However, the more significant issue is the ability to connect to the power supply is not on site. It is a half mile east where it crosses the Bond property so an easement or an extension of the line would be required as well as upgrades to the substation that serves the line. Since this issue keeps knocking us out of contention for the bigger projects, we are meeting with Ameren to tour the site and discuss how we might address it especially since the State of Illinois and the Canadian National Railroad continue to market the site as a "Super Site" to attract investment. We hope to discuss options that might exist where we least have a plan for upgrades.

Other upcoming events include the monthly webinar on July 27 which will be a hybrid event that is both in person at the Hilton Conference center and online where we will host an attorney who specializes in labor law to present information about the new Illinois Paid Leave Act which goes into effect January 1, 2024.

June's webinar was a presentation about Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) which is a tool that can be used to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements on commercial property.

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The May unemployment statistics have been released. Coles County was at 4% unemployment in May this year compared to 4.2% in May last year. In April of this year we were at 3.7% so it grew slightly over the month. We saw a gain of 625 positions in educational and health services, and 350 in government on top of the 400 created in government last month (for which Griffin still does not have clarification about what exactly those jobs are). There were 350 construction jobs added, 125 manufacturing jobs, 25 in IT and 25 in services.

There was no change (gain or loss) in leisure and hospitality or financial activities, but we did have losses of 150 professional and business services in the county, and 125 in a category that combines transportation, and utilities.

Considine gave the marketing report and stated she has been completing RFIs, working on the investor spotlight, beta testing the google forms document for the new grant program, creating a new tab on our website for the investor spotlight series, and has become the chair of the marketing committee for the Mattoon Emerging Leaders (MEL) group.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 AM.

A presentation and tour of Lester Building Systems was given by Tyler Bennet, part-owner and Vice President of Manufacturing.

Bennett stated the company was started in 1947 and has been in Charleston since 1985. Lester currently employs 65 people in Charleston and has 225 employees company-wide. Bennett described the capabilities and features of a Lester Buildings structure and said they can build as much as 60 acres under roof. Designs can be customized to meet the individual needs and style of each client. The company offers residential plans, farm and ranch buildings, pole barns, hobby buildings, commercial facilities, and equine and livestock buildings. The company's patented roof system offers its clients the structural integrity of a through-fastened roof with the sleek appearance of a standing seam metal roof. This patented feature is unmatched by any competitor in the industry. Currently there are more than 175,000 Lester Buildings across the United States which they anticipate will be standing for quite some time as the company happily offers a 40-year warranty with its buildings.

Respectfully submitted by:

Carlos Ortega, Secretary