**NEWPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**Tuesday, March 11, 2025**

**7:00 A.M.**

**Business Resource Center**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Chairman Dean Sides, Vice-Chairman Jim Gowen Sr., Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner, Tommy Okada, Benjy Harris, Scott Foushee, Lee Scoggins, and Dr. Johnny Moore.

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

Nyesha Greer

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Others present were NEDC Executive Director Jon Chadwell, Director of Chamber Affairs Julie Allen, Director of Workforce Christel Taylor, Assistant Director of Business and Financial Services Crystal Fulmer, Joe Dupree, Hiro Kado, and Mayor Derrick Ratliffe.

**OPEN MEETING**

Chairman Dean Sides opened the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Jim Gowen Sr. made a motion to accept the minutes from February, with a second by Benjy Harris, motion carried.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Director Chadwell presented the financial report for February. Newport Raceway lease was paid in the amount of $15,000. Tech Depot had an income of $400. Lee Scoggins made a motion to accept the financial statements for February with a second from Dr. Johnny Moore, motion carried.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

* Charles Walker, ASU Newport
* Jason Tarwater, Newport Fire Department
* AEDC Retail Academy
* Sesquicentennial

**DIRECTOR OF CHAMBER AFFAIRS REPORT**

* New Vision Newport Graduation, May 6
* Sesquicentennial, April 5
* Rich Realty
* Pot of Gold, April 11
* Regions Bank
* Senior Sendoff, Newport School District, April 17

**RENEWPORT GRANTS**

None currently.

**ARKANSAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION LUNCHEON**

The Newport Economic Development Commission has a table for ten at the Arkansas Economic Development Foundation luncheon on Tuesday, March 18, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Jon Chadwell, Julie Allen, Dr. Johnny Moore, and Adam Adair will be attending. Anyone else on the commission interested in attending should contact Jon Chadwell.

**HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT**

Jon Chadwell has been approached by two different parties interested in building housing in Newport. The commission engaged in discussion for a policy that should be set in place for infrastructure for housing. If a minimum number of houses should be built and the infrastructure should be for water and sewer.

**NON-PROFIT GRANTS FROM MEDICAL MARIJUANA FUND**

Trails to Tuckerman applied and submitted plans for a Memorial Park. Trails to Tuckerman is asking for $10,000. ClubRESTORE submitted an application for a Community Garden. Both applications meet the qualifications for a grant. Jim Gowen Sr. made a motion for $8,000 Grant to Trails to Tuckerman and $5,000 to ClubRESTORE from the Medical Marijuana Fund with a second by Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner, motion carries. This closes the grant for non-profits from the medical marijuana fund.

**PLACERAI SOFTWARE PROPOSAL**

Placer.ai is a software program that allows accurate foot traffic by time, day of the week, and audience segments. It would allow focus marketing for local businesses and could be used to optimize engagement. Director Chadwell would like to negotiate a three-year deal with Placer.ai. Benjy Harris made a motion for up to $22,500 for three years from the medical marijuana fund with Placer.ai with a second by Mike Turner, motion carried.

**ACT WORK READY COMMUNITY**

Director Chadwell is looking at Tech Depot becoming a testing center for the ACT Work Ready testing. Tech Depot could be a site where John 3:17 and others could test to see what level of work readiness employees can start at. Charles Walker with ASU Newport is working with the Arkansas Department of Corrections for testing those that will be released back into the community.

**SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION**

Newport’s Sesquicentennial will be on Saturday, April 5, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The day starts with a Fishing Derby at Lockwood Park done by New Vision Newport Class 20. Other events include Rails along the River Model Railroading Expo, Vendors, Wild Ones’Petting Zoo, The Pacers, Time Capsule opening, Class Reunions, Baggo Tournament, and DJ Katrina Williams.

**ICSC RETAIL RECRUITMENT UPDATE**

Team Newport’s trip to ICSC in Dallas has yielded two prospects interested in the Village Mall. The owner is open to selling the property. Another prospect is interested in what was previously the KFC Building. McDonald’s has decided to tear down the building from the old McDonald’s location.

**TECH DEPOT UPDATE**

The Arkansas Department of Corrections graduated a class of cadets and started a new Training Academy on Monday. The Transitioning from Recovery to Employment Class for John 3:17 is running smoothly. Apprenticely formerly the Arkansas Center for Data Science has a grant to help fund the class and will reimburse $7,000 to Tech Depot for costs.

**CHILDCARE FACILITY UPDATE**

The A-State Greyhound Child Development Center opens on Monday, March 17. The daycare still has toddler spots available. The grand opening is March 12, from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Commission is encouraged to go by and see the improvements.

**DRIVESMART UPDATE**

All paperwork has been submitted for the DriveSmart Grant. Director Chadwell has talked with White River Planning and Development on the status of the EDA Grant. Disaster Recovery Grants are currently released but federal grants are on appeal with the courts

**75 STRONG**

Jon Chadwell, Julie Allen, John Twyford, and Christel Taylor have been accepted into the 75 Strong Program. This means that 4 out of 57 in the state are from Newport.

**INDUSTRIAL GREENHOUSE**

FARCO has submitted an estimate of repairs on the Industrial Greenhouse. FARCO will remove and install new insulation, new metal roof, trim and ridge cap on the office portion of the building along with line the gutter system with TPO Roofing Membrane. Also, replace all broken clear panels on the greenhouse portion of the building. Total cost is $193,224.43. A prospect is interested in purchasing the Industrial Greenhouse before repairs are made. The Commission would like to know what the proposal is before repairs are made.

**P3 GROUP HOUSING UPDATE**

Once the Newport School Board approves the plans for the new subdivision, P3 will begin. The school board votes on February 18.

**VERIZON CELL TOWER**

Verizon is looking at its fourth location that is owned by the City of Newport.

**WALGREENS CLOSURE**

Walgreens announced yesterday that 27 stores will be closed in Arkansas including the Newport location. It is set to close March 27.

**PROSPECT SMOCO**

Project Smoco is still working to overcome some co-tenant obstacles.

**PROJECT CLIPPINGS**

Project Clippings has leased the whole General Cable building.

**PROSPECT RICE STRAW**

Prospect Rice Straw has submitted a letter of intent to purchase 13 to 14 additional acres.

**PROSPECT CHAR**

Prospect Char continues to move forward.

**PROSPECT SAVE**

Prospect Save is a local industry that may be purchased to pursue expansion.

**PROJECT MAGIC DRAGON**

Project Magic Dragon is someone looking to purchase Revolution.

**PROSPECT FRESH AT HOME**

Prospect Fresh at Home is looking at the former KFC Building.

**ADJOURNED**

Jim Gowen Sr. made a motion to adjourn the meeting with a second from Scott Foushee, meeting adjourned.