**NEWPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**Tuesday, April 8, 2025**

**7:00 A.M.**

**Business Resource Center**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Chairman Dean Sides, Vice-Chairman Jim Gowen Sr., Benjy Harris, Scott Foushee, Lee Scoggins, and Nyesha Greer.

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

Dr. Johnny Moore, Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner

**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, Ken Beach, 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 March. Funds from the Medical Marijuana settlement were used to purchase PlacerAI for $6,650 for the first year, $82.90 to Delcase Plumbing, and Trails to Tuckerman for $8,000. Jim Gowen Sr. made a motion to accept the financial statements for March with a second from Scott Foushee, motion carried.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

* Religious Leaders Roundtable
* Placer AI
* White River Planning and Development
* Housing Prospect

**DIRECTOR OF CHAMBER AFFAIRS REPORT**

* Rich Realty
* Pot of Gold, April 11
* Senior Sendoff, Newport School District, April 17
* Evins Healthcare Grand Reopening, April 23
* New Vision Newport Graduation, May 6
* New Vision Class Retreat, September 12 & 13

**RENEWPORT GRANTS**

The Ace of Fades Salon and Spa, located at 416 Second Street, in Newport, has requested a ReNewport grant for signage. The total cost is $2,956.63 and the ReNewport grant would be responsible for $1,478.30. Lee Scoggins made the motion to approve the ReNewport Grant with a second from Nyesha Greer, motion carried.

**HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT RECOMMENDATIONS**

The commission discussed a set of guidelines that could be in place for housing infrastructure. The commission would like Director Chadwell to start working on a set of guidelines for the commission to look over and make adjustments too.

**LEGISLATION**

Legislative Bill 227 consists of changing requirements for public meetings. Included in that bill is to notify the newspaper of special meetings, post the agenda on the website three days prior to the meeting, and a remote attendance policy. Jon Chadwell will look into the changes and may schedule a training session for the commission.

**PLACERAI SOFTWARE PROPOSAL**

PlacerAI has charged for the first year of service in the amount of $6,650. Staff will have training for the software program on April 23. Local businesses can get a yearly report and chamber members can get reports twice a year.

**ACT WORK READY COMMUNITY**

ASU Newport is looking to become a realm for the ACT Workready testing. The cost for testing would be covered by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education.

**SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION**

Newport’s Sesquicentennial was postponed due to the weather. Components of the 150th will be moved to the Delta Arts Festival on June 7. The chamber currently has shirts on sale celebrating the Sesquicentennial.

**ICSC RETAIL RECRUITMENT UPDATE**

Jon Chadwell is working with prospects from ICSC and using the Placer AI Software data as an informational tool.

**ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT**

The City Council had the first reading for the ordinance for the Entertainment District. The ordinance will be read three times in total. DRIVE will purchase the cups that will be then sold to the organizations. The Entertainment District will avoid all churches but include the Vault 1916 and Skeetdaddy’s.

**TECH DEPOT UPDATE**

Tech Depot helped those in the community that had suffered damage due to the tornado, providing a workspace and Wi-Fi to those with none.

**DRIVESMART UPDATE**

The bidding process could start any day to renovate the Business Resource Center for DriveSmart.

**INDUSTRIAL GREENHOUSE**

The commission is looking at selling the Industrial Greenhouse as is before any costly renovations to the building are made.

**P3 GROUP HOUSING UPDATE**

P3 is working on the initial cost estimate for Phase I, the new housing development.

**VERIZON CELL TOWER**

The new cell tower for Verizon will be located on Hodges Street.

**PROSPECT SMOCO**

Project Smoco has been informed that McDonalds building has been torn down and that the lot is available for purchase.

**PROSPECT RICE STRAW**

Prospect Rice Straw is working with Summit Utilities to get natural gas. Summit Utilities said 120 days, and it would create 75 jobs.

**PROSPECT SAVE**

Prospect Save is a local industry that may transition ownership

**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 Lee Scoggins, meeting adjourned.