

**CITY OF KENTWOOD  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

**MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2023**

**8:00 AM**

**IN-PERSON MEETING**

**First Floor Conference Room, Kentwood City Hall**

**AGENDA**

1. Roll Call
2. Approval of Minutes, December 2022
3. Use of EDC Revolving Loan Fund—Tyson, Coughlin, Blubaugh, Keith Morgan
4. Review of EDC Strategic Plan/Goals for 2023
5. Adjourn

Please contact Lisa Golder at 554-0709 or [golderl@kentwood.us](mailto:golderl@kentwood.us) if you cannot attend

KENTWOOD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
MINUTES  
December 12, 2022

Members Present: Green, Clements, Blubaugh, Coughlin, DeBruyn, Tyson, Gaffin, Swoboda  
Members Absent: Deluccia, with notification  
Others Present: Lisa Golder, Economic Development Planner

1. Roll Call
2. Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Clements with support from DeBruyn, to approve the minutes of November 14, 2022.

--Motion Carried--

3. King Pot Liquor Licenses Review

The EDC members discussed the King Pot application for a liquor license. The final issue to be resolved by the applicant was whether the applicant would be approved for a home equity loan; the applicant has now received approval. There was discussion regarding the outstanding issues and concerns regarding the application. The members discussed the following conditions of approval:

- Applicant must receive a certificate of occupancy and open the business
- The applicant must abide by the terms of the lease
- EDC must consent to any relocation of the license within city boundaries (outside of city boundaries would not be permitted for a time period of three years)

After discussion,

**A motion was made by Swoboda with support from Clements to recommend to the City Commission the approval of the liquor license for King Pot Inc. with the following conditions:**

- **Applicant must receive a certificate of occupancy and open the business**
- **The applicant must abide by the terms of the lease**
- **EDC must consent to any relocation of the license within city boundaries (outside of city boundaries would not be permitted for a time period of three years)**

--Motion Carried, 7-1--

The basis for the approval is as follows:

- The business has submitted evidence of their financial statements, projections, and tax returns that were reviewed by the EDC
- The applicant has experience as a restaurateur/facilities operator in the greater Grand Rapids area.
- The applicant has received approval for a home equity loan which shall assist in the rising cost of construction.
- The applicant cannot sell or otherwise transfer the liquor license out of the city of Kentwood for at least three years.
- The restaurant is located in an area that has seen some tenant turnover and the opening of a new restaurant will benefit the center
- The restaurant will likely be more successful with the addition of a liquor license.

4. Use of EDC funds

Lisa said that EDC members Coughlin, Tyson, Blubaugh and Keith Morgan of the Wyoming-Kentwood Chamber of Commerce have been working on a program for the use of the Revolving Loan Fund funds. Sabo PR has developed a branded flyer about the RLF that can be provided to banks or individuals that may qualify for the larger, traditional EDC loan. The flyer will also be available on the city's website. The flyer will promote the RLF to entities that may wish to apply for the RLF program.

However, the committee also saw a need to serve smaller businesses by offering a microloan program. The microloan program is a loan provided to a small business after completion of a series of training sessions regarding marketing, finances, sales and customer service. The recipient of the loan would also need to make a presentation to the EDC regarding its business. The businesses targeted would be those with sales approximately \$15,000-100,000. Robin noted that the information is available online for businesses with sales of \$250,000 or less. Sabo PR would assist in the marketing of the program which would include social media marketing. After additional discussion,

**A motion was made by Clements, with support from DeBruyn to approve the concept of the microloan program, with additional information to follow in the coming months.**

**--Motion Carried--**

Details regarding the program will be coming in the next several months, with a roll out of the program in the spring.

5. Discussion regarding temporary signage and open-air businesses in Kentwood

Lisa said that the city had acted during Covid to help the business community by temporarily removing the restrictions on temporary signage and commercial open-air display. Prior to Covid, each parcel of commercial or industrial property (including multi-tenant strip malls) was

permitted to have 50 days of temporary signage during the calendar year. Only one sign per parcel could be displayed at a time, and the city allowed the landlord (in the case of a multi-tenant building) to determine who could use the signage throughout the year. During Covid, the reduction of restrictions helped businesses advertise hours of operation, and food delivery options. The provisions for temporary signage do not include advertising for job openings, which is already permitted and will continue to be permitted in the city.

The temporary provisions for open air businesses were intended to allow businesses to have outdoor sales and dining. Most businesses did not take advantage of these provisions, as outdoor sales and dining were already permitted with city approval.

After discussion,

**A motion was made with support to recommend that the city consider additional day for open air display up to a maximum of 75 days for multitenant buildings.**

**-Motion Carried—**

6. Other business

Earl said he has sold his house and has relocated outside of Kentwood. Rick said that the EDC bylaws do not address the issue of non-residents on the EDC, but the EDC should review as a policy matter.

Earl said that his firm is representing the owners of the Patterson Farm that is currently on the market. He thought that the EDC ought to be involved in the discussion regarding the future use of the property.

Lisa said that the city has designated the farm as "Conservation Oriented Development" in the Master Plan in order to allow for the greatest amount of flexibility in its eventual development. The Master Plan designation will need to be updated with the development of the Patterson Farm and there will be ample opportunity for the EDC to be involved in these meetings.

7. The next meeting of the Kentwood EDC is scheduled for January 9, 2023 as the third Tuesday in January is a national holiday.

Meeting adjourned.

## **Use of Kentwood Revolving Loan Fund**

Proposal: Expand use of the Kentwood Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) monies to include marketing of the existing RLF program and a proposed forgivable microloan/training program.

### **Revolving Loan Fund Program:**

Update the city's Economic Development brochure (Your Future Here) to include a one-page handout to generate interest in the RLF. The one-page document could be taken to lenders that may know of applicants in the Kentwood area. The EDC should target companies with \$250,000-\$500,000 in annual sales and the EDC members could split up the list and make calls to eligible businesses regarding the program.

### **Microloan Program:**

The City Attorney opinion is that the EDC should not give out grants; but forgivable loans are possible.

Small loans can make a difference for the success of a small business

The city needs to get the word out about the RLF loan program as well as any microloan program. The EDC can get the word out regarding the RLF program through the press and goodwill generated from the microloan program.

#### Proposed Microloan Program:

- Offer sum of money (forgivable loan) to a small business in exchange for attending 3 training classes on various aspects of operating a business.
- Eligible businesses must be located in the City of Kentwood and must meet certain criteria for annual sales (\$15,000-\$100,000/year).
- Three to four classes would be held on three consecutive weeks. Example of potential classes:
  - 1) Business culture, growing business wisely
  - 2) How to develop employee/ business culture, how to set long term goals and business credit.
  - 3) Marketing your business and customer service
  - 4) Financial resources available

Business coaching hours could also be offered.

The EDC would measure the success of the program by having the recipient businesses offer a 10-minute update to the EDC on how the program has benefitted them.

Chamber members or other business leaders could provide the described training on a voluntary basis, or reimbursement could be offered by the EDC.

The proposed training is similar to the training the EDC has offered in the past, although the program targets businesses in earlier growth stages.

Another byproduct of the small business microloan/training is advertising for the larger RLF Program. Graduates may find they are in a better position at a future time to take advantage of the \$100,000 loans offered through the Revolving Loan Fund.

Spring event is the target date.

## **DESCRIPTION OF TRAINING:**

### **What is PR and Why Every Business Needs It To Win**

Everything you do is Public Relations. Make it count. Twenty-year veteran, Jessica Ann Tyson of award-winning PR Firm, JA PR Group will give you real insight and information to help you navigate in your specific business space, successfully. Business owners will receive personalized creative tools and practical tips to help assist in getting on the right path to a fruitful plan.

### **Effective Marketing Techniques 101**

Reach YOUR Customers: If you, your family and friends are the only ones who knows about your business; you are missing the point of having 'a business'. One guarantee: without marketing, your business will fail. We will educate you on real modern, effective and productive marketing techniques that any business can implement in less than 24 hours.

\*This presentation is not intended to sell you PR or marketing services.

### **Building Business Financial Knowledge 101**

What you need to know about accounting, banking, and proper bookkeeping practices that are vital to you and your business's success. Learn and connect with local business leaders from the Wyoming Kentwood Chamber who specialize in keeping your money safe and growing. The Wyoming Kentwood Chamber will bring professionals from the financial industry to teach and answer your questions.

Business owners will get to hear and connect with successful entrepreneurs, business leaders, industry experts (bankers, CPAs) who understanding real world needs, who have answers to your financial questions, and who have access to tools and resources that can help you.

### **Sales and Customer Service: 101**

Want to take your business idea and make money? The Wyoming Kentwood Chamber will teach local business owners tactics and strategies to increase sales. Skills and techniques for customer retention will be provided to business owners. Practical approaches and best practices will be provided.

Tools, real life examples, and breakout sessions will be led by business leaders from the Wyoming Kentwood Chamber. The chamber and its business leaders will provide guidance to

your business resulting in more sales and higher customer retention. Skills and techniques will cover both new, growing, and established businesses alike.

## **EDC Mission**

The Economic Development Commission will help attract, retain, develop, and promote businesses in the City of Kentwood.

### Opportunities

- Kentwood situated in a prime location
- Existing collaborations with Right Place, Inc. and MEDC
- Communications to community improved with Sabo PR—website improvements connect to local, state and federal
- Investors see high potential
- Business friendly
- Good infrastructure
- Thriving farmer's market
- School-business partnership focused on new jobs
- Low business insurance rates due to accessible services
- Some land still available for development—new opportunities on Division Avenue

### Challenges

- Need to continue outreach/communication with City Commission, county and other entities—understand needs of the city
- Establish relationship with new CEO of Right Place Inc.
- Identity for the City—residents and businesses
- Have community appreciate business contributions
- Demonstrate that Kentwood is healthy and growing
- Businesses awareness of available benefits
- Need method to continued outreach to business community
- Understand business issues better
- Have local business leaders care about Kentwood
- Need ongoing outreach to businesses—commercial as well as industrial

### Business challenges

- Finding qualified employees/training
- Finding employees that will show up to work every day
- Understanding programs available to them—especially new program related to Covid relief
- Knowing who to call with issues



## **EDC Objectives:**

1. Guide Policy and Partnerships to Assist with Economic Development
  - a. Align with MEDC
  - b. Align with Right Place
  - c. Interact w/ elected officials
  - d. Interact w/business community
  - e. Policy review and guidance
  
2. Implement Programs to Attract, Retain and Support Businesses
  - a. Bonds & Loans
  - b. Brownfield
  - c. PACE
  - d. Entrepreneurship
  - e. Education & Workforce Development
  - f. Liquor Licenses
  - g. Corridor Improvement
  
3. Community Engagement, Marketing and Business Promotion
  - a. Promotion of local, state, and federal economic opportunities and resources
  - b. Business Promotion
  - c. Customer Relations
  - d. Establishing and Maintaining Partnerships
  
4. Education & Training
  - a. Workforce Training & Development
  - b. Education of EDC Board Members

## **EDC Ambassador Teams & Objectives:**

### **OBJECTIVE 1: PROGRAMS AND DEVELOPMENT**

**The EDC acts as a conduit to connect businesses with available resources from local, state, federal, or private sources. Programs administered by the EDC include EDC Revenue Bonds, the Revolving Loan Fund, the Commercial Loan Fund, PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) Program, Brownfield Redevelopment Fund, and others.**

**The EDC is a clearinghouse of information provided by city, state, county and federal agencies that recognize the importance of the communication of public policies that support business development. Likewise, the EDC can inform these agencies of issues faced by the business community.**

**Real estate agencies, banking and other financial institutions may not be aware of the EDC loan programs or other incentives offered by the city; therefore their customers may not be aware of assistance that may be available to them. The EDC must communicate the availability of these programs and incentives to entities that advise small businesses.**

**Upon request of the City, EDC shall review and provide recommendation for policies that may have an impact on the businesses or the economic climate of the City. These policies may include tax abatements or other business incentives or tools, liquor licensing and the distribution of new quota licenses obtained by the city, or amendments to sign regulations.**

### **TASKS:**

The EDC shall:

- a) Invite legislators and other local leaders to EDC meetings to update the EDC the legislative board on issues and policies that may impact business development, as well as to inform legislators of known concerns within the business community.
- b) Identify organizations whose members or constituents could have interest in loan program/brownfield funds—including the Chamber of Commerce, Right Place, Inc., lending groups, real estate brokers (CAR) and environmental consultants. The EDC will provide or present written materials on these programs and the availability of funding.
- c) Find new ways to publicize information on business incentives such as loan programs, brownfield redevelopment programs, and training opportunities.
- d) Provide step sheets to access incentives such as Brownfield Redevelopment Funds to aid in determining eligibility and to provide insight into the process/timeline for approval.
- e) Develop list of banks interested in participation in the Revolving Loan Fund program, and identify a contact from each bank to promote the loan program.
- f) Coordinate efforts with Right Place Inc. by building on RPI Strategic Plan efforts.

- g) Inform City Commission and residents of business development successes by publishing article in city newsletter or reporting at a City Commission meeting.
- h) Survey businesses to address issues and concerns of the business community.
- i) Work with potential entrepreneurs and business start-ups to:
  - make use of the resources within the Entrepreneurial Center at the Library.
  - host entrepreneur bootcamps or incremental development workshops.
  - provide networking opportunities.
  - provide business counseling.
- j) At the request of the City, provide recommendations regarding ordinances, programs and policies that impact businesses and the business community.

## **OBJECTIVE 2: EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITY**

- High School
- Higher Education
- Entrepreneurial (Junior Achievement HQ, MI SBDC, Etc.)
- Workforce Development
- Business Mentorship

**The EDC recognizes the critical connection between schools and employers and will act as a conduit to connect students or graduates with businesses needing workers. The EDC can also connect local businesses with other resources (such as Michigan Works!) to help identify candidates for employment.**

**The EDC in its connections with the business community will gain an understanding of the characteristics and skills needed for the workforce and communicate these needs to educators.**

**The EDC will encourage the growth of business start-ups through programs offered by organizations such as GROW (Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women) and the Small Business Development Center of GVSU that educate individuals in various aspects of starting and operating a business.**

## **TASKS:**

The EDC shall:

- a) Actively participate in East Kentwood Future Fest by assisting in recruiting business participants and contacts.
- b) Survey businesses to assess the employment needs within the business community
- c) Encourage entrepreneurial activity by:
  - understanding the resources at the Entrepreneurial Center.
  - updating information in Entrepreneurial Center at the Kentwood Library, including outside resources available to entrepreneurs.
  - use Entrepreneurial Center for small groups training/workshops.
- d) Provide information on GRCC training programs that would benefit businesses.
- e) Connect employers to MI Works programming.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT**

**The EDC can act as a conduit to encourage the redevelopment of areas that lack new investment and growth. The areas of concern include Division Avenue and the 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and Eastern Avenue intersection. In addition, the EDC will work to encourage the ongoing success of commercial areas such as the 28<sup>th</sup> Street and 29<sup>th</sup> Street corridors.**

### **TASKS:**

For each state corridor/district below, the EDC shall:

#### **Division Avenue:**

- a) Disseminate information on the Division United study to businesses and property owners along the corridor.
- b) Link interested developers/property owners to the Division United Toolkits available, including:
  - Mobility and Connectivity Toolkit
  - Economic Development Toolkit
  - Incremental Development and Zoning Toolkit
  - Placemaking Toolkit
  - Equity Toolkit

Ensure that Toolkits are easy to read and understand, by summarizing information and making the toolkit widely available to businesses and residents along the corridor.

- c) Encourage ordinance amendments to allow food trucks and open air businesses to promote incremental development.
- d) Host incremental development workshops.
- e) Locate preferred sites for open air businesses and food trucks.
- f) Establish a Corridor Improvement Authority for Division Avenue.
- g) Advertise availability of loan programs specifically intended for Division Avenue start-ups.

#### **28<sup>th</sup> / 29<sup>th</sup> Streets:**

- a) Encourage the re-use of underutilized buildings, including
  - Consider new uses not currently permitted—such as EV charging stations
  - Consider the amount of office space currently vacant and recommend new uses.
  - Reconsider Special Land Use standards for drive throughs.
  - With assistance of developers, review city’s zoning ordinance for outdated use provisions or new use provisions.
- b) Meet with property owners to encourage business associations/joint marketing efforts.

- c) Make recommendations to the city regarding the allowance for more temporary businesses—food truck, open air businesses to encourage new development and test market.
- d) Encourage city to improve access to 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> Street corridors through:
  - Bus line extensions/service improvement, especially for the benefit of employees
  - Improve crosswalks along the corridors
- e) Review retail/office absorption rates and report trends

### **52<sup>nd</sup> and Eastern**

- a) Invite owner/realtor representing property to EDC meeting to discuss potential projects.
- b) Encourage incorporation of new residential uses.
- c) Work with landlord to offer retail incubator space within center.
- d) Encourage temporary uses such as food trucks or outdoor open air businesses.

### **OBJECTIVE 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**One of the major roles of the EDC is to act as a conduit between the business community and the city. In order to do this, the EDC needs to connect regularly with businesses to ascertain their issues and concerns. In addition, the EDC must continue to promote the accomplishments of the business community to residents, the City Commission and other entities.**

### **TASKS**

The EDC shall:

- a) Determine method for collection and upkeep of business contact information.
- b) Complete a periodic survey of businesses for feedback on services, issues, accomplishments.
- c) Use city newsletter (or a newsletter geared primarily to business) to inform developers, real estate, engineers re:
  - changes to development process
  - road closures and construction
  - business expansions in Kentwood
  - changes to state programming and incentives, grants, deadlines for applications
- d) Develop a list of the City’s Top 30 businesses—know who they are and they know us.
- e) Develop a business award program for:
  - significant contributions to employment in area
  - exterior property improvements
  - contributions to the community
  - new technology developed

f) Develop a business assistance hotline.

g) Complete a cost of doing business study:

- real estate and occupancy cost
- construction cost
- utility cost
- taxes
- development permit fees
- incentives to reduce costs
- Labor costs

Create model project for comparison

Identify comparable communities

RFP for consultant

Identify results, cost advantage, incentives to offset costs

h) Develop a directory of small business services.

i) Create a Kentwood Linked in Group.

j) Encourage tourism in the city.

- Who visits and why
- Use digital resources to provide information on current events/activities/attractions
- Host amateur tournaments
- See if hotels have exhibition space to attract events

### **EDC Ambassador Team Members:**

#### 1. Programs & Development

- DeBruyn
- Clements
- Gaffin
- Blubaugh

#### 2. Education & Opportunity

- Swoboda
- Green
- Tyson

#### 3. Corridor Development

- DeLuccia
- Coughlin
- Clements

#### 4. Community Engagement

- DeLuccia
- Coughlin
- Green
- Tyson

