

ALBERT LEA PORT AUTHORITY

MINUTES

Wednesday, October 6, 2021 – 7:30 a.m.

**Regular Meeting
132 N Broadway Ave**

CALL TO ORDER & NOTATION OF ROLL

The Regular Meeting of the Albert Lea Port Authority was called to order on Wednesday, October 6, 2021 at 7:30 a.m. by President Nelson. Roll was noted by the Board Secretary.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Sarah Nelson, President; Nate Jansen, Vice President; Mark Heinemann, Treasurer; Rich Murray, Bryan Skogheim, Tricia Dahl

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Vern Rasmussen, Jr

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Jensen, Freeborn County Representative; Ted Herman, Freeborn County Representative

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT: Ian Rigg, City of Albert Lea Representative; Holly Karsjens, Local Tourism Representative; Shari Jenson, Business Community Representative

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Phillip Johnson, Executive Director; Noelle Hagen, Assistant Executive Director

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 1, 2021 REGULAR MEETING

The minutes from the Wednesday, September 1st regular meeting were reviewed. Commissioner Heinemann made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Murray. President Nelson asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 6 in favor; 0 opposed.

RESOLUTION PA-21-15 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF CLAIMS

The claims were presented for review. Commissioner Skogheim made a motion to accept the claims as presented in the amount of \$16,674.14, seconded by Commissioner Heinemann. President Nelson asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 6 in favor; 0 opposed.

SOUTHERN MINNESOTA INITIATIVE FOUNDATION (SMIF) PRESENTATION

Alissa Oeltjenbruns of SMIF presented information about SMIF's work in 2021 and a summary of their current areas of focus which includes assisting entrepreneurs, early childhood education and support, and community vitality. Last year, SMIF coordinated 12 million dollars of covid relief funds to the communities and businesses they serve. There were 48 businesses in Freeborn County that received the state grants that SMIF administered. There is a second round of DEED grants for businesses and SMIF will be administering the grants to recipients that are selected in the Southeast region. Additional information was shared about upcoming programs and focuses including Early Childhood education and Childcare shortage, community vitality projects such as murals, and equity funds.

The board thanked Alissa Oeltjenbruns for her time and confirmed that ALEDA will be supporting SMIF again in 2022.

ALBERT LEA AREA SCHOOLS DISTRICT PRESENTATION

Dr. Mike Funk and Jennifer Walsh of Albert Lea Area Schools gave a presentation on the impacts of this year's referendum vote. The referendum will be a continuation of the current amount and will not be an increase to taxpayers. However, if the referendum does not pass, the school will need to make major cuts to its budget. This could include eliminating 16 or more positions, including teachers, reductions in support for families who cannot afford fees to participate in sports and other activities, would bring back fees at sport events, parking fees, AP exam fees, etc. The voting will take place on November 2nd.

After discussion the board agreed that a yes vote to keep the referendum active and provide the funding needed for these various positions and programs aligned with our organizations mission to create quality jobs and sustain them as well as to work towards a high quality of living for Albert Lea/Freeborn County and quality schools with opportunities for all students is an important component of that.

STAFF REPORT

Tree Range Accelerator Launch

- The group now anticipates hosting a conference in March at Wedgewood Cove. They are hoping to bring in about 200 – 250 people.
- They are also still looking at bringing in an existing company who is a partner in their chicken process.
- There are also new conversations about an oats group. We've connected with Albert Lea Elevator and will be helping to make that introduction to Reggie's group.

Entrepreneurial Bridge Event

- The event was held on September 28th and was well attended.
- The event featured three keynote speakers – Victor Hwang , CEO and Founder of Right to Start; Beth Fynbo, President and Founder of Busy Baby, and Linda Minar of CLA BizOps. "Firestarter" talks were also given by local entrepreneurs. These talks were 15 minutes in length and told inspirational stories of how these businesses grew, faced a challenge, found a creative solution to a unique problem, etc. Assistant Director Hagen was the lunch presenter and told "Albert Lea's Entrepreneurship Story."
- The reception after the event was held in Fountain Lake Park in conjunction with Fall Frenzy on Fountain sponsored by ALEDA, Albert Lea CVB, and Albert Lea Main Street. ALEDA sponsored the music and food/drinks for Bridge attendees. The weather was beautiful, and attendees commented on how much they enjoyed the reception and the opportunity to experience downtown Albert Lea. Holly Karsjens from the AL CVB and Main Street organized the reception and Fall Frenzy Event – thank you Holly!
- SMIF was very pleased with the event in Albert Lea and has decided that Albert Lea will be the host city again for next year.

ALEDA MISSION STATEMENT

"To provide and promote services and resources to retain, expand, create and attract businesses, increase tax base and quality employment opportunities in Freeborn County."

- Historically there has also been a student competition component of the event which has been rescheduled for March 2022 and will be called the Aspiring Entrepreneurs Competition. Assistant Director Hagen has been asked to join the Design Team to create the new event as a standalone and we will begin meeting in October.

Options for Future Programs and Development of Buildings/Land

- Staff has been working with Tim Reisonour of ZRT to get spec drawings and estimates on the cost to make the I35/I90 park owned by Greater Jobs shovel ready and what the cost to build a new spec building or incubator would be.
- The estimates for the building came in very high at 10 million. We were hoping for 6 to 8 million. The increase of about 2 million more has to do with the COVID shortages and supply demands that are driving up the cost of construction material and labor.
- At this time, it is not feasible to build another spec building, but it can be considered in the future as either prices go down and/or we sell one of our existing buildings.
- Other ideas include making the I35-I90 land shovel ready, a larger scale Tiger Cage program, or potentially a smaller spec building.
- After discussion the board recommended that staff look further into the cost and timeline to make the 70 acres in the I35/I90 Park shovel ready. After we get a long-term commitment or sale on either of our 2 new spec buildings, that might be the best time to revisit the idea of building another.

Collaboration (Chamber/CVB/ALEDA)

- The final images and messaging for the “who we are/how we work together” marketing project is done and we will be discussing with Holly and Shari and rolling out the campaign soon.
- Also working on the strategic planning goal of a joint marketing plan, will be working with a local group to begin planning and working on this with our partners.
- Met with partners (Chamber/CVB) about the joint visitor’s guide/community guide to provide one professional and informative guide for both visitors and community members. This will be a joint project.
- We’ve also begun to plan for the Shop Small Bingo card and Shop Small Saturday campaign.

Conferences/Meetings to Note

- Continued attendance at regular meetings.

EX-OFFICIO UPDATE

Freeborn County – Tom Jensen

- Currently working on where/how the ARC funds will be used.
- County negotiated their employee health insurance; cost will be going down this year for employees.
- Beginning January 1, County employees will now be able to use the Health Partners clinic at the Brookside School building. This is a new partnership with the school district.

ALEDA MISSION STATEMENT

“To provide and promote services and resources to retain, expand, create and attract businesses, increase tax base and quality employment opportunities in Freeborn County.”

- Bridge Avenue construction is still ongoing, they are hoping to have the project wrapped up by November 1.
- Preliminary budget increase was set at 5%, working to bring that lower. Staff is preparing options for the county board to review to decide what they want to cut.
- County staff is meeting to discuss a possible regional food shelf opportunity with Channel One. The food shelf would be in Albert Lea.
- They bond will be coming off the courthouse in 2023. Staff has hired Apex to consult them on energy saving upgrades and improvements including HVAC, roofs, lighting, solar, etc. for county buildings.

City of Albert Lea – Ian Rigg

Ian Rigg submitted updates by email to Port Authority staff, they were;

- We are reviewing some economic development policies to make them more inclusive and easier to process where we can. Also we are focusing on having incentives expanded to meet the different challenges in Albert Lea like work force housing needs.
- We continue discussions with a developer about redevelopment of and adding more housing.
- The City acquired some properties a few weeks ago and are looking to invest what would have otherwise been wasted demolition costs into preserving housing, commercial space and the tax base instead.
- We continue to offer TIF and tax abatement for some businesses to promote development or redevelopment.
- The Blazing Star Property environmental assessment has been slow going but is still moving in hopes to clear some property for new commercial development.

Chamber of Commerce – Shari Jenson

Shari Jenson submitted updates by email to Port Authority staff, they were;

- Ambassadors - - Did their first two Ca\$h Mobs. The first one was at The Funky Zebras in August; the second was in September, at Wintergreen. Both were a lot of fun and the businesses were extremely grateful! Ca\$h Mobs will be held monthly, at undisclosed locations. We will be inviting the public to participate, in hopes of growing them even bigger! The next Ca\$h Mob will be held on October 28th.
- Business After Hours events will be held in November and December. Details coming soon.
- Business Education Collaborative - - First quarter Albert Lea Greater Education Project Workgroup meeting will be held October 15th. - October is Minnesota Manufacturing Month - Chamber will promote on Chamber website/FB. Will also send an E-blast out, including the CareerForce “5 Great Reasons to Consider Manufacturing” info page and encourage businesses to use as they choose.
- Community Resiliency Committee - - Met September 16th. Kathy Leidal presented “Fall into Wellness” – a month-long virtual program Mayo Clinic Health System rolled out 10/1,

ALEDA MISSION STATEMENT

“To provide and promote services and resources to retain, expand, create and attract businesses, increase tax base and quality employment opportunities in Freeborn County.”

designed to help participants jump-start building new healthy habits. Here is the link:
<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/fall-into-wellness>

- Worksite Wellness - - Real Age Test opened on Monday, September 13th – The Chamber will be promoting this via email and weekly eBlasts.
- October 8th, from noon-1 p.m. there will be a Zoom presentation and Q&A session, covering: Healthcare services offered in Albert Lea; Partnerships; and, Current Concerns (COVID, Flu and Cold Season, and ongoing care). - Dr. David Heine, M.D. – Family Medicine Physician at MercyOne and Sumit Bhagra, M.D. – Site Lead Physician at Mayo Clinic Health System will be presenting.
- Annual Meeting - - It was decided that our Annual Meeting will not be held in person again, this year. We will be doing a video presentation, again.
- Dementia Friendly Freeborn County - - Kicked off Memory Café in September. Memory Café will be held the second Thursday of every month at 2 p.m. at the Historical Museum. - Memory Kits are now available at the Library.
- Leadership Reads - - October 15th, noon-1 p.m. “Leading with Emotional Courage” by Peter Bregman.
- Social Media Breakfast - - Tuesday, October 26th, 8:30-10 a.m. Thomas Beck, writer and social media expert at Taylor Corporation will present.
- Blood Drive - - October 29th, noon-6 p.m. at Northbridge Mall. Donors needed.

Convention and Visitors Bureau – Holly Karsjens

Holly Karsjens submitted updates by email to Port Authority staff, they were;

- Art Sculpture Walk Bases proposal approved by City Council 9/13/21
- Partnered billboards - BOTH I35 boards are up
- Bomgaars Sign
 - Survey is in the works on the property, and then will come the easement for the City
 - I don’t foresee a new sign in place before the end of 2021
- Visitors Guide 2022
 - Met with Shari & Noelle to start building out the joint publication
 - Have a mtg with Hustle Marketing team week after next to hand off the layout
 - Will start working on ads & stories end of the month
- Bringing in more sweatshirts & things for the swag store for Winter
- Working with Bob @ Recreation on:
 - Patio & lights North of the Red Shed at the N Broadway Parking lot
 - Power at Central Park
 - Inclusive Summer Picnic
- Core Partner group mtg: Strategic Plan
 - Wayfinding Signs
 - Started conversation with Megan at the City
 - Welcome Wagon

ALEDA MISSION STATEMENT

“To provide and promote services and resources to retain, expand, create and attract businesses, increase tax base and quality employment opportunities in Freeborn County.”

- Will develop a welcome bag to sell to businesses as a first day gift to new employees
- EVENTS
 - Main Street Shop Sip-n-Stroll Oct 9 (bags ALMOST sold out!!!)
 - Spooktacular Oct 28
 - Deer Widow Shopping Event Nov 6th
 - Pots on Broadway (Decorating of Planters Competition) Nov 20th
 - Small Biz Bingo Nov 22-27
 - Holiday Bazaar

COMMISSIONER/OTHER ITEMS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Heinemann made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Murray. The motion carried 6 in favor, 0 opposed. The meeting adjourned at 9:03 am.

Filed and attested October 6, 2021.



President



Secretary

ALEDA MISSION STATEMENT

"To provide and promote services and resources to retain, expand, create and attract businesses, increase tax base and quality employment opportunities in Freeborn County."