

ALBERT LEA PORT AUTHORITY
MINUTES

Wednesday, March 1, 2023 – 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, March 1, 2023 at 7:30 a.m. by President Skogheim. Roll was noted by the Board Secretary.

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT: Ian Rigg, City of Albert Lea Representative; John Forman, Freeborn County Representative; Candace Pesch, Freeborn County Representative; Shari Sprague, Business Community Representative; Holly Babcock, Local Tourism Representative

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT: None

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023 REGULAR MEETING

The minutes from the Wednesday, February 1, regular meeting was reviewed. Commissioner Heinemann made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Murray. President Skogheim asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 7 in favor; 0 opposed.

RESOLUTION PA-23-07 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF CLAIMS

The claims were presented for review. Commissioner Jansen made a motion to accept the claims as presented in the amount of \$55,866.29, seconded by Commissioner Dahl. President Skogheim asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 7 in favor; 0 opposed.

WINNEBAGO COOPERATIVE TELECOM ASSOCIATION PRESENTATION

Mark Thoma, WCTA CEO, presented to the board an update on their expansion plans. They are located in Lake Mills and have been providing services to the area since 1950. They are currently expanding their buried fiber network, and will be providing fiber internet to Albert Lea and the surrounding area in Freeborn County in the next 5 years. Mr. Thoma explained the benefits of a co-op model and their focus on the local community vs. shareholder dividends. Their investment in Albert Lea will cost about \$20

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million, WCTA has committed to the full investment on their own. They also received a large grant to finish North and East Freeborn County areas.

STAFF REPORT

Collaboration Chamber/CVB/ALEDA

- Staff continues to support each other in the office and through participation in various projects, committees, and events. There will be more opportunities to partner together in 2023 with both the Main Street Program and the Chamber including working on Business Succession Planning and entrepreneur/business education.

Scholarship Program

- In lieu of meeting with businesses individually staff has proposed to have a kickoff event in April to introduce the idea to the community and get people on board.
- FMEC committed \$15,000 each year for five years.
- Hoping that a ‘word-of-mouth’ strategy will get more businesses and donors on board.
- Still having a discussion about when the program will be released – for 2023 graduates or 2024.

ALEDA Spec Building Parking Lot Expansion

- Unfortunately, staff did not receive the information from Tim in time for the meeting.
- Due to the growth of Design Ready Controls, the current tenant in the building, there is a need for additional parking lot space. Currently, DRC employs 50 people – by the end of the year they think that number will increase to 100-120.
- Once we have the numbers from Tim, we will organize a meeting between ALEDA, the City, and DRC to see how we can get this paid for and done promptly.
- Another plant in Waseca, MN has closed, DRC will be working on trying to attract that workforce here.

Update on Vortex

- Phase 1 and Phase 2 were built during the original construction period, they are now at full capacity in their freezer storage space and are looking at starting Phase 3 very soon.
- Phase 3 will be an additional 15-20 jobs created.

Child Care

- Staff shared the action/strategic plan that the group finalized with the consultant, Jeff Andrews.
- Next steps will be to discuss how we move forward as a group and which items from the plan we will work towards first.

Freeborn County Fair

- Staff shared with the board a request letter from the Freeborn County Fair Board of Directors. The letter outlined how the fair does not generate enough income annually to cover the expenses involved in managing the fair event.
- Staff highlighted that we do budget for contributions to other entities such as Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, Albert Lea Main Street, etc.
- Staff recommended the board consider a one time donation of \$5,000.
- After discussion the board agreed that if this were to be an ongoing ask, more information would need to be provided.

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- Commissioner Heinemann moved to approve the \$5,000 donation for the 2023 Fair Season, with the stipulation that if they were to ask again in the future we would need a presentation on the financials and a better understanding of the P&L, Commissioner Jansen seconded the motion. President Skogheim asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 7 in favor; 0 opposed.

Conferences/Meetings to Note

- Continued attendance at regular meetings.
- Staff participated as Day Leaders for the Chamber Leadership Program in February. The group toured Vortex Cold Storage, Design Ready Controls, Lou-Rich, and Albert Lea Select Foods.
- Staff had a discussion with John Gary, from DCA.
- Staff attended the ribbon cutting event for Big Lots.

EX-OFFICIO UPDATE

Freeborn County – Candace Pesch, John Forman

- Attended legislative conference. Let them know what Freeborn County's needs are.
- Met with Gene Dornik, let him know what the priorities are for Freeborn County.
- Beginning strategic planning sessions soon.
- Workplace culture sessions coming up soon as well.

City of Albert Lea – Ian Rigg

- Former Streater Building – want to put a loading dock straight off of 1st Ave, city is working with them to create a better option.
- State legislative sessions – small amount of money available to support the first phase of the grit facility at the wastewater treatment plant, there's been some traction on the dredging project.
- Meeting with SWMN Housing – see what can be done, potential to move forward with 9 houses.
- Another meeting next week for housing – developer looking at senior and low income tax credit housing

Chamber of Commerce – Shari Sprague

- Upcoming events include; Ag Luncheon, 2 ribbon cuttings
- Thanked Freeborn County for their support letter for the application to name Freeborn County as an Age Friendly County through AARP. Chamber has also started Tech Tuesdays and local cell phone companies are attending and helping people with their phones – first events were very successful.
- Golf Outing will be July 24th.
- Annual Meeting is October 26th.
- Community Resiliency Committee – working with NAMI, they're doing presentations and recording them so they can be rewatched by employers/employees.
- Coffee Cocoa, and Close Ups – March 22nd, networking and headshots with Holly.

Convention and Visitors Bureau – Holly Babcock

- Art Call released for Art Sculpture walk, hoping to have ribbon cuttings and installation in Augst.

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- Home Federal Wall/Alley Mural – cover the graffiti with a mural, work with the businesses to pain their back doors.
- New Visitors Guide is done.
- Organizing a meeting to discuss Welcome Wagon ideas and begin working on the enhanced welcome guide.
- CVB Staff attended tourism conference, got a lot of great ideas. Will be implementing some including expanding blog and video content.

COMMISSIONER/OTHER ITEMS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Heinemann made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Jansen. The motion carried 7 in favor, 0 opposed. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

Filed and attested March 1, 2023.



President



Secretary

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