

# **ALBERT LEA PORT AUTHORITY**

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## **MINUTES**

**Wednesday, February 7, 2024 – 7:30 a.m.**

**Annual 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, February 7, 2024 at 7:30 a.m. by President Murray. Roll was noted by the Board Secretary.

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT: Ryan Rasmussen, Freeborn County Representative; John Forman, Freeborn County Representative; Ian Rigg, City of Albert Lea Representative

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT: Holly Babcock, Local Tourism Representative; Shari Sprague, Business Community Representative;

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

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 10, 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

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

### RESOLUTION PA-24-06 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF CLAIMS

The claims were presented for review. Commissioner Heinemann made a motion to accept the claims as presented in the amount of \$62,693.58 seconded by Commissioner Skogheim. President Murray asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 7 in favor; 0 opposed.

### STAFF REPORT

#### **Collaboration Chamber/CVB/ALEDA**

- Staff continues to support each other in the office and through participation in various projects, committees, and events.
- ALEDA staff will be volunteering as day leaders for the February Business and Economic Development day – part of the Chamber’s Leadership Program.

#### 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.”*

## **Scholarship Program**

- The program was announced to high school students, resulting in a positive reaction from them.
- It will be interesting to see the enrollment numbers for the program and efforts are underway to fundraise for 2025.
- Collaboration with Janelle is ongoing to determine the necessary funding for the next year.
- Enrollment count won't be available until fall when students are fully registered and enrolled in their classes.
- Plans include pushing the high school to increase awareness about the program, possibly through a sign-up day to determine eligibility and generate more interest.

## **South Shore Drive Property**

- Closed on the property in December.
- Discussions with Aaron regarding progress with Wedgewood have been positive. Plans for the initial phase in the spring include starting to build the first twin home, with one being presale and the other a spec.
- Efforts are underway to finalize updated cost estimates and work on rezoning and infrastructure numbers. Once zoning is complete, discussions with Aaron regarding layout and the project will commence.

## **Childcare**

- A grant program opportunity for opening new in-home daycares was introduced.
- Proposal includes covering all start-up costs, amounting to \$5,000 per daycare.
- More discussions need to be had with the county board.
- If we wanted to create two new in-home daycares, the total grant amount is \$10,000, with the possibility of sharing it among multiple recipients.
- The board was open to the possible grant program creation.

## **ALEDA/Balchem Building Discussion**

- Balchem chose not to exercise the purchase option at the five-year mark.
- Staff proposes that we revisit the opportunity to sell them the building because getting rid of the debt would allow us to pursue other upcoming opportunities that our current debt leverage restricts us from.
- After discussion, the board recommended staff reach out to Balchem to gauge interest before pursuing a building appraisal.

## **Employee Handbook Discussion**

- Staff presented the two handbook changes that have previously been approved by the board. Commissioner Heinemann moved to approve the changes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Skogheim. President Murray called for further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 7 in favor; 0 opposed.

## **Conferences/Meetings to Note**

- Continued attendance at regular meetings.
- Other meetings included: Scholarship announcement at the high school and meeting on Areal/City projects referendum.

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## EX-OFFICIO UPDATE

### **Freeborn County – John Forman, Ryan Rasmussen**

- A new county assessor, Candy Lehan, was appointed by the board. With 15 years of assessment experience in Mower County and recent work in Olmstead County as a commercial appraiser, Candy brings valuable expertise to the role.
- Discussion at a recent meeting highlighted county regulation of smaller solar arrays, with interest expressed by Freeborn Mower Electric Cooperative. The county regulates these solar installations.

### **City of Albert Lea – Ian Rigg**

- Exploration of city ordinances regarding the inclusion of solar panels as accessory units, including attachment to roofs, and considerations for accessory structures and tiny homes.
- Work underway on restrictions for B2 zoning related to cannabis and other business types.
- Amendments to the sign ordinance discussed, including restrictions for vinyl banners and unconventional signage.
- Active participation in housing discussions and coalition discussions pre-legislative session for funding increases.

### **Chamber of Commerce – Shari Sprague**

- Shari was unable to attend but provided the following updates:
  - Big Freeze Medallion Hunt is happening, now!
  - We held the first quarterly “New Member New Resident Coffee” on January 23rd at The Outlet. It was very well received and very well attended. The next one is Tuesday, April 23rd. Anyone and everyone is welcome to attend.
  - Leadership program is going great! Last month, Kim Nelson and Val Kvale were Day Leaders for Diversity and Workforce Development Day. We had guest speakers from DEED and the MN Chamber. This month, Phillip and Noelle are our Day Leaders for Business & Economic Development Day.
  - Business After Hours continues to grow! Minnesota Freezer Warehouse sponsored January; Albert Lea Seed House is the February sponsor. Join us, Tuesday, February 20th, from 5-6:30 p.m. at Wedgewood. (Always the 3rd Tuesday.)
  - Next blood drive is Friday, February 23rd.
  - We’re having our next ‘coffee, cocoa & closeups’ headshots event on Wednesday, February 28th. Can register online or call the Chamber.

### **Convention and Visitors Bureau – Holly Babcock**

- Holly was unable to attend but provided the following updates:
  - Updates on the Big Freeze event, with activities like Elsa, pancake breakfast continuing, while ice fishing and pond hockey were canceled due to weather conditions. Other scheduled activities remain unaffected.
  - Progress on the "vote yes" campaign for recreation/city arena improvements is ongoing.

## COMMISSIONER/OTHER ITEMS

Staff requested approval to have two documents drafted related to acres in the South Industrial Park. There are two potential projects seriously looking at purchasing the property within the next 12 months and these projects need a Right of First Refusal or Letter of Intent in order to start the process for grant

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applications and to bring to their banks/investors of the project. The board approved staff going forward with preparation of these documents through an attorney.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Skogheim made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Heinemann. The motion carried 7 in favor, 0 opposed. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m.

Filed and attested February 7, 2024.

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President

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Secretary

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