



FILED
MAR 31 2025
GALE A. NEULIEB
CITY CLERK
CITY OF MICHIGAN CITY

Minutes

January 27, 2024

The Michigan Urban Enterprise Association conducted a meeting on January 27, 2025, commencing at 6:00 p.m. in-person and on Zoom. This meeting was open and was held in the Access LaPorte County conference room, located at 301 East Eighth Street, Michigan City, IN 46360.

Board Members Present: Tristan Smith, Sylvia Collins, Nick Pollock, Dakota Euler, Antonio Conley, Bruce de'Medici, Wendy Willis.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to add the November 18, 2024, minutes to the record and to amend them to add the word "Michigan" to reflect that the meeting occurred in Michigan City.

The motion was seconded and approved.

A motion was made to amend the December 2, 2024, minutes to reflect that the meeting occurred at the City Hall for Michigan City.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Directors' Report

Mr. Pollock updated the Board on the Executive Assistant search committee interviewing applicants.

Mr. Pollock reported that three resumés that have been submitted –Joseline Schooly retracted her resume; the Committee had reached out to Mary Loggins to schedule an interview and not received any communication from her; and the Committee (Mr. Pollock, Mr. Smith, and Mr. de'Medici) had met with and interviewed Kamisha Williams.

Mr. Pollock also reported that the UEA had advertised the available position through the Beacon and Michigan City Chamber of Commerce had advertised it.

Mr. de'Medici reported that he had discussed the position with a Michigan City resident and invited him to apply.

Mr. Pollock invited questions from the Board.

Mr. Smith noted that the time to submit a resume was still open and recommended that the Board postpone making a decision on selection to fill the position until after the time to submit a resume passed.

Finance Report

Mr. Smith commented that the Board should determine how much of its revenue and funds on hand it would deploy in grants and in respective categories of grants, mainly business grants residential grants.

The Board then discussed expanding the types of grants to include workforce development. The Board also acknowledged the contribution of Dan Botich toward collection on revenue for the UEA.

Ms. Collins also commented that the UEA will have approximately \$290,000 to \$300,000 to utilize in operations and grants for the 2025 year, and that after projected expenses (including office, supplies, wages for the executive assistant) the UEA will have approximately \$200,000 for grants. She recommended that the UEA have this projected by March.

Ms. Collins also raised the topic of the UEA engaging in outreach in the community and the question of whether the UEA can extend grants to for-profit entities or only to not-for-profit entities.

Ms. Collins also expressed that it would be helpful to have historical information on past grant activity over the past five years, but also articulated that it would be difficult to compile that information from some of that period of time because some records on this were not accessible.

Ms. Collins also expressed her desire for the UEA to expand the participation of businesses in the Urban Enterprise Zone with the UEA and for the UEA to develop a Workforce Development grant and a grant focusing on community beautification.

Ms. Collins also noted that some checks issued by the UEA for grants were not yet reflected in the most recent bank statements.

A motion was made to approve the December finance report.
The motion was seconded and passed.

New Business

DEF Consulting contract proposal

(Development Economic Finance Consulting LLC)

Mr. Botich addressed the UEA in person.

He reported that he has been involved in finance economic development for over 30 years and works with municipalities and townships for assisting with economic development projects and quantifying the impacts of land use decisions.

He also reported that he has worked with municipal bodies throughout Northwest Indiana, including with the Hammond UEA for 15 - 16 years and the LaPorte UEA and the East Chicago UEA (as well as the Michigan City UEA), assisting in calculating qualified participation fees that

businesses receive from filing a Form EZ2 to monitoring those fees, assisting with budgets, preparing tax impact and tax rate impacts to be submitted to the city councils, and works closely with the LaPorte county auditor's office.

Mr. Botich also explained that with tax rates for taxing unit 009 and 0 022 (which is Cool Spring Township and Michigan Township) now being available, the UEA can start to prepare the packet for 2025 invoices (assuming the UEA approves his firm's consulting agreement).

He also explained that this would be based upon the January 1st, 2024, filings and that once those are verified and approved, it would be possible to estimate what the participation fee would be next July 1st (or whatever date the UEA selected) and that this would help the UEA with budgeting for 2026.

Mr. Botich also noted that sending invoices to participating businesses early in the calendar year was beneficial for a UEA because this enabled the participating businesses to budget UEA invoices into their year planning.

Mr. Botich also noted that his firm projected an increase from the 2024 fee because he anticipates spending more time working with the UEA in 2025 and reported that his firm could inform the UEA when the billing reached 90% of the contract fee and update the UEA on whether the contract fee would be sufficient to cover his firm billing or, alternatively, request an amendment to the contract to request a higher fee.

Mr. Botich also explained the purpose of the increase in the fee for 2025: in prior periods, the UEA board decided that they were going to conduct the tracking but that consumed much time of the Executive Director; Mr. Botich suggested that going forward, if Mr. Botich's firm performed this tracking, the Executive Assistant would have a correspondingly higher amount of time for community outreach.

Mr. Botich also conveyed that his education is in finance, with a Masters Degree.

A motion was made to approve the DLF Consulting contract.

The motion was seconded and approved.

2025 Residential Grants

Mr. Smith mentioned that the income eligibility table has probably been updated with higher income levels allowed since the 2017 levels set forth in the table.

Ms. Collins expressed that he included more detail in the process, to enhance the people applying for the grant providing the required information up front and spare the UEA having to follow-up for additional required information.

Ms. Collins also suggested that residential grant applicants appear in person to the UEA to explain their project and answer questions. She also noted that this enhances the UEA connection to the community and the grant applicants understanding the role of the UEA.

Ms. Collins also noted that her proposed grant format better informed grant applicants of deadlines.

Ms. Collins also suggested that the UEA observe how UEAs for other communities addressed operational issues to learn from their ideas and suggested that the UEA form a small committee to assist the executive administrative assistant to enhance the transition of responsibilities to the new assistant.

Ms. Collins, Mr. de'Medici, and Mr. Conly volunteered.

Ms. Collins also expressed her preference that the residential grants involve local contractors and also that the UEA ask the grant applicant how they learned about the UEA, to enable the UEA to better track its profile in the community.

Ms. Collins raised the question of proof of payment, since the grant is a reimbursement; since grant applicants are low-income, it may be a hardship to expect them to remit payment to a contractor up front and asked for the Board to address this.

Mr. de'Medici suggested some kind of pseudo escrow account.

Mr. de'Medici also raised the questions of the UEA retaining a copy of any of the items that are listed to be provided for the UEA and expressed concern on the UEA undertaking responsibility for protecting those records and retaining them for any particular period of time, and that some of the information might qualify as personal identifying information that would give rise to legal requirements on maintaining it.

Mr. de'Medici also raised the question of the UEA reviewing tax returns that might show the applicant's social security number and suggested that we instruct the applicant to obscure or cover up the social security number before showing the return to the UEA.

Mr. de'Medici also raised the point that the proposed form requires a consent to assess the ownership – that the UEA does not want to place itself as underwriting that it determined that the grant applicant owns the home upon which work it proposed to be done, as to verify this, the UEA would have to travel to LaPorte to review the online records of the LaPorte County Recorder (whose records may not always be accurate) and this would be inappropriate to require of the UEA.

Mr. de'Medici suggested that the UEA take some time to consider this last point and volunteered to do so.

Mr. Euler and Mr. Pollock also volunteered to work on this.

Mr. de'Medici also raised a concern that Michigan City does not require bonding from contractor seeking a permit to work in the City.

Mr. Smith made a motion to hold this topic over the next meeting while the committee works on
The motion was seconded and approved.

2025 Business Grants

Mr. Smith raised concerns on verifying progress of construction on business grant projects. In part, this reflected that on some business grants, applicants were seeking several grants because they had determined that it was easy to obtain more than one grant from the UEA. Mr. Smith also suggested a modification whereby an applicant disclose both overall plans for business improvement and whether it was going to pursue only partial completion of a project at any given time and thus only request a grant for the portion that it intended to complete in the present. This would also assist the UEA in budgeting for business grants in 2026.

Mr. Smith also suggested requiring business applicants provide progress reports on projects and disclose how a project involved in a grant could impact employment in the community – with a correlating vista on whether certain potential projects for a grant business could have more impact upon community employment.

The UEA discussed setting aside funds for a community/neighborhood grant.

Mr. Pollock raised the question of a category for a sponsorship event – and suggested that the applicant make a showing of economic impact and that for business grants, they also be required to use local contractors.

Mr. Pollock also raised the question of requiring a business tenant showing written consent from the building owner for the tenant having work done for the rented property.

The UEA also discussed applying a factor to increase a grant if the applicant utilized a local contractor and the amounts of grants for residential and business.

The UEA also discussed that it would be helpful to obtain Mr. Botich's perspective on these grant amount issues.

Motion was made to hold the Business Grant topic over to the next meeting

The motion was seconded and approved.

Mr. Danny Armstrong (a member of the public) addressed the UEA and asked if particular contractors were performing work on approved grants year after year and if the UEA could

condition that if a contractor performed work in one year it could not perform work in a subsequent year.

Neighborhood Improvement Grant

Mr. Smith suggested that this could be the category of grants where sponsorships could be addressed and suggested, as an example, this could include projects to address landscaping or tree care for disadvantaged individuals in the Urban Enterprise Zone.

Mr. Smith also suggested that Mr. Pollock, Mr. Euler, and Mr. de'Medici discuss this and update the UEA on their discussion, including parameters for the grant.

Mr. Smith also suggested that these grants could include a workforce development component - geared toward residents of the Urban Enterprise Zone getting individual training.

The UEA also discussed that federal or state grants might integrate with this concept.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. Botich if other UEAs had programs like this. Mr. Botich reviewed how this can be developed through the applicable governance of the UEAs.

A motion was made to table this topic until the next meeting and turn it over to the grant committee

The motion was seconded and approved.

Budget for 2025

Mr. Smith reported that the budget is due to the city council by March 1st.

Ms. Collins, Mr. de'Medici, and Mr. Smith agreed to work on this.

Old Business

No old business to address

Public Comment

Kamisha Williams addressed the UEA and expressed that she enjoyed watching the meeting and that the subject of the meeting aligned with her goals.

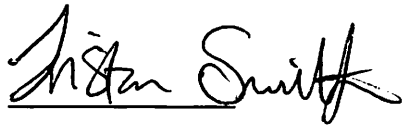
Jose addressed the UEA and expressed appreciation for the possibility of projects for local contractors.

Directors' Comment

Ms. Willis expressed that she was glad to be selected to serve on the UEA.

A motion to adjourn was made.

Motion seconded and approved.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Megan Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the first name.

Board President