

Antrim County Economic Development Corporation

Mission Statement: Retain, expand, and promote County-wide economic growth and stability.

**April 18, 2023
Minutes**

Members present: Rachel Krino, Dawn LaVanway, Sherry Comben, Pete Garwood, Kathleen Peterson, and Tim Timmer

Members Absent: Leslie Elrod, Cherie Hogan, Bonnie Robbins

Others Present: Jessica Lovay from NLEA; Janet Koch

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:04 a.m. by Rachel Krino.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Kathleen Peterson, second by Dawn LaVanway, to approve the March 21, 2023 meeting minutes as presented.

Motion passed.

4. Discussion: Strategic Planning

Jessica Lovay, Community Development & Grants Director with Northern Lakes Economic Alliance, described her technique for compiling the responses from the EDC members regarding strategic planning; identify action items, identifying potential partners, funding. She said seven of the nine EDC members responded; a very good response.

Ms. Lovay said the common themes of the responses were education, being a resource, and a connector of information. True actionable involvement did not come across as a priority. Main categories of topics and sub-topics were:

- Community & Human Services
 - Affordable housing
 - General needs of growing population/health facilities
 - Childcare,
- Business & Economic Development
 - Broadband
 - Property redevelopment
 - Talent attraction and workforce development
 - Business attraction & economic development
- Environmental
 - Preserve & protect natural resources
- Organizational Objectives
 - Communication
 - Access to Resources
 - EDC Evaluation
 - Collaboration

Ms. Comben said true actionable items would require dedicated staff. She described how other counties approach economic development. Mr. Timmer suggested that EDC members meet with businesses in 2024 to determine their needs. Ms. Lovay said NLEA focuses on larger businesses; she said the EDC contacting smaller businesses could be beneficial. She also said that it would be helpful if news of large businesses and properties being sold could be forwarded to NLEA.

Ms. Krino said the EDC outreach had been limited during the pandemic, and that now was a good time to refocus and move forward. Ms. Lovay recommended prioritizing the items and how often the EDC wants to address the items, that the May meeting could put a timeline to action steps.

Ms. Krino asked if the EDC was a policy & procedures organization or an action organization. Mr. Timmer suggested that the EDC provide metrics that could track accomplishments. Ms. LaVanway said an annual report could provide data regarding housing and other items.

Mr. Garwood suggested rating items from two points of view; first by community importance, second by EDC focus. There was a consensus that affordable housing should be a high priority.

It was noted that if funds were required for any action steps, the County's Capital Improvement Plan was in planning stages. Mr. Garwood said in his experience that project-based funding requests were most successful, and that the EDC would be most successful if their goals were supported by the BOC.

Ms. Koch noted that Dave Emmel, NLEA President, had told the BOC in a recent training workshop that economic growth is quantitative and that economic development is qualitative. Business surveys were discussed. It was mentioned that some communities were currently conducting surveys. Ms. Krino noted that the EDC could request the survey results.

The EDC's mission to "Retain, expand, and promote County-wide economic growth and stability" was mentioned.

Ms. Lovay noted that there seemed to be a disconnect between where the EDC wanted to go and how the EDC was going to get there. She asked the EDC about its roles and responsibilities. She recommended that the EDC recognize its own resources and what its highest priority focused and productive items should be.

It was the EDC's consensus that organizational objectives should be their highest priority. It was mentioned that the organizational objectives could also serve as an outreach and marketing plan. Ms. Krino and Ms. Koch will collaborate to send out a request to EDC members for their input regarding organizational objective action items.

5. Various Matters / Public / Member Comment

Ms. Koch mentioned that two seats are still available for the NLEA symposium on Monday, May 22 at Boyne Mountain.

Meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.