



Fredericktown Community Development Foundation, Monthly Meeting – Minutes for Thursday, February 4, 2016, 7:30 a.m., Fredericktown Local Schools Board Room.

Trustees in attendance were: Matthew Crispin, Jeffrey Harris, James Hobson, and Joan Stout.

The monthly meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m.

Mr. Hobson welcomed those in attendance and asked that any guests be introduced. Guests this day included Paula Elliott of Pleasant View Apartments.

Mr. Hobson opened the floor for a motion to approve the minutes of the Foundation’s Monthly Meeting of January 7, 2016. Mr. Harris noted that he received a couple corrections via email for the previously distributed minutes; those corrections had been made in the “final” version. Representative Margaret Ann Ruhl moved to approve the minutes and Ms. Stout seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hobson turned the floor over to the attendees for community resource updates.

Bruce Snell noted the Village will witness Debbie Whaley’s retirement as of June 1. He has received 60 applications for her replacement from individuals with strong credentials. The Village intends to fill her position by mid-February.

Rep. Ruhl noted the Ohio General Assembly was back in session, with a House medical marijuana committee, comprised of 15 members, holding seven hearings for stakeholder input. She stated the extent of voter turnout on the previous ballot issue had compelled the General Assembly to review the matter in further detail. The Senate is holding its own committee hearings on medical marijuana concurrently around Ohio. Mr. Snell pointed out the previous ballot measure was difficult to discern.

Rep. Ruhl further noted that unemployment tax reform has been proposed under House Bill 394, which such measure is supported by the local chambers of commerce and is opposed by organized labor unions.

Finally, Rep. Ruhl stated that 13 requests from her district were submitted for Ohio Capital Budget funding early this year.

Carol Grubaugh noted the Knox County Chamber was holding its 100th birthday luncheon on February 18 at Foster Hall, Ariel Arena, at the Mount Vernon Nazarene University. The keynote speaker is from Virginia and the Distinguished Young Women and Leadership Knox will participate in the event.

Mr. Crispin provided a report on the Fredericktown Local Schools. He stated the data has been reported from testing conducted in spring 2015 – Mr. Crispin distributed copies of the Knox County comparison report to the attendees. Within the 21 tests conducted, Fredericktown had the highest passage rate in Knox County. He credited the district's strong commitment by its teachers. Rep. Ruhl asked if the lower numbers for the middle school attainment suggested an issue. Mr. Crispin replied, yes, the middle school had experienced a heavy amount of teacher turnover in the middle school; he has his eyes set on improving the situation.

Mr. Harris gave updates on the Foundation's sister organization, the Area Development Foundation. First, he has hired two interns from Kenyon College to assist in his daily operations. Second, he will be hosting the US Dept. of Agriculture state lead staff within Knox County on Thursday, March 3. Alan Kintner stated there may be funding available from the USDA to assist with water infrastructure improvements. Ms. Elliott noted the agency is often highly involved in multi-family housing constructions.

Ms. Grubaugh noted to Mr. Harris that the Knox County Career Expo will take place on April 20 at the Knox Technical Center (formerly the Knox County Career Center Adult Education building) in Mount Vernon.

Mr. Hobson stated that he was getting on his soapbox to encourage the attendees to shop local. The Village community is enticing if the local economy is strong.

Mr. Hobson then asked Mr. Harris to provide an overview of a façade improvement-type program that could be employed by the Village. Mr. Harris described his efforts with the City of Worthington to create and administer a half-loan, half-grant program to encourage property owners and tenants to make improvements to their commercial building facades. If the Foundation agrees with the Worthington model, that approach can be easily updated and modified to fit the needs of the Village.

Mr. Hobson opened the floor to discussion. Ms. Stout noted the approach sounds good, but remarked that in the past, store keepers in Fredericktown have shied away because of the required building inspections. To this, Mr. Hobson reminded the attendees that the fire department will conduct proactive inspections to help building owners and tenants understand their obligations. Having said that, he noted that if issues exist with the buildings in downtown Fredericktown, they must be addressed eventually; store keepers cannot kick the can down the road indefinitely. Mr. Kintner assented to this point, noting that building issues have been raised over time and remain unaddressed in the downtown. He continued, stating that building maintenance must be done anyway – a façade program could help improve relationships between the Village and store keepers downtown. Likewise, he stated, residents like to see store keepers invest money in their properties. Mr. Kintner stated the façade program is one worth doing, if it can be capitalized properly.

Ms. Stout asked if there exists money to demolish structures. Tricia Styers stated that building owners may be initially hesitant to have their structures inspected, but if money exists to help them, it would be an easier sell to the owners and tenants. Mr. Harris responded, saying that was

his exact experience in Worthington; an initial chilly reception would warm once building owners understood the government can help pay for improvements. Ms. Stout asked further if an analysis had been conducted of the downtown buildings. Mr. Hobson replied that he did not know, but the Village's efforts in this area had been reactive to-date.

Ms. Grubaugh noted this would be a great initiative and good public relations for the Village. She emphasized that curb appeal is a big deal to outsiders viewing the community.

Mr. Hobson stated that Mayor Day had mentioned his interest in placing a business incubator in space at the old Village police station; the Village is paying for the space anyway. He noted that it could serve as office space for home-based workers – the space could accommodate a handful of such businesses and grow them in Fredericktown.

Ms. Grubaugh stated that other incubators exist in the area, including in Marion, and it would be helpful to visit them. She believes this is a great idea given the input she receives from members and other inquires at the Chamber. Many incubators have membership requirements and amenity packages to attract tenants. Further, they have established office hours and could make use of the available skilled resources in the community.

Mr. Kintner noted there is a framework involved, with equipment that must be purchased and signage placed appropriately to attract business. This all requires up-front capital. Moreover, it must be determined the best form of operation; a board must be created and it should not fall to the Village to operate an incubator.

Mr. Harris noted his research on this subject for the City of Worthington, and the need to leverage other successful incubator models – there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Mr. Harris has an upcoming visit to Braintree in Mansfield; Mr. Snell asked to attend that session.

Mr. Hobson asked for Officers' reports. Ms. Stout provided the attendees with two separate reports showing January's financial activity for the Foundation; one report for the Foundation as a whole, and the other showing the Tourism Committee's activity. There was no income – only a webpage expense was recorded. The upcoming Quilt Show to occur April 23 will incur various expenses.

Mr. Hobson asked if there was any further Old or New Business for the meeting. Ms. Stout asked that the Foundation have a conversation about the value-add of being part of this organization, and to ask members what they need. Mr. Crispin stated that a survey could be conducted using email addresses and SurveyMonkey. Ms. Stout remarked that members may not be sure what they receive in return for their annual dues checks.

Mr. Harris offered to chair a working committee of the Foundation to look into the façade improvement initiative. Several attendees offered to participate in such a meeting.

Rep. Ruhl moved to adjourn, which Mr. Hobson so did at 8:26 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffry Harris
Secretary