

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Economic Vitality Commission**

5:30 PM
April 21, 2021

Virtual Meeting

MINUTES

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Alternate Meeting Format: On March 6, 2020 the Mayor declared a civil emergency due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). On March 24, 2020 the Governor issued Proclamation 20-28 relating to the COVID-19 emergency and open public meetings. The proclamation has been extended. Due to these factors, the meeting was held using a remote meeting platform.

Commissioners Present:

Kathy McCorry, Acting Chair
Tom Brown
Corby Casler
Jon Edwards
Anjali Remme, Alternate
Chris Reichley, Alternate
Art Freas, Alternate

Administration/Staff:

Jen Davis Hayes, Economic Dev. Mgr.
Benton Coblentz, Economic Dev. Coord.

Commissioners Not Present:

Therese Garcia, Chair (Excused)
Christopher Beaudoin, Vice Chair (Excused)
Joan Probala (Excused)
Ashwin Muthuvenkataraman (Unexcused)
Tom Rogers (Unexcused)

CALL TO ORDER

McCORRY, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:36 PM. She noted that REMME and REICHLEY, Alternates, will be participating as regular (voting) members tonight.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED BY McCORRY, SECONDED BY EDWARDS that minutes of January 20, 2021 and March 25, 2021 EVC meetings be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

AGENDA ITEMS

a) **Welcome New Commissioners and Introductions, (I)**

Presented by:

Jen Davis Hayes, Economic Development Manager

Davis Hayes asked Commissioners to introduce themselves and share some information about their background and interest in serving the City.

b) **Business Survey Results (D)**

Presented by:

Benton Coblentz, Economic Development Coordinator

Coblentz provided some history about the City's last business survey, conducted October-November 2020, and gave more information about the why the City conducts business surveys

and the history of the City's business survey activities since 2012. He referred to the preliminary analysis of 2020 results prepared in December 2020, and said a final report will be available later this year. (Details about the survey, including the number of respondents, outreach activities, survey results, and the survey questions used are included in the agenda packet.)

The Commissioners shared thoughts about how the pandemic may have affected the 2020 results, particularly start-up businesses. The Commissioners also asked questions about the data, including what percentage of the City's businesses are represented in the results; the margin of error; what business types are represented in categories such as "other" and "none of the above;" whether qualitative responses were also collected; and whether the results are being used as a snapshot in time or more of an indication of trends.

The Commissioners were particularly interested in the data on women-owned businesses and home-based businesses, specifically about differences since the last business survey was taken (2016). They also discussed the difficulties new businesses face in their first two and first five years, and what support would be helpful for those businesses to succeed. REICHLEY indicated he would be willing to do some research on the issue of what support is most needed. Staff made a note of it.

Coblentz concluded his presentation with information about next steps in analyzing the responses to, and results of, the business survey. Staff will present more information to EVC as it becomes available.

c) **Business Grants, (I)**

Presented by:

Jen Davis Hayes, Economic Development Manager

Davis Hayes described the past opportunities the City has provided for business grants, and compared that information with business recovery grant opportunities in 2021 (details in the agenda packet).

d) **Business Technical Assistance - RFQ, (I)**

Presented by:

Jen Davis Hayes, Economic Development Manager

Davis Hayes explained the CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funding the City recently received from the federal government, which is intended to help small, low, and moderate income business owners grow their businesses by providing technical assistance. She explained how the program will work and said a program administrator is in the process of being hired now.

In response to a question from REMME, Davis Hayes explained the city's outreach activities to find out more about what resources small businesses need. EDWARDS noted it is important to not lose sight of the significance of supporting larger businesses and employers as well as small businesses. McCORRY agreed, and provided some details about the ways that EVC has interacted with larger businesses in the past. She noted that the majority of the City's grant funding allocated as part of the economic recovery effort is targeted to small businesses.

e) **Commission Officer Elections, (I)**

Presented by:

Jen Davis Hayes, Economic Development Manager

Davis Hayes said nominations and elections for EVC officers will be held at the May 19 meeting.

REPORTS

- a) *Business Openings, Closures, & Trends*: McCORRY spoke about the value in sharing information at EVC meetings about changes that Commissioners are aware of in terms of business openings and closings. CASLER suggested someone from REI be invited to EVC to talk about why they selected Issaquah for expansion. Staff made a note of it.
- b) *City Council Report Out*: Davis Hayes made a brief summary of recent City Council actions and plans. She said the Mayor's Recovery Task Force hosted a community meeting April 5 to discuss how best to invest the \$8.6 million the City recently received from the federal American Rescue Plan Act. She said EVC members will be kept informed about those and other discussions about how the City should use federal stimulus funds, and are welcome to follow the Task Force's meetings.
- c) *2021 Schedule*: Tentative details for EVC meetings in 2021 are included in the agenda packet. Suggestions for topics can be forwarded to staff.

OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to conduct, McCORRY adjourned the meeting at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary