

**Juneau County Economic Development Corporation  
Community Partners Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, February 11, 2020, at 5:30pm  
Mauston City Hall, Mauston WI**



In Attendance:

Bonnie Peterson	Gary Robison	Veronica Meyer	Terry Whipple
Tamaya Loewe	Randy Reeg	Rick Noe	Diane Kropiwka
Dennis Emery	Brian McGuire		

JCEDC President Bonnie Peterson opened the meeting at 5:31pm and welcomed everyone.

**Motion to approve the last Community Meeting Minutes by Meyer/Robison was carried.**

Gary Robison gave the Treasurer's report for December 2019. Balance brought forward \$45,352.91; Deposits \$1563.49, Debits \$20,508.10; Resulting Balance \$28,408.30. Copies of report are available.

**Motion to approve the Treasurer's Report by Meyer/Reeg was carried.**

Randy Reeg, Administrator for City of Mauston, presented update on the Mauston area:

- Downtown interest & investment: Oh! Arts Cooperative Studio opened, a microbrewery received CID grant through WEDC and is opening soon, and two new businesses are preparing to move into the Anytime Fitness mall building.
- Shopko still owns building – they paid a large price for it and want to recoup that when selling
- Kmart still has their building lease through December 2021, and it's not easy to show prospects
- Beer Walk is scheduled at the end of April – doubling up on vendors as a larger crowd is expected
- The new Speedway gas station will begin construction this spring after the frost is gone

Terry Whipple presented update on Juneau County area:

- Mauston will host the 2021 Rural Partners Summit at The Lodge at Mauston. Bonnie Peterson, Tamaya Loewe, and Mary Hudack will briefly present about Mauston at the 2020 summit. Typically this summit draws attendees from all around the state.
- We've received several inquiries and press interviews about Juneau County's history of presidential voting matching the national election outcomes consistently since the 1960s. Reporters and college professors are trying to figure out why Juneau County is so representative of the US as a whole regarding political opinions.
- We're partnering with WTC to bring trainings on automation, optimization, and artificial intelligence to Juneau County businesses so they can learn ways to grow despite the labor shortage using higher technologies instead of additional workforce.
- Planning for our Annual Government Opportunities Business Conference (GOBC) has begun. We bring small businesses together with prime contractors and government buyers of all levels and departments. The first conference actually took place in this very room 15 years ago!
- Working on transload facility for Juneau County. We have three Class A rail lines but without a transload facility we can't leverage these rail lines for local businesses that could definitely use them such as Mill Haven Foods and Organic Valley.

- Planning the upcoming iLEAD Casino Night Fundraiser.
- WHEDA is creating a new Office of Rural Prosperity. JCEDC will host a state speaker at our Annual Meeting in May to share details.
- Highlights of Juneau County as compared to National averages, from recent EMSI Report produced by NCWRPC:
  - ⇒ Slightly fewer Millennials
  - ⇒ Significantly higher number of employees retiring soon
  - ⇒ Significantly higher number of veterans
  - ⇒ Half the violent crime rate and property crime rate
  - ⇒ Much less diversity
  - ⇒ Top Jobs: Government, Manufacturing, Healthcare/ Social Assistance, Retail/ Trade
  - ⇒ Juneau County is one of very few counties that is actually growing

Further Reports & Discussion:

- (Meyer) *What is JC population and is it growing?* JC has a population of 26,624. Grew 286 in past 5 years. Projected to grow 281 over next 5 years. Labor participation rate is also increasing. JC has unemployment rate below 3% and has ranked in the top quarter of all WI counties for lowest unemployment rate. JC jumped from the bottom 5 counties in state to ranked 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> out of all rural counties for average wages.
- (Kropiwka) *What keeps workers from coming to Juneau County?* A decade ago it was unappealing corridors in communities. Today we need higher skilled labor to fill higher tech jobs, so we need to focus on attracting nature-lovers rather than metropolitan-minded individuals and families.

President's Comments:

- Thank you all for coming.

**Motion to adjourn by Meyer/Peterson was carried at 6:05pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

*TJO Loewe*

Tamaya Jo Loewe, Acting Secretary