

MINUTES OF APRIL 10, 2024
VERMILION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
REGULAR MEETING

President Patrick Duhon called the meeting to order at 5:50 PM. The meeting was held at the Vermilion Parish Government Office Complex, 407 Charity Street, Abbeville, La.

Mr. Ben Rivera led the Pledge of Allegiance before Mr. Duhon requested a moment of silence.

The following members were present at the meeting: Mr. Ruben Rivera, Mr. Richard Guilbeaux, Ms. Kristin Vincent, Ms. Linda Vincent, Mr. Joshua Anderson, Ms. Kristy Doucet-Touchet, Ms. Nikki Vidos, and Mr. Patrick Duhon

The following members were absent: Mr. Elliot Broussard, Ms. Anne T. Falgout, Ms. Anita Dupuis, Ms. Claire Broussard, Ms. Megan Landry-Lalande and Mr. Jacob Landry

The following guests were present: Ms. Kayla Link, VEDA, and Ms. Shari Cormier, VEDA, and Ms. Lynn Guillory

PUBLIC COMMENTS: There were no public comments regarding any of the items on the agenda.

MINUTES: The minutes of the March 13, 2024, meeting were approved as written on a motion made by Mr. Ben Rivera. Ms. Nikki Vidos duly seconded the motion, and it was unanimously carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Ms. Nikki Vidos gave the Treasurer's Report. The board was provided with a list of invoices and expenses totaling \$682.41. Mr. Richard Guilbeaux motioned the board to accept the Treasurer's Report and pay the invoices. Mr. Ben Rivera duly seconded the motion, and it was unanimously carried.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: Ms. Kayla Link presented the board with her March Administrative Report. She noted that she assisted 2 new business start-ups and completed 5 visits with existing businesses. She updated the board on the existing business prospects/projects and reviewed existing grant opportunities available to the parish. She noted a meeting with the Twin Parish Port and the opportunity to meet with tour guides from across the country at Crawfish Haven/Mrs. Rose's Bed and Breakfast. Ms. Link also reported meeting with the Town of Delcambre, the Acadiana Planning Commission, Sellers and Associates and the Office of Rural Development regarding the town's infrastructure needs for their water and sewer project.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Ms. Nikki Vidos informed the board that the Transition Committee provided letters of support to Senator Bill Cassidy and Congressman Clay Higgins on behalf City of Abbeville's Riverfront Revitalization and Infrastructure Enhancement Project. Mr. Ben Rivera motioned the board to ratify the letters in support of the City's efforts to redevelop the area by the river by moving the electrical substation. Ms. Kristin Vincent duly seconded the motion, and it was unanimously carried.

Ms. Link informed the board that the Workforce Development Committee has scheduled a meeting with Mr. Lonnie Richard and Superintendent Byler, with the Vermilion Parish School Board, to discuss career pathway programs for students and opportunities to engage business leaders in promoting local job opportunities and preparing students for success.

Mr. Duhon led the report on the Sustainable Funding Committee. He asked Ms. Cormier to inform the board of the process of canvassing the election votes for VEDD's parcel fee proposition on the March 23, 2024, election ballot. Ms. Nikki Vidos motioned the board to adopt a resolution providing for the canvassing of the returns and declaring the results of the election. Mr. Ben Rivera duly seconded the motion, and it was unanimously carried. The resolution reads as follows:

RESOLUTION

A resolution providing for canvassing the returns and declaring the results of the special election held in the Parish of Vermilion, State of Louisiana on Saturday, March 23, 2024, to authorize a parcel fee to be collected by the Vermilion Economic Development District therein.

Mr. Duhon then proceeded to examine the official tabulations of votes cast at the special election held in Vermilion Parish of Saturday, March 23, 2024, to authorize a parcel fee and further proceeded to examine and canvass the returns and declare the results of the special election. There was a total of 915 votes cast in favor of the parcel fee proposition and a total of 3783 votes cast against the parcel fee proposition, and it was further found and determined that there was a majority of 2868 votes cast against the parcel fee proposition. Therefore, Mr. Duhon declared that the Vermilion Economic Development District's parcel fee proposition has failed by a majority of votes cast at the special election held on Saturday, March 23, 2024.

There was no update from the Strategic Planning Committee.

Ms. Vidos gave the update on the Hometown Revitalization Project. She informed the board of the need to start advertising for bids for an architect for the projects but added that she would like to review the regulations before going further.

Ms. Kayla Link gave the update for the Communications and Promotions Committee. She noted that the website should be active within the next few days.

There was no update from the Business and Industry Development Committee.

OLD BUSINESS: Ms. Link updated the board on efforts to support strategic planning for the town of Maurice. She informed the board of the planned meeting on April 18, 2024, with the Development Ready Communities Team from Louisiana Economic Development.

Ms. Link reminded the board of the business training event, entitled "How Processes And AI Can Save Time, Money And Your Sanity" to be held on April 16, 2024, at the Vermilion Parish Library.

NEW BUSINESS: Mr. Duhon led a discussion regarding plans for the organization after the failure of VEDD's parcel fee election. Mr. Duhon suggested that in the absence of a source of sustainable funds, we focus on completion of current projects with the intention to cease operations at the end of the year. The board members were each asked about their thoughts. Ms. Vidos suggested closing the organization earlier and using the money that we have left for a strategic planning grant that could benefit the parish. She also noted that the Hometown Revitalization Project would not be concluded until the end of 2025 and questioned whether VEDD should start the project and get tied into the legal repercussions of the grant. The board agreed that a December 31, 2024, end date would be the longest possible timeline.

Mr. Duhon then asked the board to ratify Ms. Link's one-month contract, extending her services until the end of April. Mr. Ben Rivera motioned the board to ratify the contract extension. Ms. Kristin Vincent duly seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Mr. Duhon then motioned to extend Ms. Link's contract. There being no second, the motion failed. Mr. Richard Guilbeaux then motioned the board to go into executive session. This motion was duly seconded by Ms. Nikki Vidos and unanimously carried. After their discussion Mr. Richard Guilbeaux motioned the board to return to the regular session. Mr. Ben Rivera duly seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Mr. Guilbeaux then motioned to offer an extension to Ms. Link's contract, at the current rate and responsibilities, until December 31, 2024. Mr. Joshua Anderson duly seconded the motion. The motion was carried with Ms. Vidos and Mr. Rivera opposing, and Ms. Touchet abstaining.

Mr. Duhon reiterated the board's tentative plan to cease daily operations by December 31, 2024. Mr. Guilbeaux was asked to research the legislative and administrative requirements with assistance from the VEDD staff. Mr. Ben Rivera motioned to have the Executive Committee present to the Police Jury about the board's intent to cease operations unless the jury can identify another source of sustainable funds for the next ten years. Mr. Joshua Anderson duly seconded the motion. The motion was carried with Ms. Nikki Vidos opposing. The board also agreed to schedule a meeting with Seller's and Associates and the Police Jury to discuss the Hometown Revitalization Project.

The Farmers Appreciation Dinner discussion was tabled until the May meeting.

BOARD MEMBER UPDATES: The board members spoke about the areas they represent and shared things happening in their communities.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held at 5:30pm on Wednesday, May 8, 2024.

ADJOURN: Upon motion by Mr. Ben Rivera, duly seconded by Ms. Nikki Vidos and unanimously carried, there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Ms. Anne T. Falgout
Secretary