May 11, 2010

SWEETGRASS DEVELOPMENT – CUT BANK

In attendance: Tony Sitzmann, Corlene Martin, Lillian Alfson, Jim Hodgkiss, Deb Brandon, Brett Doney, Jerilee Wilkerson, Cheryl Curry, John Shevlin, Doug Embody, Larry Bonderud and Lorette Carter, reporting. Guests included Evan Barrett, Chris Aegeson, and Pat Wise from the Governor's Office of Economic Development and Jeremiah Johnson from Great Falls Development Authority.

MINUTES: Larry moved and John seconded to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

TREASURY: Larry presented the financial statements for review. The adjustments to the line items as discussed at previous meetings will be initiated when a new executive director is on board. John moved and Lillian seconded to approve the financial statements. Motion carried.

GUEST SPEAKER: Evan Barrett, Governors Office of Economic Development

OLD BUSINESS:

EDA Reporting: Tony and Jerilee discussed the EDA Peer Review held with John Rogers, Regional EDA, and a CRDC Executive Director from Grafton, North Dakota and Jodi Duncan, EDA. The Grafton E.D. will serve as a mentor to our new director. Jodi has asked to review the top 2 finalists' applications. Brett suggested we send her the 4 finalist applications the hiring committee is considering. Brett also suggested sending the new executive director and board member of Sweetgrass Development to an economic development training seminar in San Diego in August.

CRDC Update: Jerilee reported that we have received $15,000 in funding through Department of Commerce and will receive the balance when the new E.D. is hired. The board will review the financial information to make sure the match requirements will be met in receiving these funds.

SDC RLF Report: Brett reported that High Plains Financial has closed on the loan to a Conrad business. He reported that the fund has approximately $27,000 available to lend. Jeremiah

Johnson will be traveling the region working with loan officers and speaking with county and city leadership in regard to region economic development and lending opportunities.

Hiring Committee Update: Jerilee reported that there was a great pool of candidates for the position. 4 finalists have been selected of which she will begin reference checks and hopefully schedule interviews next week. It is the hope of the committee that a new executive director will be hired in 2 weeks.

Membership Commitment: Deb reported that Corlene Martin has agreed to join the board once again. She also asked each county to review their board appointments and confirm the commitment of those members.

Greatfallsprospector.com: Brett presented several hand-outs on the website. The site is an interactive internet mapping program that assists the business community with site selections available within the region. Brett offered the option to the four counties to develop a sweetgrassprospector.com website at a cost of $5000.00 in partnership with Great Falls' investment in the site.

NEW BUSINESS:

Dale Carnegie Business Training: Cheryl asked the group to consider hosting a Dale Carnegie Business Training Seminar in the region. The individual cost is very expensive, but she believes there is workforce training dollars available to offset some of the costs. Commerce representatives mentioned several workforce training programs available.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Community Economic Development Activities:

Conrad/Pondera County: John Shevlin reported that work has begun on the viaduct remodel. The ribbon cutting ceremony for the wastewater treatment plant will be June 23rd. Work is proceeding slowly on the south exit paving project. Conrad has received grant funding for remodeling of their community senior center. They also continue infrastructure work for their industrial park area.

Great Falls/Cascade County: Brett Doney reported that renovations are nearly completed at the Centene Stadium. The review period is coming to an end for the city's pursuit of Superfund

designation for the old Anaconda site. Road construction continues on 10th Avenue South and Black Eagle. Great Falls Development Authority has seen a large increase in loan activity and will be looking for a loan officer shortly. The College of Technology has finalized their wind technician program to begin this fall and have a wind mill on site. Downtown renovations are taking place in tree maintenance and care. The OEA Transportation application has been submitted. The Great Falls Airport Authority has hired a new executive director.

Shelby/Toole County: Deb Brandon reported that the community of Sweet Grass was awarded a $753,000 grant through USDA for their water tank project with work slated to begin in mid-July. Toole County and City of Shelby officials met with a private investor who is seeking to establish a business in North Toole County. He was directed to SBA specialist Rebecca Engum. Deb also reported that the Northern Transit Interlocal has seen a 20% increase in ridership over last year. She also reported that an application has been submitted to the Big Sky Trust Fund for the proposed Sunburst Subdivision.

Larry Bonderud reported that the initiation of the Tax Increment Financing District designation has been completed for the 640 industrial park area east of Shelby. Work continues on rail development and infrastructure. The sewer project continues and a water project is slated to begin shorting. The Port Authority has made proposals to several wind farms projects for lease of property as lay-down yards. They have also received word that the appropriation request in regard to a wind stabilization analysis is moving forward. The city is seeking a second phase of funding for the former refinery site. Shelby has also received Historic Preservation funding for Historic Shelby High. Shelby continues to struggle with a housing shortage. Through funding, 5 manufactured homes have been constructed in Shelby. Larry also reported that the North Central Regional Water Authority is planning on making presentations to Bear Paw Regional Development and Sweetgrass Development in the coming months.

Cut Bank/Glacier County: Doug Embody reported that phase 2 of their water project continues. The new overpass is scheduled to be let in January of 2011. They continue their clean-up projects and adopt-a-block program. They also continue to seek funding for a Veteran's Memorial Park.

Tony Sitzmann reported that the Two Medicine Bridge project is slated to be let, August 18th. The project will employ 75-200 people at any one time and is schedule to take 3-5 years to complete. A milling project is taking place from Summit to just outside East Glacier. Millings will be used for secondary road work in the area. The Browning-south road project is nearly completed. The EMS Building is moving forward. The Glacier County Commissioners continue work on transferring ownership of the hospital through the Cut Bank Economic Development Authority to Northern Rockies Medical Center.

Choteau/Teton County: Jim Hodgkiss reported that work continues on the bridge project in Teton County. A new fire hall is under construction in Choteau. Lillian Alfson reported a fire hall project is also schedule to begin in Fairfield. Corlene Martin also reported Choteau is gearing up for all the tourist trade with Glacier Park's Centennial this summer.

In general conversation, Tony reported that the Blackfeet Tribe will be disbursing a payment to all tribal members in the next week to 10 days which will be a good economic boost to the region. He also noted that a second grocery store is being considered for the town of Browning.

NEXT MEETING: June 8th, Shelby

With no further business, meeting was adjourned.