

City of Evansville **Economic Development Committee**  
**Monday, January 17, 2022, 6:00 PM**  
*Meeting held virtually and in-person*

**MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order.** Ladick called meeting to order at 6:00pm

**2. Roll Call:**

	<b>Present/Absent</b>	<b>Others Present</b>
Chair James Brooks	A	City Administrator Jason Sergeant
Ben Ladick, Vice Chair	P	Community Development Director Colette Spranger
Vacant	-	Christina Slaback, Evansville Chamber of Commerce
Jason Knott	A	Bill Lathrop, Evansville Today
Abbey Barnes	P	
Sue Berg	P	
Brandon Rutz	P	

Rutz was not immediately available at roll call. Lack of quorum was discussed on whether or not to carry on with the meeting, considering there were no actionable items. The committee starting with monthly reports.

**3. Civility Reminder** Ladick reminded the committee of the City's commitments to civil discourse.

**4. Citizen Appearances, other than listed agenda items.** None

**5. Monthly Report**

**A. Community Development Updates.** Spranger shared the Report. This month's report included a Year in Review of economic development advancements in the community, written by Rutz. In going over 2021's building permit data, Lathrop asked if duplexes counted as affordable housing. Spranger replied that she did not know, but the current supply of lots available for building in the City is low at the moment, and any new housing is good. Many of the permits issued at the end of 2021 were for new duplexes.

**B. Chamber of Commerce Report.** Slaback summarized the Chamber's annual report. Chamber is in the middle of its membership renewals. Have had some inquiries regarding available properties/sites over the past month. New Year's mixer was cancelled due to increased COVID numbers. Also updating the Chamber's community guide.

**C. Tourism Commission Report.** Berg shared recent updates. She is going to the Historic Preservation Committee to seek a source expert relative to the mural project. Specifically, she is looking for someone to check in with on impacts to historic buildings. The mural project is the major undertaking of the tourism commission at the moment. Next meeting is February 10<sup>th</sup>.

**6. Discussion****A. CUP Compliance and Code Enforcement to Enhance Economic Development**

Spranger discussed her thoughts on how to reach business owners about existing funding opportunities and other underused programs for business development, without overwhelming owners or overstepping on what the Chamber already does. Berg suggested developing a fact sheet that summarizes the resources available, and sharing it would be a good refresher for the business community. Sergeant noted that the current economic development website should be kept up-to-date, and that the fact sheet should refer back to the City's economic development website. Slaback offered the Chamber's e-blast and to share any information that was shared on the City's Facebook page. Brief discussion of WEDC's Bounceback Grant, which several business owners in the area have received. Grant funding is temporary and is available to businesses moving into previously vacant space. Slaback discussed not overwhelming the business community too many updates, as information sometimes gets overlooked.

**B. Comprehensive Plan Update****i. Business Survey**

Spranger inquired about the group's thoughts on a business survey. Rutz asked where the focus should be. Spranger replied that it would be good to know what things the City should be focusing on, any weaknesses they could identify, or other experiences they've had in Evansville. Sergeant talked about business retention visits, which sometimes reveals useful information about what is needed. Group discussion continued about appropriate methods of outreach.

**ii. Goals for Economic Development chapter update**

Spranger began by explaining the opportunity to create measurable action items in the upcoming Plan update. Sergeant pointed out that past economic development chapters have been rendered essentially useless after events like the 2008 Recession or COVID. Slaback concurred, noting that when the Chamber reaches out, they realize that businesses don't necessarily know what they want from the City. Questions the efficacy of trying to survey a large number of business owners, and instead suggested letting them know they have an opportunity to be heard. Continued group discussion about economic development strategy.

With a quorum in place, the committee followed up on housekeeping items.

7. **Motion to Approve Agenda by Berg, seconded by Barnes, approved unanimously.**

8. **Motion to waive the reading of the minutes of the December 20, 2021 meeting and approve them as printed by Rutz, seconded by Barnes, approved unanimously.**

9. **Next Meeting Dates: February 20, 2022 at 6:00pm**

10. **Motion to Adjourn by Berg, seconded by Barnes, approved unanimously.**