

*Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the DeKalb County Business Incubator Advisory Board at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.*

## **DeKalb County Government**

### **Business Incubator Advisory Board Minutes**

**Tuesday, June 27, 2017**

The DeKalb County Business Incubator Advisory Board convened Tuesday, June 27, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in the Barton Room of the DeKalb County Community Outreach Center. Chairperson Jennifer Bristow called the meeting to order. Members present: JeaNae Remala, Jerry Foster, LaCretia Konan, Mike King, Jeff Whelan and chairperson Bristow constituting a quorum. Anita Zurbrugg arrived late. Members absent: Sandra Polanco. Also present: Derek Hiland, Community Development Director, DeKalb County and Jolene Willis, Economic Development Coordinator, DeKalb County.

#### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Motion by JeaNae Remala, seconded by Jeff Whelan, and carried to approve the agenda.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Jerry Foster, seconded by JeaNae Remala, and carried to approve the minutes.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

#### **BUSINESS INCUBATOR REPORT**

Jolene Willis introduced herself to the board and thanked the board for the warm welcome in her new role. She reported that a prospective tenant had toured the space and completed a pre-application, but recently withdrew it without giving any reason. Derek Hiland commented that the lead was generated from the Sycamore Expo and we are working on two additional leads from that event. He also reported that the Veterans Affairs office has borrowed a couple rooms of office furniture until their furniture is delivered, but should be returned in a couple months, if not sooner.

- **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **MARKETING STRATEGY**

Chair Bristow revisited the goals for the incubator's marketing strategy and role of the board as mentors to tenants. The board discussed what makes the incubator unique and ideal tenant criteria. Jolene discussed NIU Springboard and the business consulting services they provide in business research and development and creative communications. The board asked Jolene to investigate how NIU Springboard could assist with our marketing strategic planning.

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Chair Bristow also asked Derek Hiland the status of the incubator's website and he said that Jolene has updated it recently. He also explained that County Board Chairman Pietrowski has created a website committee and asked Jolene to serve on it, but they have not met yet. Chair Bristow and the board discussed the need for an updated County website and its impact on the incubator's ability to market itself. The board asked Derek and Jolene to find out the status of the County Website Committee and if the Incubator can have its own social media accounts.

Other ideas the board discussed were having another open house, investigate memberships or reciprocal relationships with chambers throughout the county, review the incubator's mission statement, the role of the board as volunteer mentors, and define a clear conflict of interest policy.

### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Jolene Willis reviewed the current application process of the pre-application, board/candidate interview, full application, and board meeting with final review. She has been researching other incubators in similar sized communities and finding that they require a basic application, conduct a thorough interview and require minimal financial assurance. The board asked Jolene to keep researching options and gather County Administration feedback to also include issues such as document retention and destruction policy.

### **POLICIES**

Derek Hiland reviewed that we are about one year into the leases with the current tenants and was seeking the board's guidance on the current reduced rental rates. The board's consensus was that it was the former manager's decision alone to offer the reduced rent. The board asked Derek to seek the County's administrative and legal opinions on the rental policy and whether the Incubator should seek sponsorships.

- **NEW BUSINESS**

### **SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT**

Jolene Willis discussed the networking she has done since hired related to small business development. Several ally organizations in the county have expressed the need to create a new small business referral system and network since DeKalb County is no longer served by a nearby Small Business Development Center. Jolene has met with NIU Springboard, DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, Mark Petrilli - Illinois DCEO-Small Business Development Center, DeKalb Public Library, Rodan Co-Working and others about existing services and identifying gaps. This issue has also surfaced in the DeKalb County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy sessions. The board discussed options to host a stakeholder meeting and/or survey of small business support providers in the near future to help lead that discussion. Jolene said she will continue identifying providers and create a plan for convening stakeholders for a discussion.

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## **NEW WORKSHOPS**

Jolene Willis asked the board for suggestions of future workshops and resource providers. LaCretia Konan shared information on an upcoming QuickBooks workshop that Kishwaukee College is hosting on July 11 at the college. Anita Zurbrugg said the DeKalb County Nonprofit Partnership hosts workshops and trainings for minimal charge.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 16<sup>th</sup> at 7 a.m. at the DeKalb County Community Outreach Building.

Motion by Jeff Whelan, seconded by Jerry Foster, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Jennifer Bristow  
Chairperson, Business Incubator Advisory Board

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Jolene Willis, Recording Secretary