



# COLES Together

The economic development organization for Coles County

## Coles Together Operations Committee Meeting January 30, 2023

**Members Present:** Doug Abolt, Mike Stanfield, Mike Taylor, Rick Hall, Bob Shamdin, John Inyart, Brock Ashley and Carlos Ortega

**Members Absent:** Brandon Combs

**Others Present:** Angela Griffin and Kasey Considine

**Call to Order:** Called to order by Doug Abolt at 7:30 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** A motion to approve the November 2022 Board meeting minutes was made by Mike Stanfield and seconded by Rick Hall. The motion passed.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Mike Taylor provided overview comments on the December financial statements. The year-to-date numbers through December 31 reflect three months into the fiscal year. Net income is \$20,000 for the period, which is a little behind \$35,000 for the same period last year. It is also a little lower than budget. Line items, specifically, cash rent from the farming operation, on the revenue side is running lower than last year at about \$12,000. However, annual contributions are on track. Budgeted annual revenues of \$49,000 are little behind which is related to timing of revenue from year to year. Overall year-to-date expenses increased \$2,600 from the previous year, but most compare very close to the previous year. Taylor pointed out that expenses related to the Back to Business Navigator grant and offsetting entries for staff salary are flowing together but overall expenses close to target.

Overall, the balance sheet and fund balances continue to be strong and growing.

**Approval of Treasurer's Report:** A motion to approve the September 2022 financial statements was made by John Inyart and seconded by Bob Shamdin. The motion passed.

### **President's Report:**

Griffin stated the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is nearly ready to launch the newest back to business grant program. Originally there were two categories of awards planned, but now there will be five. The first three categories will focus on restaurants,

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the hospitality industry, and cultural or art organizations. The two programs to follow will be open to any business that began operations after March 2020 and any business that renovated a vacant or shuttered space during or after the pandemic. Other than marketing the programs through our normal channels, which is paid for with grant proceeds, and answering questions local businesses may have, none of these programs should take much staff time as the process is handled completely online once we refer eligible businesses.

In other state funding we are getting closer to receiving the first draw on funds from the \$150,000 RISE grant we were awarded. The budget has been approved by DCEO and is awaiting a final signature from legal and processing through the Illinois Comptroller's office. The first step will be to contract for the regional workforce and jobs survey which should take 6-9 months. One of the Ohio partners plans to be in Illinois in February to meet with our group and the consultant to build out the survey and the questionnaire. We will use that process to collect information for the Aerospace Institute so their team can analyze the skills present in our communities and learn about the types of products already being produced here that could be used or modified for use in aviation, defense, or aerospace.

North American Lighting is growing in Coles County and was looking for 15,000 SF of inventory space that will help the company as they build a service operation into their Mattoon location. Adding this activity will result in minimum buys for parts used infrequently so they will be purchasing items that could sit on shelves for a year or more and they need warehouse space for these parts. They are looking for leased space and are comfortable with shared space. There are a couple of options under consideration.

Griffin went over the lot layout in the Coles Business Park to give the group an idea of the lot configuration and plan for the construction of the John Davis Implement project. Plans are shifting slightly and we are working with Davis along with the engineer and surveyor at Upchurch to subdivide Lot 14 in the best way possible for Davis and for future development.

Phoenix Investors, the company that bought the LSC facility has purchased the GE facility and is working with two leads interested in leasing space there. One company needs warehouse space and the other one needs space for light assembly. We are working with Phoenix on an enterprise zone application so they can start renovating portions of the facility. They are making structural changes, but also want to improve the curb appeal.

Regarding the former LSC facility, it is clear activity has picked up and Griffin confirmed John Deere has signed a lease with Phoenix and the operation will encompass the entire facility. There will be three separate entities in the facility all supporting the Deere operation—Deere, one of Deere's contractors, and Phoenix Logistics will provide third part logistics support for the operation. In all there will be more than 200 people working on site.

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Griffin has been working with Tim Monahan of the Thomas Monahan Company and Monahan Filaments in Arcola to locate 30,000-40,000 SF of space in Coles County. Griffin has provided options for co-location and leases, but since there is not a stand-alone building that fits his requirement, he has not been keen on any of the options. The next step is to put him in touch with Phoenix about the GE facility when he returns from an out-of-the country trip.

At the recommendation of Shamdin, Griffin reached out to Heartland Greenway, a company building a CO2 pipeline through five states, including Illinois. The pipeline would take CO2 from ethanol and fertilizer processors along its route through the Midwest and then permanently sequester it allowing those companies to benefit from the new 45Q federal tax credits. Heartland is financially backed by BlackRock and headquartered in Nebraska. The 1300-mile pipeline would be built from South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Iowa into Illinois. They have been focused on the former Tenaska site in Christian County but Griffin reached out to ask them about interest in bringing the pipeline further east to the site west of Mattoon. Materials have been provided about the site and we wait to hear from the company

Other activities include working with Doehring Winders on the year-end financial statements and tax preparation for our community development corporation. The enterprise zone application is almost complete for H&R Investment Group which bought the property at 825 Lincoln in Charleston. We are waiting for the building permit from the city. H&R bought the building and is putting over \$1 million into remodeling it for Davis-Houk Mechanical, a commercial and industrial HVAC company out of Champaign Urbana that is going to create 10 jobs in a portion of the space. Eventually there may be a second tenant.

The navigator group put on our best attended webinar yet last Thursday with information and case studies on the use of enterprise zone, TIFs, and special business districts. The February webinar will focus on the topic of childcare again, one of our most requested topics.

Griffin worked with sheriff Kent Martin to help build a recruitment packet for new employees. In February Griffin will speak to the EIU annuitants' organization. Finally, planning is underway for the April 11 annual meeting which will be held at the mall in conjunction with a Rural King managers' meeting.

### **Marketing Report**

Considine gave the marketing report and stated she has been preparing a response to an RFP issued for project Payton, a supplier in the EV battery sector looking for sites to build a new facility. She is also working with the chambers on a "made in Coles County" campaign and initiative, and is preparing to represent Coles Together at Futures Day at MHS.

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**Other**

Ortega gave an update to the group about the Maker's Space at Elevate and an application he is submitting to the USDA for funding that will help integrate CNC machining into the space. Shamdin offered engineers and maintenance employees from MPMI to provide advice and guidance on the integration of the machines.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Carlos Ortega, Secretary