



COLES Together

The economic development organization for Coles County

Coles Together Operations Committee Meeting July 29, 2024

Members Present: Doug Abolt, Mike Stanfield, John Inyart, Rick Hall, Bob Shamdin, Amy Borntrager, Blake Pierce

Members Absent: Jack Turner, Brandon Combs

Others Present: Ronda Sauget, Angela Griffin

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

Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve the June 2024, Operations Committee meeting minutes was made by John Inyart and seconded by Rick Hall. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Pierce provided the June Treasurer's Report. He stated the balance sheet is about \$120,000 above last year. Current assets are primarily held in grants payable and cash. For the month of June, the organization is almost exactly where it was last year and also on track for year to date. Net income is only about \$1,200 off from the prior year and that includes additional costs. Enterprise Zone fee income is helping offset the additional costs.

Sauget added that expenses for the month included upgrading computer equipment and technology for new staff person and the router been upgraded. Marketing expenses exceed the prior year due to a lot of marketing activities occurring. Also, expenses have been incurred related to the Coles Business Park as the large trees have been cleaned up and new fiber and mulch put down to contain weeds.

Approval of Treasurer's Report: A motion to approve the May Treasurer's Report was made by Mike Stanfield and seconded by John Inyart. The motion passed.

President's Report

Sauget is working on the annual meeting scheduled for October 8 at SBLHS with Steve Zuber from BarberMurphy Group and a representative of Kingspan as featured speakers. We will also conduct a question-and-answer interview session with John Inyart moderating.

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Kingspan is making progress in Mattoon with its new manufacturing line from Italy scheduled to arrive in August. The company has hired a local plant manager, technicians, and other personnel. With 40 US facilities, 224 total global facilities, and over 22,000 employees, Kingspan is deeply committed to each of the communities it operates in. The company strives to hire local contractors and people to operate the facility. Kingspan plans to provide local tours of the facilities once they are fully operational.

Mars Petcare and Ameren Illinois have reached an agreement in upgrading the electrical substation with \$3M in new investments to support the new \$70M phase 1 expansion project creating twelve new positions. With this new expansion underway, this advancement helps set the stage for more phases of future development at this facility.

In recent correspondence with GDB International executives, they are looking forward to moving the Charleston project forward, partnering with other businesses needing space at the site location, and planning to start their plastics recycling process in Charleston.

Sauget has been in discussions with Amy Borntreger, CEO of CMEC, about electrical power capacity, future expansion planning, and worker training needs.

In a discussion with Andrew Fearn, Coles County Airport Director, Coles Together will work with the airport to complete a marketing presentation to the external aviation industry MRO (modification, repair, and overhaul) firms and other aviation companies.

Sauget attended an Illinois/Saluki Amtrak Corridor Meeting Mayor Rick Hall, Alex Benishek, Ed Dowd, and other Mattoon City Officials. During the meeting, updates were provided on passenger service improvements, increasing ridership, and efforts to address Amtrak rail issues. IDOT Passenger Rail Communications. It was noted there is a \$200M funding allocated for passenger rail for track improvements and efficiencies.

Coles Together was interviewed for *Site Selection Magazine, Illinois Edition* listed as the EDO for Coles County. This is a premier site selection magazine, and the ad placed will be our first media outreach effort.

Sauget attended the Mattoon IHDA Housing Stakeholders meeting. From this meeting, further discussion with Kirk Swenson and Jeremy Yost occurred. Coles Together coordinated a series of meetings with Craig Coil, Principal and COO, The Development Consortium, Inc., Swenson, to discuss best municipal and financial planning models for mid-level and high-end home developments in surrounding Illinois communities and explored using bonding, TIF, Enterprise Zone, and other funding tools.

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Coles Together is working with CN Railroad to develop a potential supply chain logistics cost benefit analysis model for shipping by rail to and from Coles County. This work is being completed with a local firm interested in testing multi-modal transportation logistics options.

Sauget visited and toured the City of Oakland with Mayor Jack Turner and learned a new Dollar General Market will locate to the city providing grocery items and fresh produce and vegetables to the community. We visited the new city hall location, Oakland elementary and high school, and discussed the impressive expansion of Birkey's Case International Farm Implement facilities.

Sauget met with Todd Thoman, Agracel Senior Economic Development Director and discussed Mattoon Enterprise Park and Coles Centre. During this meeting, they discussed marketing strategies for proactively engaging more site selectors and brokers about the benefits of each park. Todd mentioned the renewed interest in Illinois he is seeing in the marketplace, especially in tertiary markets. Sauget will spend October 5 at Agracel's office in Effingham meeting the executive team, touring their rail yard and business development, discussing how to work more closely together in the future, and brainstorming more strategic efforts for marketing outreach.

Sauget met with Ed Dowd to discuss marketing outreach materials and new video opportunities to work together with Mattoon and Charleston Chambers of Commerce. She also met Matt Mattis the CPA with Doehring Winders & Co to discuss expectations for the annual audit for Coles Together. Other meetings include with Tony Sparks, arranged by Borntrager, to learn about his philanthropic giving and projects in the Mattoon area and with the marketing firm working with Rural King, EIU, and SBLHS. As a result, Coles Together engaged the firm, Cass Concepts, in a 6-month arrangement to assist with logo, website, marketing materials, graphic design work, and other required marketing outreach materials with options for further assistance as needed and when necessary.

The office has processed five new and one reissued Enterprise Zone Applications that indicates strong construction activities in Coles County. A new national brand hotel is planned near the Emerald Acres Sports Complex and will participate in the EZ program.

Conference Update

Sauget attended the CCS Decarbonization Conference in Houston and in terms of CCUS it was the who's who of the industry. The change and momentum in the industry is being driven by the Inflation Reduction Act and 45Q tax credits which now fund carbon up to \$85/ton. Sauget learned the military is also looking for carbon sequestration project opportunities due to the industry's large carbon footprint. Discussions took place on risk management, liability, and litigation related to any carbon storage sites. DOE attendees included Battelle consultants who were very familiar with the Coles County site. The DOE Director and Sauget are to discuss opportunities for the site at the upcoming Midwest Regional Carbon Initiative meeting in Ohio.

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Staffing Update

The Coles Together team has interviewed two candidates for the open position and have two more interviews remaining. Once interviews are completed, one of the candidates will be offered the position. Erica Boone and Mallory Waldhoff with Innovative Staff Solutions have provided excellent work in bringing top-notch candidates to select from in this process.

Other Business

Abolt stated he would like input on the size of the Coles Together board and upcoming changes that may occur as a result of the annual meeting and filling vacant seats. Hall stated it is his opinion that the current board is so big it is unmanageable and there are many board members who do not come to meetings. Pierce agreed and said twenty-three members constitutes a large board compared to other boards he serves on. Discussion occurred about exploring a shareholder type of approach where contribution amount equals number of votes. If so, intervening informational meetings and community updates could be held. It was suggested a nine-eleven person board could be efficient with the expectation that members be present and engaged. Inyart suggested if the board size is reduced, creating committees would give other members a chance to be part of the economic development effort. Sauget said her experience is committee level engagement is something she has had success with, then those committees bring plans to the executive committee. Pierce stated if a more committee-driven structure that executes initiatives is desired, we need to evaluate overall organizational structure to achieve that. Sauget said in those cases committees can assist with planning and success in terms of all things Coles Together works on, for instance, infrastructure build-out.

Stanfield reminded the group that concerns like quorum should be considered and we should also look at whatever bylaw changes would be necessary.

Abolt said he and Sauget would develop an outline and get back to the group.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 AM

Respectfully submitted by:

Brooke Kieffer, Assistant Secretary