**Board of Directors Meeting**

**March 17, 2022**

**Minutes**

**Members Present:**

Joel Bertolino, BRCD

Nan Knight, BRCD

Jacy Head, BRCD

Myrna Lastusky, BRCD

Ryan Van Ballegooyen, Billings Job Service

Holly Higgins, First Interstate Bank of Hardin

Lorene Hintz, Big Sky EDA SBDC

Dan Lowe, Big Horn County Conservation District

Scott Miller, Carbon County Commissioner

Larry Keltner, FIB Hardin President

Meeting Called to Order at 1:00 pm.

**Pledge of Allegiance, Introduction of Members and Guests**

**Review January Board Minutes**

* Scott Miller motioned to approve the minutes. Holly Higgins seconded. Motion passed.

**Executive Committee Nominations**

* Jeff McDowell no longer has time to serve, but will continue as an alternate. Ryan, Melanie, and Marissa are all willing to continue serving, and no one else was nominated.
* Motion to keep current Executive Committee officers: Ryan motioned, Lorene seconded. Motion carried.

**Congressional Updates – No one attended**

**Treasurer/Financial Reports**

1. Treasurer Update
   1. See the attached report.
   2. If you would like to review the audit report, give Nan your email and she will send it to you.
   3. Pg. 12: RLF updates on loans:
      1. 2 in Big Horn
      2. 2 in Stillwater
      3. Closed a loan in Yellowstone yesterday – with a concrete company and great people to work with. 20-year loan but they will probably pay it off sooner.
      4. Carbon County has a loan pending – will bring us up to 3. Will hopefully be closed at the beginning of April.
      5. 2 in Sweet Grass
   4. At bottom is where bank accounts are sitting at end of February – what we have to lend out.
   5. 2 “troublemakers”: Nan was able to get in touch with one lender and is working with them to get the money from that loanee (they must give half the money up front and then remainder will be paid off in monthly increments). Another one has an inter-creditors agreement with Yellowstone Bank, so we are sitting pretty good with it.
2. RC&D Financials
   1. Beartooth Books (p 13): Showing what ins and expenses are moving out.
3. RLF Financials
   1. A $200,000 loan for Yellowstone County and a $210,000 loan for Carbon County are both set to close this month.
   2. RLF funding inquiries have been very active.
   3. EDA de-federalization application is completed and accepted; just waiting on EDA signature.
   4. One of Stillwater County loans was paid off in January.

* Dan motioned to approve the financial updates; Holly seconded. Motion carried.

**CEDS Update (Jacy)**

* Had most recent CEDS Committee meeting this week and have goals pretty well in place.
* Working on Evaluation Framework and Strategies / Projects for the next 5 years.
* Myrna & Jacy have been working on Summary Background, have SWOT Analysis completed, and overall moving forward. But in May we will need to definitely prioritize to work on CEDS a LOT.
  + Need to have it pretty much complete by July 1st, then open it for a 30-day window for public comment. Then have another 30-day window to address all public comments and address to EDA how we responded to every single public comment. Not many in the past, but we need to be ready for that. Must submit to EDA by September.
* Keep fingers crossed that EDA is happy with everyone now. CEDS 5-year update came up a year early for us because EDA wants to get all Economic Development Districts on the same timeline. Many other EDDs have asked for extensions to finish their CEDS.
  + Joel: We don’t want to ask for an extension unless we absolutely have to because it just prolongs the pain.
  + Jacy: Yes, we are going to just do our best on it.
  + Ryan/Joel: The CEDS is a great outline or roadmap for needs and projects in our region. Joel said Jacy & Myrna have done a great job of outreach and that is continuing as we work through the CEDS.
* Jacy: Tara Mastel with the Extension is working on a study of migration patterns – where are all these people moving from and where are our people moving to. I’m hoping she can come to Red Lodge in September and want to incorporate that study.
  + If anyone knows of good studies, pass them on to Jacy.
  + Joel: Bureau of Economic Research has some good data on this, also – in and out migration with estimates.
    - Ryan: California and Colorado. Californians moved to Colorado at one point because it was like Montana, but now they want to move to Montana b/c it’s like CO used to be – at least until they saturate us, too.
    - Scott: Growth happened after the census. From 2010-2020, Carbon County only grew by 400 people, which isn’t accurate.
    - Ryan & Scott discussed the water issue around Bozeman – one of the main concerns of those commissioners right now.
    - Ryan: 40% of real estate transactions are by a holding company and not an individual right now.
      * Joel: And Bozeman’s growth record isn’t just based on the state but on the country.
      * Lorene: We don’t want their MHI either – about $800,000
      * Ryan: $3800/month for a 2-bedroom apartment
  + Lorene: They are doing a great job on the CEDS. Keep it up!

**Staff Reports – Program/Project updates**

Food & Ag Program (Joel)

* 1. Working through Growth Through Ag grants. Several applicants made it to the second round. Pioneer Meats got improved for improvements to their plant.
  2. Worked through ARPA Value-Added Ag Grants – quite a few meat plants applied to add space and capacity. Will hear back on those in a couple weeks. Up to $500,000.
  3. Growth Through Ag Projects & ARPA Value-Added Producer Grants
     1. Yellowstone Valley Farms – Reuben Stahl in Laurel
        1. Joel & Nan visited with Reuben Stahl outside of Laurel – trying to add space to his greenhouse. Good-sized operation he’s been doing for 15 years.
     2. Mill Creek Farms – Josh Sian in Pompey’s Pillar
     3. Blue Creek Marbled Beef – Nels Pearson in Blue Creek south of Billings
        1. Really mind-blowing operation. Invited Lorene to tour that with them. Hope to be up and running in July. Set it up so they can add on to it easily. Should help direct marketers and raise production level.
        2. Scott asked if anyone is processing Bison? Joel said Stillwater Packing does. Blue Creek is likely just doing beef (no pork), but possibly yaks, maybe bison?
     4. Carbon County Meats – Sabina Giovetti in Belfry
        1. Joel toured recently. They opened last summer. Have had so much demand, they want to build a larger one at a different location. Possibly use the current one for just wild game.
     5. Toews Family Farms – Aaron Toews in Hardin
        1. Been growing grain for years and decided to bag it; surprised with demand and needs a bigger place. Looking for funding options.
     6. Prime Meats – Lamont Herman in St. Xavier
     7. Primitive Meats – Kelsey Grice in Worden
        1. Put them in touch with an engineer
  4. Doing more outreach each month with Lane Gobbs. Visited Meadowlark Brewing in Billings. Fascinating! Huge microbrewery.
     1. Lorene was there yesterday with SBDC and he has 9 tanks he is brewing. Not open yet, but is getting very close – maybe waiting on licensing.
     2. Joel: He’s trying to get a full liquor license.
  5. Ongoing Projects
     1. Basin Inc – Judy Edwards in Big Timber
     2. Yellowstone Valley Food Hub – Schahczenski in Billings
     3. 406 Bovine LLC – Bryan Elliot in Laurel
        1. Still trying to raise money for Ag Tech product line – facial recognition for livestock; hardest part is initial entry of photos.
        2. Lorene: Mainly for registered cattle? Additional marketing piece – people will know where their meat came from; can follow an animal throughout entire life.
     4. Stillwater Packing Co/Emmett’s Meats – Jason Emmett in Columbus
        1. Joel will visit them & bring Carbon County Meats along to help them get more info.
     5. Pioneer Meats – Brian Engle in Big Timber
        1. Invested $600,000 in that facility. Toured them in Nov.
     6. Big Sky Beef – Gary Guessman
        1. Large processing facility
     7. Becky’s Berries – Becky Stahl in Absarokee
     8. F Bar 3 Vineyards – Kasey Felder in Laurel
        1. Toured this recently
  6. Beartooth FADC initiated contact with:
     1. Kathy Bauer – Roberts – ways to add value for a small ag operation
     2. North 40 Ag – Huntley
     3. Robin Whalen – Columbus – referred to us by Veterans Business Outreach Center
     4. Patrick Certain – Billings – local vegetable farm operation
     5. Bio Economy Solutions – Hardin
     6. Miller’s Custom Meats – possible processing in Joliet

1. Economic Development/CRDC (Jacy)
   1. EDA CARES Act – continuing through June 2022
      1. Myrna meets with Deb Brown, Watch Parties, Bozeman Trail meetings
         1. $3380 left of CARES money, and we got it approved to use for some mapping work on Bozeman Trail. Myrna recently met with DOC and others to discuss these efforts.
      2. Big Sky EDA – using funding for trainings and other work. Myrna is working with our EDA rep, Caroline, and BSEDA on possible extension so they can complete an industry study on TIF Districts. Waiting to hear more from BSEDA.
      3. Received final housing study from Cushing Terrell and CT will be presenting to Montana Housing Coordinating Team in April.
   2. BSTF
      1. Red Lodge Pea Cannery – hopefully wrapping up in April. Will get funds from DEQ once we finalize with High Plains Architects.
      2. Stillwater County Industrial Park Feasibility Study – KLJ was selected for the project’s contractor; hope to execute contracts by March 25th. Moving along well.
   3. ARPA
      1. Jacy continues to attend the meetings for updates
   4. USDA RCDI Grant – create Economic Dev position in BHC
      1. Interviewed 4 different applicants, but they weren’t suited for the position so it remains open until filled. 1 more applicant came in since. Once someone is hired we will be training them.
   5. CEDS
      1. Creating draft document, meeting with CEDS Strategy Committee, and doing remaining public outreach, getting input and incorporating it.
      2. Anticipated completion of first final document will be June & open for public comment for 30 days.
   6. Reporting: April is busy month
      1. EDA Partnership Planning Grant – similar to CEDS Annual update
      2. 1st Qtr CRDC Report
         1. Almost approved with 4th qtr reports from CRDC
      3. BSTF
         1. Qtr reports for 2 grants
      4. 1st qtr reports for RCDI grant
2. RLF (Nan) – see notes above from Treasurer’s Report
   1. Defederalization
      1. Everything is submitted, but it’s been delayed due to ARPA stuff going. We should be able to sign off in the next month.

**Regional Roundup:**

Scott Miller, Carbon County Commissioner

1. Marijuana has hit MT. Carbon County is leading the way on resolutions. With the recent issue of the marijuana shop in Roberts, we didn’t shut the guy out or run his business out – we put a resolution together to put ordinances in, which were required distances from churches/schools, etc. He already had a commercial business, so he didn’t need a commercial license to put it in. Our resolutions were to prevent shacks from popping up next to schools. We have a Green County Commissioner Team to let others know what is happening. It’s up to the people of Carbon County (we live in America!).
2. We have a Health Dept that works for the people. 3 new people that are nurses and are hiring 3 more people. All the schools are on board with MOU to have health nurses in the schools, have school nurses to provide shots and other care. Many people were scared of County Health officer before, so now have County Health Dept that works for the people.
   1. Dane Lowe asked if nurses were operating under a doctor. Scott said yes, they are. Nurse can also send them to regular provider and confirm that prescriptions are correct, lining people up with Medicare/Medicaid, getting children healthcare, etc.
3. County hired some new people because some people were doing 8 jobs.
4. This summer they’re hiring an engineer to provide guidance on the courthouse, sheriff’s department, and fairgrounds to provide for growth in the future. We don’t have the facilities now so we need to look forward.
5. Big Sky Rail Authority has started to really pick up. Board President has been in DC and met with Transportation Secretary. Ramping up to provide services across the country. It’s coming faster than Scott thought it would happen. Passenger Rail Authority may be here in the next 2 years. Money is coming faster. Will take a BIG number. They have to inspect tracks since it’s passenger – different weight for passenger vs. freight. Will go through Denver. Once Transportation Authority passes it, Amtrak will be rolling. Everyone is on board, but big government is slowing things down.
   1. No major upgrades needed – just inspections and upgrading some older track – and where/how to put the depots in. Yellowstone County doesn’t want it, but other counties are very excited about it. Will bring money to the state but will cost the federal government a lot of money.
6. Just had Ski Joring in Red Lodge.
7. Renaissance Faire in June – 7,000 people will be coming (10,000 in entire county!)

Dan Lowe, Big Horn County Conservation District

1. Invasive Aquatic Station – in middle of hiring Board-approved applicant. Unique because the position is from daylight to dark. Supposed to start April 15th.
2. National Association of Conservation Districts Conference in Orlando this year – Dan has been to about half of these conferences. Great opportunity to talk to other people and see what is happening in other regions since there are people from all over U.S. and U.S. territories even. There were many young Native American people there who are taking an active role in their areas, which was a breath of fresh air.

Holly Higgins, First Interstate Bank of Hardin

1. Now have 3 places to buy coffee in town (and rolls!).
2. Annie’s Deli is now in downtown.
3. Police Force is now up and running. Hired 6 deputies. Some issues between County Sheriff’s Office and the City Police and dispatch and who acts on which calls.
   1. Article in paper today about the division between the departments.
4. Concern over inflation with Custom Combiners – for farmers who don’t own a combine. This is one of most expensive things usually, but with gas inflation, who knows what this will cost this year. Some farmers have such big farms they are unable to help neighboring farms out.
   1. Scott: Hay shortage due to drought has made hay very expensive, so many people need to sell the cattle because they can’t feed them . . . ripple effect.
   2. Joel: Herd is decreasing. If we have another drought many won’t make it. Might be able to survive one, but not two in a row.
   3. Holly: People were struggling already, so inflation is really hurting.
   4. Scott: It’s not just the oil the war is impacting – a lot of food came out of Ukraine, which is similar to war in Iraq.

Lorene Hintz, Big Sky EDA Small Business Development Center

1. Veterans Training coming up on Tuesday
2. Celebrated SBDC Day yesterday – national day started by the center in Helena. Bought a big Costco cake and went to 14 businesses and served cake to employees. Fun day!
   1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ = little restaurant started during Covid and then expanded. There were 11 employees there for lunchtime.
3. Rise & Restore 1-day business workshop – Nikki Edmonds is keynote speaker, panel, 2 breakout sessions, showing Edge of Plains documentary over lunch, at 3:00 there are optional tours – Swanky Roots, Red Ox, Canty Boots, then Beer & Bingo at night. Join them for a great day.
4. Ask Lorene to tell you about her grandkids and their State Basketball Championships! ☺

Next Beartooth RC&D Board of Directors Meeting: May 19, 2022 – Stillwater County

2:33: Adjourn