

June 24, 2024

Meeting of the Nebraska International Port of the Plains Board of Directors. Present were James Hawks, J. Patrick Keenan, Michael Steele, Kimberly Steger and Kevin Tighe. Absent was Vince Dugan, LeAnn Ellis, Kirk Olson, and Dwight Porter. Vice Chair Keenan called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Keenan announced that the Open Meeting Act with amendments is posted for public review and Board of Directors will comply with the open meeting requirements.

Hawks moved to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2024, meeting. Steger seconded the motion. Present and voting "aye": Hawks, Keenan, Steele, Steger and Tighe. "Nays" none. Motion carried.

Purchasing guidelines

Steele stated the Finance committee met and have additional questions. He stated the finance committee recommends falling back on the grant guidelines to not limit the port's abilities for future purchases. They also recommend meeting with the consultant to review the guidelines and answer further questions.

Committee Reports:

Finance Committee: Steele reviewed the financials. \$69,098.05 in operating and \$2,001,109.59 in the SBDF fund. The interest rate is 2 ¼% and those funds from interest will need to stay in the SBDF fund and be used on future projects. There was one invoice from the attorney to be paid.

Facilities: Hawks stated there is still the need of mowing and maintenance of the facility.

Executive: the committee met with the consultant, discussed the site and pros and cons of the site. Consultant will recommend sites for the committee to visit.

Executive: Committee met with TranSystems, Paul Hentschke. He reviewed with the committee the avenues for success. The port has acreage potential, workforce and transportation. He will recommend potential sites to visit. 2 members met with DEVCO with a group from the community to discuss a potential prospect.

Hawks moved to approve the committee reports. Steger seconded the motion.

Site visits-Board will continue until next meeting to review with consultant. Present and voting "aye": Hawks, Keenan, Steele, Steger and Tighe. "Nays" none. Motion carried.

Work session-Board will continue to next month to seek advice from consultant. Steele stated that the grant monies need to be obligated within 24 months. He has some questions for consultant regarding rail spurs, concerns with construction timelines. Tighe stated in the May minutes that the committee appointed to meet with consultant was Dugan, Keenan, Hawks and Porter. Tighe asked for a copy of the consultant's contract.

Ben Goins and Jessica Anderson of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development were present to answer questions regarding the SBDF grant funds. They are the compliance state officers overseeing the statutory requirements governing the rail park development.

Keenan asked what the next steps would be once the current grant funds were expended? Ben stated that the ports can reapply for the remaining funds, and it will be on a first come first serve bases. The application process will be similar to the last application. DED would review the request for additional funding, and it will be contingent on the remaining funds.

Steger as if the grant monies could be used for studies necessary for projects? Ben stated yes. Jessica encouraged the Board of ensure that the receipts and invoiced are turn in as necessary for grant obligations.

Steele asked about closing out the grant and if monies had to be spent prior the date of the closing of the grant and before applying for round 2? Jessica stated that monies had to be obligated, committed or under contract but not necessarily spent.

Jessica and Ben encouraged an open line of communication between the Inland Port and the DED

There are currently 4 designated ports: Hershey, Fremont, Omaha and Bellevue and one more as a potential.

Update from Development Corporation-

Person updated the Board. They have been working with Village of Hershey and have sent a letter of annexation on the purchased properties and the 4 additional properties. The 3rd reading will be in August. There will then be a blight study on the properties. The redevelopment plan will be developed prior to construction beginning.

Meetings with Paul Hentschke and been valuable. The immediate need would be a transloading facility. The Board would need a contract with a business to reactivate the spur. This is a requirement of the railroad. The first infrastructure to be constructed would be 2 parallel lines installed as a “drop & pull yard”. There are 8 solid prospects. The consultant can advise staging and design. The prospect would request and submit application to get the rail activated, lease the building and then develop the property from the Chamber. The port would not want to hinder other potential customers that could use the rail. One of the prospects would use mega energy power consumption and all power companies are struggling to meet demand at this time.

A soybean manufacturing plant is a prospect and may start with a smaller operation and grow. Person stated that the UPRR director toured the facility. Tighe asked what requirement the railroad would have to open the spur? Person stated that a letter explaining the operation and function. He stated that 6 of the prospects are Ag based. Tighe asked when an appropriate time would be to build the “dop and pull”. Person stated that it would be the first part of the grant which is building infrastructure. Keenan stated could build to encourage and entice the customer. Tighe questioned the wastewater and if that would be an issue. Person stated the Chamber owns the property and it is not an issue.

Public comment: Nancy Siefer Nelson asked if the Board had called any of the ports on the website to save money and see what worked and didn't work for them. She also asked who is paying Tammy's salary and using taxpayers' dollars if county if paying her salary.

Tammy stated the Port is borrowing her services and she is being paid by the County until the Port has paid staff.

Keenan adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

Advance notice and Amended agenda for the June 24, 2024, inland port board meetings were sent to the Inland Port Board members and all others requesting the same. Advance public notice (includes agenda) of the Nebraska International Port of the Plains Board of Directors meeting was posted at the Lincoln County Courthouse, City Hall, Village of Hershey, and the Lincoln County website on June 20, 2024, and was also emailed to the media on June 20, 2024.

The agenda for the meetings to be held on Monday July 22, 2024, will be kept continually current and open for inspection at the office of the Lincoln County Board Assistant. The regular meeting of the Nebraska International Port of the Plains Board of Directors will be at the Lincoln County Commissioner's Room, Lincoln County Courthouse, 301 North Jeffers, North Platte, NE at 2:00 p.m.

Submitted by:
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