

## **Grow Licking County CIC**

Board of Directors Meeting  
January 8, 2024

Location: Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority, Heath, OH

Present: Corey Alton, Tim Bubb, Mike Compton, Jennifer Ellis-Brunn, Erin Grigsby, Mark Johns, Mark Mauter, Jennifer McDonald, Robert Montagnese, Jim Roberts, Joseph Robertson, and GROW staff Alexis Fitzsimmons, Hayley Feightner and Reaghan Willison

Excused: Robert O'Neill, Brandon Hess, Lauren Massie

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 PM by Chair Jennifer McDonald.

Mr. Alton called the roll. Mr. Mauter motioned; seconded by Mr. Montagnese to excuse absent directors. The motion passed.

Mr. Rick Platt provided the welcome on behalf of the Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority. Mr. Platt provided an update on current Port Authority activities and efforts, including an overview of the Port's properties and the financing arm.

Mr. Platt recognized the long history of the Port Authority with Grow Licking County and highlighted the Behr project and Grow's support for improvements to the Thornwood Drive corridor. Mr. Platt advocated for a continued focus on attracting manufacturing operations, and to devote time facilitating organic leads.

Mr. Platt also introduced Sophia Miller, an Ohio Public Leaders Fellow who is assisting the port with research related to AI integration and a Downtown Newark property conditions assessment.

Chair McDonald welcomed guests, which included: Rick Platt, Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority; Sophia Miller, Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority fellow; Jacque Annarino, ODOT; Scott Ryan, Ohio Department of Development; Atrina Good, Licking County Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Valerie Mockus, Village of Hebron; Brittany Misner, Village of Hebron; and Mike Jacoby, Bricker & Graydon

The minutes from the November 13, 2023 meeting were reviewed. Mr. Johns motioned; seconded by Mr. Robertson. The motion passed.

### Chair's Report

Ms. McDonald reported on a draft Family Leave policy which was discussed at the Executive Committee Meeting for employee retention, as the organization does not currently have a policy on this matter. Mrs. Fitzsimmons stated that this policy was modeled on Knox County

Foundation's policy. Mrs. Fitzsimmons asked the Board of Directors for feedback on the draft policy.

The Board of Directors had a robust discussion on the language within the draft policy, and directed staff to explore any legal implications of requiring an employee who benefits from this policy to have a stated tenure at the organization before and after receiving these benefits.

Chair McDonald presented the letter of resignation from Mr. James Layton as a member of the Board. Mr. Bubb thanked former Mayor Layton for this service to this Board. Mr. Bubb indicated that the Commissioners have not yet appointed a replacement for this seat.

Mr. Bubb motioned, seconded by Mr. Compton to accept James Layton's letter of resignation. Motion passed.

#### Roundtable Discussion– Chair McDonald

At the recommendation of the Board, Chair McDonald facilitated a roundtable discussion of board members to provide updates within each of their organizations.

Chair McDonald reported a new role on the Junior Achievement Advisory Council, which will be located at the old State Farm building in Newark, which will help strengthen our workforce pipeline. Chair McDonald shared that they are still looking for interested individuals who would like to be involved in the program or on the Advisory Council Board.

Mr. Robertson reported that Monroe Township is finishing up their Comprehensive Plan, with a heavy focus on the Land Use map.

Mr. Montagnese shared that Licking Memorial Health has improved security of their facility with safety technology called Evolve. Mr. Montagnese commented on LMH's involvement in the improvements to Licking County Transit, and stated that LMH will be developing a food pantry along the bus line.

Mr. Roberts stated that he is excited to now be a public sector appointment to the Board in his new role at Southwest Licking Community Sewer and Water District, and thanked the Licking County Chamber of Commerce for their continued appointment.

Mr. Bubb provided an update on several County efforts, including: discussions on the water and sewer operation that the County operates; Eastland Center land acquisition and Ohio Means Jobs Center expansion; Courthouse renovations.

Mr. Compton stated that Pataskala's focus on the Corporate Park remains strong. He stated that Illuminate USA is looking to become operational this month.

Mr. Alton summarized 2023 as a tumultuous year for the banking industry; however Park National Bank remains focused on their mission and is hopeful for a strong 2024.

Mrs. Ellis-Brunn stated that Ohio Means Jobs Licking County is developing a business center and provided an overview of several planned recruitment events.

Ms. Grigsby stated that when StemFlex is finished, the Port is happy to host a tour.

Mr. Johns stated that the City of Heath is looking to submit a RAISE grant application for \$2 million for planning and preliminary engineering for a long-term look at the Thornwood Drive corridor. Mr. Johns stated that requests for letters of support will be emailed this week.

Mr. Mauter echoed the importance of improvements to the Thornwood Drive corridor, and provided an update of current plans within the City of Newark's section of that corridor. Mr. Mauter also expressed working with several individuals to help better understand how to manage new developments of unprecedented scale. The City of Newark is also looking to construct a parking garage to support existing and future downtown activities. Mr. Mauter commented that the West Church Street bridge will soon be closing until August 2024.

### Committee Reports

Finance and Strategy – Ms. Grigsby stated that Integrity Bookkeeping is still working on financials for November and December. Reports will be provided to the Board when received.

Marketing and LCWorks – Ms. McDonald stated that the committee did not meet in December, and stated that Ms. Willison will provide a Marketing update in the staff report.

Infrastructure – Mr. Roberts provided an update on the committee's work. Mr. Roberts explained the growing relationship between the Grow Licking County Infrastructure Committee, LCATS and the Licking County TID. LCATS is pursuing a pedestrian safety corridor along State Route 79. Kristy Hawthorne provided an update on behalf of the Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District. Mr. Roberts explained that conversations on advocating for the ability to create a "Water and Sewer Improvement District" are ongoing.

### Staff Reports

Mrs. Fitzsimmons provided an update on GROW's economic development efforts (see slideshow). Mrs. Fitzsimmons stated the staff presented to Licking Valley sophomores on Licking County growth and career opportunities, and is hopeful for more opportunities to share the Licking County story with students in the community. Mrs. Fitzsimmons shared some highlights of the Expansion Solutions magazine which featured Robert Montagnese and Licking Memorial Health Systems. Mrs. Fitzsimmons shared that the region is now designated as an Economic Development District by the USEDA, which will allow us to be more competitive in applying for grants.

Mrs. Fitzsimmons asked the Board of Directors to complete the Conflict of Interest Policy for the year. Mrs. Fitzsimmons also stated that GROW Licking County has a table at the Groundhog Day breakfast, and for Board of Directors to reach out to staff if they would like to sit at the GROW table.

Mrs. Fitzsimmons stated that the November meeting falls on Veterans Day, which is not a holiday. The Board of Directors recommended rescheduling the meeting for November 18<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Feightner provided an update on lead activity and business retention and expansion efforts. Updates also included a demonstration of a revised economic development entitlement areas map (see slideshow).

Ms. Willison provided an update on social media efforts and results of the Digital Advertising campaign on Youtube, LinkedIn, and Snapchat (see slideshow).

Chair McDonald encouraged the Board of Directors to share ideas and thoughts for organizational goals moving into 2024.

Comments from Citizens

None.

Items for Action

Mr. Mauter motioned; seconded by Mrs. Ellis-Brunn to adjourn the meeting at 1:39 PM.

Next Meeting: Monday, March 8, 2024 at 12:00 PM – TBD

Respectfully submitted, Corey Alton, Secretary