

**Business Development Corporation for a Greater Massena  
Board Meeting Minutes  
January 21, 2021**

**Draft!**

Board Members: Dan Pease, Jeff Dobbins, Mike Besaw, Sherry Thompson and Dave LaClair

Excused: Ben Murtaugh, Melanie Cunningham,

Staff: Jim Murphy, Executive Director

Public: Sam Carbone, Sue Bellor, Pat Facticeau, Steve O'Shaughnessy, Matt LeBire

**Call to Order**

VP Dan Pease called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. Dan and the other board members welcomed Sherry Thompson to the BDC Board. Sherry is Senior Vice President of Lending Operations and Risk Management at SeaComm Federal Credit Union, where she has worked for 30 years. Sherry also serves as a Director for PALS, formerly the Massena Boys and Girls Club. Sherry replaces Ron Bacon.

**Approval of Minutes of the Sept. 17, 2020 Meeting**

A motion to approve the minutes of the Sept. 17 board of Directors meeting was tabled because there was not a quorum of those present at that meeting attending this meeting.

**Financial Reports**

Treasurer Jeff Dobbins presented draft (pending audit results) balance sheet, profit and loss statement and financial reports to the board. Jeff noted that all the financials should be considered as drafts pending the completion of the BDC's audit. Jeff reviewed the balance sheet as of Dec. 30, 2020, noting that the BDC was still waiting on some payments billed in December, so we can expect those revenues moving forward. Jeff has also set up an account to "book" the BDC's loan to the Massena Arts and Theater Association (MATA) once we begin billing the organization. Jeff noted that, overall, there wasn't much different in the organization's overall finances as the prior year. Jeff also provided a summary of expenditures for the year to board members.

A motion was made by Mike B. to approve the financial reports (Seconded by Dave), which was approved unanimously.

**Board Discussion – Future Direction of the BDC**

Jim Murphy prefaced the discussion by saying that the issue before us goes beyond this year's funding cuts. As we move forward, we will need to develop a more specific scope of services for both municipalities as part of our annual contracts with both the town and the village. Jim noted that the original scope of services under which he was hired appears to have changed significantly, with the village appearing to pull away from the BDC and the town reimagining the BDC as a grant-writing and grant administration tool.

Steve O'Shaughnessy joined the meeting at this point. Sam Carbone left the meeting temporarily to avoid any quorum issues. Sam returned when Sue Bellor left the meeting.

Matt said, given the current situation with the village, it was hard to tell what role the BDC would play in the future, adding that there may be some potential to work together because of expected service gaps in the next budget. Matt said the "deep discussions" about the next village budget would not happen until late February/March. With so many unknowns, he said he did not feel that the village board would be willing to fund the BDC at prior levels, but that the door might be open to contracting with the BDC for specific services. One concern in the past among village trustees was not having a thorough understanding of what the BDC was doing for the village. Better defining what we can expect to get might garner more yes votes, he said.

Steve O'Shaughnessy said that the town fully supports the BDC, noting that the town has come to rely on Executive Director Jim Murphy for writing grants, carrying out awards and assisting in grant administration. This work, as well as Jim's guidance on the town's comprehensive plan process, is really necessary for the town, providing a level of expertise that the town lacks.

Dan asked board members about what they thought about the future of the BDC and their commitment to participate in monthly meetings and to develop and advance the BDC's mission and activities.

Mike said that he was committed to the organization moving forward, noting "we could be doing a lot more than we are doing." He said he was worried about focusing too much on grant-writing and grant administration services, noting that the BDC needed to stick with its traditional mission of getting businesses to come here.

Dan agreed, noting that having Jim working primarily as a grant writer did not make sense from a use of funds perspective. He felt the primary role of the executive director should be to work as a "facilitator" with other agencies like the IDA to bring more business to Massena. Jim's been doing that on his own but he has not received any guidance from us, he said.

Dave said that he, too, was committed to the BDC and agreed that the focus of the Executive Director should not be solely on grant writing, although he noted the organization's history of success in that regard. He said that we needed to develop a more detailed job description moving forward. He also noted that the BDC should take a little more credit for what it has done.

Dan added that he thought the BDC had played an important role throughout the years. I think we sort of lost ourselves with the shock of losing half of our funding but I think there's a way to work through that and spread the money out and still perform a function that's valuable to the community.

Steve reiterated the town's commitment to the BDC, noting that the BDC is important to the community and provides a valuable service to the town. As long as I'm involved, the BDC will have the support of the town, he said. Later, Sam Carbone also reiterated his support for the BDC. He added that even if the town was the sole funder for the organization, they would want the BDC to

work on village projects and continue to include the village in the selection of BDC board members and making policy decisions.

Jeff added that the key to success moving forward was getting together on a more regular basis, which will help to stay a little more focused. Grant-writing helps to pay the bills , he noted, but ultimately, we want to do more for the community.

### **Organizational Issues**

Dan noted that the January meeting had traditionally been an organizational meeting, when the BDC elected its slate of officers for the year and made its committee assignments. Since the BDC Board had not yet nominated a slate of officers for the year, Dan suggested that the BDC put together a nominating committee to present a slate of officers at the February board meeting. Dan, Jeff and Dave volunteered to serve on the nominating committee.

Jim also noted that while the BDC Board had reviewed the draft 2021 budget, no official action had been taken to approve it. A motion was made by Dave (seconded by Jeff) to approve the BDC budget for 2021. All voted yes except Sherry, who abstained

Jim also discussed Authorities and Budget Office annual requirements for board members and the organization, which has been complicated because of issues completing our audits for 2017-2020. Jim noted that there were several documents that needed to be reviewed and signed by board members Dan suggested that we put together a working group to review the required ABO documents and policies and develop draft revisions for the full board to consider as needed. Jeff and Mike were selected to volunteer for the working group.

### **Executive Director's Report – See Attached!**

#### New Business/Other Business

Matt noted that his work requires him to participate in Faculty Senate meetings that are held at the same time as the BDC's monthly meeting, making it nearly impossible for him to participate in the BDC meetings. It was suggested that others might be having issues making the meeting. Mike volunteered to send out a Doodle poll to see if there was a more convenient time/day to hold future meetings.

#### Consultant and Liaison Reports

Steve and Sam reviewed several current town initiatives, from the airport to upcoming fishing tournaments.

#### Questions from the Public/Press.

#### Executive Session

None

#### Adjournment

Jeff made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:22 p.m., that motion was seconded by Dave and passed with all members voting 'Aye'.

**Next Regular Meeting Date: February 18, 2021**