BEMIDJI ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MINUTES

Monday, May 27, 2025

Pursuant to due call and notice, a special meeting of the Bemidji Economic Development Authority (BEDA) of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, May 27, 2025, at 6:10 p.m. in the Chambers of City Hall, Chair Prince presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Commissioners were declared present: Prince, Peterson, Dickinson, Rivera, Eaton. Absent: Fiskevold Gould, Thayer

Present: Rich Spiczka, Michelle Miller

OTP Site Host Agreement

Spiczka stated that Ottertail Power is proposing to install an EV charging station at the Sanford Center at no cost to the city, having met on-site with key staff to select a location. The selected site was chosen for utility access and cost-effectiveness. The contract is relatively favorable and poses little risk to the city, requiring the city to keep the station accessible but not obligating it to pay for installation or electricity. Concerns were raised about the charging station's location, especially during major events like the Water Carnival and hockey games.

Motion by Rivera, seconded by Eaton approving the agreement between Otter Tail Power Company for the installation and maintenance of charging station facilities. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Peterson, Prince, Rivera, Eaton, Dickinson. Absent: Thayer, Fiskevold Goud.

BEDA Authority

Spiczka requested board direction on whether the Authority should be more proactive or remain reactive in its activities, noting that it has historically been reactive.

- Councilmember Rivera advocated for a proactive approach, citing the potential loss of 43% of federal housing vouchers in Bemidji (115 people, approximately $300,000) and the need for local solutions, including acquiring properties for redevelopment and utilizing the authorized levy capacity (which could have added $345,000 last year).
- Discussion included the Authority's historical relationship with the HRA, the upcoming retirement of HRA Director Debbie Wold, and the need for clarity on roles and responsibilities, especially given the HRA's current portfolio of scattered site houses.
- The possibility of restructuring the board to include non-council members and/or additional staff (e.g., a community development director) was raised, along with the need for council education on HRA operations.
- Funding mechanisms, including the use of levy authority and the underutilized Revolving Loan Fund, were discussed as potential sources for proactive initiatives.
- Councilmember Peterson expressed indifference, leaning towards the current reactive approach due to staff time constraints, but acknowledged the points for proactivity.
- One councilmember expressed a preference for the private sector handling public housing but was open to using funds to help private property owners.
- Members noted the complexity of the HRA and the need for council education on its operations. Suggestions included considering citizen involvement in BEDA, hiring additional staff such as a community development director, and reassessing board structure for more proactive engagement.

Consensus was to maintain the current (reactive) approach until further clarity is achieved, especially regarding the HRA leadership transition. Agreement was made to revisit the topic in future work sessions, potentially as a series of conversations, and to explore potential changes to bylaws/ordinances as needed, noting that the ordinance currently states the board consists of council members.

Closed Meeting

President Prince stated that the purpose of the BEDA meeting was to develop or consider offers or counteroffers for the purchase or sale of real or personal property in the Plat of South Shore, Lot 1, Block 3, Parcel No. 80.05983.00.

Motion by Eaton, seconded by Peterson, to close the meeting in accordance with Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.05, Subd. 3(3) to develop or consider offers or counteroffers for the purchase or sale of real or personal property in the Plat of South Shore, Lot 1, Block 3, Parcel No. 80.05983.00. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote. Meeting closed at 6:41 p.m.

Commission members received an offer for the purchase of land in the Plat of South Shore, Parcel No. 80.05983.00 in closed session. Staff was given direction related to an offer or counteroffer.

Prince reopened the meeting at 6:57 p.m.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Peterson, seconded by Eaton to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle R. Miller

Michelle R. Miller
City Clerk