

MINUTES
PORT AUTHORITY REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, JUNE 27, 2022
3:00 P.M.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Members Present: Commissioners Jerry McCarthy, Michael Bednar, Jeff Austin, Tim Ruzek, Lee Bjorndal, Jason Baskin, and Chuck Moline.

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Port Authority Attorney Craig Byram, Port Authority Executive Director Craig Clark, and Port Authority Secretary Tom Dankert.

Others Present: Tim Penny (President and CEO of Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation) and John Garry (President and CEO of the Development Corporation of Austin).

President McCarthy called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Item #2. – Approval of minutes of the April 27, 2022 regular meeting: President McCarthy noted two changes, one for the meeting time to start at 4:00 (instead of 4:30) and the second on the motion to approve the audited financial statements should be by Commissioner Bednar (instead of Commissioner Bjorndal). Motion by Commissioner Austin, seconded by Commissioner Bednar to approve the amended minutes of the April 27, 2022 regular meeting. Carried 7-0.

Item #3. – SMIF (Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation) Presentation: Tim Penny, President and CEO of SMIF presented the Port Authority with an update of the last year and thanked the Port Authority for their annual contribution. Mr. Penny noted their annual book donations, early childhood training sessions, and local loans to entities such as Bella Victoria, Golden Tress, Lansing Corners, and others. Mr. Penny noted SMIF moved over \$20 million of federal dollars to local grants as part of their administration work as a trusted partner of the state and federal government. Mr. Penny noted SMIF also donated \$10,000 to help with the Taopi tornado relief efforts.

Item #4. – DCA Presentation (John Garry): John Garry, President and CEO of the Development Corporation of Austin (DCA) and Austin Community Growth Ventures (ACGV) presented the Port Authority with an update of their Joint Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 noting four main priorities:

- Position Austin to grow as a destination for business, innovators, and entrepreneurs at the intersection of food, health, agriculture and biosciences.
- Ensure entrepreneurs and startup businesses have access to the right technical assistance and funding to launch their idea.
- Assist existing firms with access to workforce, infrastructure, capital, and physical space that allow them to remain and continue to grow the community.
- Coordination and collaboration with community partners to make Austin a world-class destination for residents.

Commissioner Ruzek questioned what are people looking for in an incubator. Mr. Garry noted usually we need a big generic space that people can share labs in, and also dedicated space for scientific research.

Item #5. – Overview of Port Authority Function: Mr. Clark noted attorney Craig Byram had drafted the memo to outline the history and the role and function of the Port Authority. No questions asked by the Commissioners.

Item #6. – Open Discussion on Port Authority Priorities: President McCarthy noted this meeting was to have some ideas/priorities of the Board. The following were discussed:

- Commissioner Baskin noted he is on-line with the DCA and ACGV Strategic Plan. Food, bioscience, health, and agriculture are things we should concentrate on. We have a great opportunity to build out Creekside Business Park.
- Commissioner Ruzek noted Creekside Business Park and Nu-Tek should be our priority. We also need to better promote the community, and review the Velocity Report on what can also be done to expand Austin’s opportunities.
- Commissioner Moline stated it was good to see the DCA’s focus narrowed. We should continue to “hit singles instead of going for the grand slam” noting many small victories are just as good as one big one. We need to toot our own horn of what we have in Austin, including two free years of education at Riverland Community College thanks to The Hormel Foundation.
- Commissioner Austin noted we need to work more with existing companies, and focus on certain programs.
- Commissioner Bjorndal noted maybe we should look at an incubator building, and a smaller focus is good.
- Commissioner Bednar noted Nu-Tek is a terrific addition. However, our housing stock has deteriorated with too many rentals in town. In order to sell Austin, we also need to back up the statistics that Austin has a great education system. The test scores and passing rates don’t indicate such. We also need to continue with downtown development.

Item #7. – Executive Director Report: Mr. Clark noted we are still working with the federal government on our EDA grant for infrastructure at Creekside Business Park. Getting a SAMS registration seems to be a big hold-up, with no help from the federal government.

Terry Hall noted that construction is coming along well on the 117 and 119 2nd Avenue properties.

Austin Utilities did agree to pick up their share of costs for infrastructure in the Creekside Business Park as part of the EDA grant.

The wetland delineation plan came back showing 0.68 acres in the 25-acre Persinger land site as wetlands. We will need to buy a wetland credit somewhere else in order to utilize this land to full capacity, noting it might cost around \$13,000 for such credit purchase. Mr. Clark noted the Port Authority will proceed with the drainage plan.

Item #8. – Any other business: None.

Item #9. Adjournment: With no further business, motion by Commissioner Austin, seconded by Commissioner Ruzek to adjourn the meeting at 4:08 pm. Carried 7-0.

Approved: _____

President: _____

Secretary: _____