

**SMITHVILLE BOARD OF ALDERMEN
WORK SESSION**

November 5, 2024 6:30 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers and Via Videoconference

1. Call to Order

Mayor Boley, present, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. A quorum of the Board was present: Melissa Wilson, Marv Atkins, Kelly Kobylski, Dan Hartman and Leeah Shipley. Ronald Russell was present via Zoom.

Staff present: Cynthia Wagner, Gina Pate, Chief Lockridge, Chuck Soules, Jack Hendrix, Rick Welch, Matt Denton and Linda Drummond.

2. Discussion of Economic Development

Gina Pate, Assistant City Administrator, gave a brief summary of the [memo](#) in the packet. She noted that the Board had requested a work session to discuss the work of the Economic Development Committee (EDC). Gina added that it would also be good to discuss economic development in general and using Placer AI for economic data and that data could be provided quarterly in future meetings.

Gina noted that included in the memo is the history of what the Economic Development Committee (EDC) has worked on over the past several years, including the milestones that they worked towards as outlined in the Strategic Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. Currently they are working on marketing materials for review for tourism and future development. The committee has moved to only have quarterly meetings. Gina explained that this discussion would help guide the committee in moving forward and what their meeting would look like. Also included in the memo is a list of their partnerships. They partner with Smithville Main Street District for their tourism and marketing efforts, for the downtown. The Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce has an MOU with the City to help with business retention and various items in the Comprehensive Plan. Gina noted that she has been working with Erika Winston, Chamber of Commerce Director, on Lunch and Learn ideas and opportunities for the community for bettering businesses. She and Erika are also looking at new marketing ideas since it is budgeted for FY2025. The City is a member of the Clay County Economic Development Council (CCEDC) and when they receive requests for information for potential development, they forward those requests to Jack Hendrix, Development Director and Gina to review. Staff also attends the Clay County Economic Development Council meetings for networking opportunities.

Gina noted that also in the memo is what other communities are doing for economic development, what their budget is and if they have an Economic Development Committee.

Gina explained that staff is looking for feedback from the Board on what they view as the role of EDC and what it looks like in the future and economic development in general.

Mayor Boley explained that the last time we updated the Ordinance for EDC was May 2019. The Ordinance was amended to expand the eligibility to be on the EDC to include owners of real estate within Smithville, individuals who reside within the Smithville School

District boundaries and Chamber of Commerce members. He noted that even with adding that language we still struggle to fill the committee and have a purpose. At that time, they discussed having the committee be a part of the Chamber of Commerce or even a stand-alone entity. The committee does not have a budget. In other cities, the Economic Development Council owns land and can do more. Mayor Boley noted that Clay County Economic Development Council, Platte County Development Council and Northland Chamber of Commerce are great options we can use for economic development. He added that if a big business were looking to come to Smithville, the Clay County Economic Development Council would be involved.

Alderman Hartman noted that he attended an informative meeting today with Erika that was put on by Clay County EDC and Northland Education Business Alliance. During that meeting, Alderman Hartman sat next to Kirk Davis, Chair of the Clay County EDC and former City Manager of Gladstone. He had the opportunity to visit and ask him questions.

Alderman Hartman said that he echoed the Mayor's thoughts. He noted that the Chamber of Commerce focuses on business retention, and attracting new businesses. He does not think that should change. Businesses looking to come to the City of Smithville usually contact City staff first and that works well. Currently we have some new development underway that seem to be getting a lot of positive attention from businesses.

Alderman Hartman reiterated that we are members of Clay County EDC and thinks that we should continue to be involved. He would like to have an Alderman appointed annually in April as a City of Smithville liaison to the Clay County EDC. They could attend functions as their schedule allows. He noted that he tries, as his schedule allows, to attend their functions and build a relationship them. He added that the Clay County EDC has a program called ED Pros and thinks the Alderman representative could be part of that panel. That opportunity would lead us to access the Kansas City Area Development Council (KCADC). Alderman Hartman noted that few years back when he was a member of the EDC they had Tim Cowden, President and CEO of the KCADC visit. He said it is a wonderful organization that is central to businesses in the Kansas City area. Alderman Hartman explained if you want to know what is coming to the area, Tim and his organization are the key for that information. He noted that the KCADC membership fee is \$10,000 a year, but through Clay County EDC we do have the opportunity to access it.

Alderman Hartman noted that he learned in talking with Kirk that the Clay County EDC also has the Midwest Small Business Finance Division for the SBA Loan Program. Rickey Pierce, Director of Loan Operations for Clay County EDC is leading that program.

Alderman Hartman said his recommendation would be to update our Ordinance to not have an advisory committee. Instead have a Board of Aldermen representative appointed to participate in the Clay and Platte County EDC meetings and events and keep the Board informed of upcoming economic development.

Alderman Russell asked that Gina make sure that the metrics are correct for what we were trying to reach for the quality of jobs that we are bringing Smithville. He noted that he had received positive feedback from the flyer that was distributed at the Smith's Fork Campground. He would like to see a way we can measure the effectiveness of the flyer for local businesses. He said he would also like to interview businesses that are closing or

moving to see if there is a key driver for it and possibly address the issue and help retain businesses. Alderman Russell added that he would like to see a partnership with the School District to work with and keep some of the graduates here.

Mayor Boley explained that it is in the Ordinance the School District have a representative on the committee. He noted that they have always had a representative on the committee, and they attend all the meetings. They are also involved in the Northland Chamber and Clay County EDC.

Alderman Kobylski noted that if we can streamline our resources and retain our partnership it would consolidate our time and efforts and avoid duplicating resources. She said when she was on the EDC they were spinning their wheels, there were a lot of great ideas but no direction on where they would go. Alderman Kobylski added it would save a lot of time and manpower if we partner with more local resources. The Chamber is more for business recruitment and community engagement.

Mayor Boley explained that part of the job role of the Assistant City Administrator position is economic development. He said that Gina's time would be better spent working with Clay County EDC or Platte County EDC then preparing agendas for committee meetings. Mayor Boley added that Smithville does not have very many business locations for lease like a lot of other communities do.

Alderman Hartman noted that the Chamber is better at business retention and asked that Erika Winston, Chamber Director, speak on that. He said that he is Chair for the Clay County University of Missouri Extension, and it is a resource that we can lean on for workforce development updates.

Mayor Boley noted that the data that Gina provides at EDC meetings would be better for Erika to provide it at the Chamber lunches to reach a broader audience.

Erika noted that she attends most of the Clay County EDC and Northland Chamber events. Erika explained that she works very closely with Gina to look for possible businesses that might be interested in expanding to Smithville and what struggles businesses are having and finding ways to help.

Gina noted that part of business retention is to visit businesses before they reach the point of leaving. This is to see if there is a trend in certain struggles businesses are having in Smithville and offer workshops on subjects like marketing.

Mayor Boley asked when they began the business retention visits.

Gina noted that they started them in January 2024.

Erika explained that they had done nine business retention visits this year. She said that the summer month's scheduling was difficult, but they were going to try to catch up before the holidays. Erika noted that they are trying to reach out to all of the businesses that are interested.

Mayor Boley noted that the goal for the visits is one a month but not all businesses want to be involved. Mayor Boley added that Erika's position is now a full-time position but has not always been.

Alderman Hartman said that there has been some criticism about the City supporting the Chamber of Commerce, but he would challenge anyone to show a community that does not support or work closely their Chamber of Commerce.

Erika added that in most of the surrounding communities, the Chamber of Commerce is economic development, or the City helps the Chamber with economic development.

Alderman Hartman said that if the Board chose to have the Chamber take over EDC he would like to see the City work with the Chamber to offer programs. He added that the University of Missouri Extension Economic Development works closely with the Clay County EDC and have been a good resource for us also. Alderman Hartman noted that we should also utilize Platte County EDC.

Alderman Wilson asked where the Smithville Main Street District would fit in to this.

Alderman Shipley explained that Smithville Main Street District works very closely with the Chamber, especially on events. She added that they do not have much connection to other businesses or developments.

Alderman Wilson asked if the Smithville Main Street District still had the data for the downtown.

Alderman Shipley said that they have a ton of data for the downtown area and pull the data regularly. She noted that the data that they have would be beneficial for EDC.

Mayor Boley asked the Board what they wanted for EDC.

Alderman Kobylski said she preferred it not to be a City committee and to streamline our resources.

Mayor Boley suggested to also appoint an Alderman representative to the committee to attend the meetings and events as they can.

The Board all agreed.

3. Adjourn

Alderman Hartman moved to adjourn. Alderman Wilson seconded the motion.

Ayes – 6, Noes – 0, motion carries. Mayor Boley declared the Work Session adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Linda Drummond, City Clerk

Damien Boley, Mayor