

# MINUTES

## Economic Development Committee Meeting

**Date / Time:** Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 5:30 P.M. | **Meeting called to order by** Lukens at 5:30 P.M.

---

### In Attendance

---

**Members Present:** Carol Lukens, Chad Henke, Gary Gisselman, Terry Kilian, Victoria Tierney

**Others Present:** Randy Fifrick, Shannon Graff, Tammy Stratz, Andy Lynch, Atty. Anne Jacobson, Kimm Weber (MVDEVCO), Mayor Doug Diny, Alder Michael Martens, Citizens – Becky Hebda, Tom Kilian, Steve Lewens (Domtar)

*In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisc. Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Daily Herald in the proper manner.*

---

### Agenda Item 1 – Public Comment

---

Citizen Becky Hebda provided public comment regarding development on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. She expressed concern about the existing traffic challenges in the area, noting that turning left or right onto North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street can be difficult during certain times of day due to the high activity of nearby businesses, including her own. She recommended that, if a housing development is planned, staff should further evaluate access between 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Bridge Street.

---

### Agenda Item 2 – Approval of Minutes from March 4, 2025, Meeting and Joint Finance Meeting from April 22, 2025

---

*Kilian moved to approve, seconded by Tierney. **Motion Carried 5-0.***

---

### Agenda Item 3 – Discussion and possible action on the responses to the Request for Qualifications for Partnership for Housing on Infill Lots in the City of Wausau (Stratz)

---

Stratz reported that the Development Department released an RFQ for contractors experienced in modular and manufactured homes. The goal is to establish a pool of qualified contractors to contact on a lot-by-lot basis. Three submissions were received by the April 28, 2025, deadline.

Staff had already spoken in depth with all three contractors and toured one in Irma, who have extensive experience working on both private lots and manufactured home parks. They understand the unique challenges of the individual sites and welcome the opportunity to collaborate and determine the appropriate fit for each lot

Tierney asked Stratz to clarify her comment about the homes being expensive. Stratz noted construction costs are estimated around \$300,000 but options to reduce costs are being explored.

Kilian asked whether only single-family homes would be built, referencing a proposal that mentioned duplexes. She also asked if other districts had gathered public input on infill development.

Stratz responded that duplexes may be considered if appropriate for the lot and neighborhood. She added that public participation has not been an issue in past projects and cited the successful partnership with Northcentral Technical College, which included neighborhood notifications and a well-attended open house.

Fifrick noted we have three qualified contractors we can work with and the way to provide the best value to the city is when there is a lot available for development, staff can work with all three contractors to see who provides the best product that not only fits the neighborhood but comes in at the best price point.

**Action:** *Henke moved to approve staff moving forward with contractors, seconded by Tierny. **Motion Carried 5-0.***

---

### Agenda Item 4 – Discussion and possible approval 208-214 Wyatt Street Property Sale Disposition Application (Stratz)

---

Stratz informed the committee that Gunther Nowak submitted an application to purchase city-owned parcels on Wyatt Street to construct a side-by-side duplex, with plans to live in one unit and rent the other. He is aware of environmental and FEMA floodplain requirements and that rezoning is needed.

Mr. Nowak requested financial assistance through CDBG for remediation and elevation costs and proposed a \$1,000 purchase price due to his low/moderate income. Stratz verified his income eligibility and noted that CDBG funding would require he reside in the home for five years, after which the loan would be forgiven.

Stratz added that Mr. Nowak plans to present to the Plan Commission on May 20 but is waiting on committee feedback before proceeding with rezoning.

Kilian asked whether FEMA requires elevation regardless of ownership; Stratz confirmed yes and shared a rough estimate of \$20,000–\$25,000. Kilian expressed concern about the low purchase price, noting that the lots' combined assessed value could be \$51,800 if taxable and that a \$1,000 sale would be a significant loss. She also questioned whether the request aligns with the March 2024 property disposition guidelines.

Tierney asked if the city uses realtors to market city-owned lots. Stratz said she had spoken to one, but the commission wouldn't justify the time. She noted the lots were previously listed at \$25,000 with no interest and emphasized the need to return the parcels to the tax roll after 20 years.

Tierney raised concern about the city potentially losing around \$75,000 on the deal and it would take several years to recoup that through tax revenue. Stratz suggested considering the tax revenue that has been lost in the 20 years it hasn't been on the tax roll coupled with the cost of the city maintaining it.

Gisselman asked why the city wouldn't complete remediation now to improve marketability. Stratz explained that remediation depends on the type and extent of future development.

Gisselman asked what the post-construction assessed value would be; Stratz said it would depend on construction costs and neighborhood comparable properties.

Kilian shared a nearby resident was unaware the lots were available and believes a property near water is in demand, suggesting the lots should be properly marketed for a reasonable price.

Henke stated that while some have said the city shouldn't be in the real estate business, denying this proposal would require staff to continue managing the property. He expressed support for the sale to get the lot back on the tax roll.

Tierney responded that the city entered the real estate business when it purchased the property and felt it should not have been acquired in the first place.

Henke added that Council had previously objected to \$1 property sales, and now an offer of \$1,000 is still being questioned.

Fifrick asked whether FEMA grants were used to purchase the property, referencing programs for flood zone buyouts or elevation. Stratz clarified the city was encouraged to purchase the lots due to brownfield contamination from a former auto repair shop, not flood risk, and the ability to obtain grants for remediation. Stratz noted the city was reimbursed for 75% of the cost.

**Action:** *Henke moved to approve, seconded by Gisselman Motion Carried 3-2 with Kilian and Tierny dissenting.*

---

### **Agenda Item 5 – Review of draft N 2nd St Redevelopment Request for Interest (RFI) (Lynch)**

---

Lynch presented a draft Request for Interest (RFI) document for the redevelopment of city-owned parcels on N. 2nd Street. The purpose of the RFI is to gauge interest from potential developers, gather ideas for site use, and identify qualified parties interested in partnering with the city on redevelopment of this key corridor.

Committee members discussed the general framework of the RFI, including development goals, community benefit considerations, and flexibility in land use. Emphasis was placed on housing potential, compatibility with surrounding businesses, and the need to address traffic and access concerns in the area.

Public comment was received from a nearby business owner who expressed concerns about existing traffic congestion and emphasized the need to carefully evaluate access to Bridge Street as part of any future development plans.

Kilian expressed appreciation for including public participation but asked how it will be utilized in the evaluation process. She recommended assigning points based on the level of community engagement. Lynch agreed the suggestion was appropriate, noting it's often difficult to predict the type of feedback received, but he would explore options for incorporating it.

Gisselman emphasized the importance of green space and ensuring the development complements the surrounding residential neighborhood. He expressed a preference for single-family housing with added amenities.

Overall, Committee members were supportive of issuing the RFI but requested minor adjustments to clarify evaluation criteria and ensure alignment with adopted planning documents. Staff agreed to revise the draft accordingly and return with an updated version for final review.

---

### **Agenda Item 6 – Approval of MCDEVCO and The City of Wausau Micro Loan Program guidelines (Stratz)**

---

Staff presented the proposed Micro Loan Program guidelines, developed with MCDEVCO to support local small businesses. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was reevaluated to better align with current business needs. It was noted that smaller purchases are often difficult to finance through traditional banks and typically come with high interest rates.

The committee reviewed eligibility, loan terms, and evaluation criteria. Members expressed support and requested minor clarifications on outreach and reporting.

**Action:** *Motion by Kilian, seconded by Tierny, to approve the guidelines with minor revisions. Motion carried 5-0.*

---

### **Agenda Item 7 – Update on Thomas Street Infill and WAM Grant (Fifrick)**

---

Fifrick reported that he has not received a response from the DNR and had no new updates to share.

---

### **Agenda Item 8 – Discussion and possible action regarding Domtar Dam Rehabilitation Project Letter of Support**

---

Steve Lewens from Domtar presented a request for the committee’s consideration to provide a letter of support for the Domtar Dam Rehabilitation Project. The project aims to restore and improve the dam’s structural integrity and support local economic and environmental goals.

Committee members discussed the importance of the project for community safety, infrastructure preservation, and potential economic benefits. There was consensus on the value of endorsing the project.

**Action:** *Motion by Gisselman, seconded by Tierney, to approve providing a letter of support for the Domtar Dam Rehabilitation Project from the council. Motion carried 5-0.*

---

### **Agenda Item 9 – Adjourn**

---

*Tierny motioned to adjourn, seconded by Henke. Motion Carried 5-0.*

**Meeting Adjourned at 6:59 PM**

### **CITY OF WAUSAU, YouTube MEETING LINKS**

*ALL City of Wausau Meetings can be viewed at:*

- <https://www.youtube.com/@CityofWausauMeetings>

*The ED meeting from 05/06/25 can be viewed at:*

- [https://www.youtube.com/live/K\\_zk\\_976Y8Y?si=qLGXRgch6VzJBjIn](https://www.youtube.com/live/K_zk_976Y8Y?si=qLGXRgch6VzJBjIn)