

**Minutes of the February 5, 2024 meeting of the Sawyer County
Economic Development and UW-Extension Committee
Of the Sawyer County Board of Supervisors
Board Room; Sawyer County**



Voting Committee Members Present:

- ☒ Chair: Tom Duffy
- ☒ VC -- John Righeimer
- ☒ Stacey Hessel
- ☐ Brian Bisonette
- ☐ Chris Rusk - virtual

Others Present:

Andy Albarado -virtual
Lynn Fitch
Lori Baltrusis
Cathy LaReau
Ann Larsen
Matt Kures – virtual

Sherry Beckman
Adam Lamoreaux
Jim Ferguson
Molly Lank-Jones
Donna Knuckey
Ann Larsen

Call to Order – Chair Duffy called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.

Certification of Compliance with the open meeting law was met. Roll Call was taken. Quorum was met.

Meeting Agenda --

Public Comments –

Minutes from previous meeting – A motion was made by Ms. Hessel to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2024, meeting; second by Mr. Righeimer. Motion carried without negative vote.

Sawyer County Agricultural Fair Association Report -

University of Wisconsin-Extension Department Report -

Ms. Baltrusis advised that August 7th the Extension Northwoods Showcase will take place. Matt Kures shared a PowerPoint presentation regarding Sawyer County's population and economy. He reviewed the change in population over time; Sawyer had a larger growth in the last decade than most of the State of Wisconsin, largely during the pandemic and because of the recreation amenities offered. Net migration by age groups and community patterns were reviewed; individuals working remotely from home increased significantly. Sawyer had a job opening spike in openings prior to the pandemic and it has remained fairly high. Unemployment rate patterns in Sawyer have followed the rest of the state and nation; we have more job openings in the State than we have employable individuals; population of individuals age 65 and over has increased more notably in northern and central Wisconsin. Labor availability in Sawyer County will continue to be an issue going forward due to our age demographics. Sawyer County has one of the highest share of seasonal/rental housing units in the entire U.S. Sawyer County is very low on the home affordability index due to the high cost of homes in the area.

Hayward Lakes Visitors & Convention Bureau -

A written report was provided and focused on the NW ITBEC marketing. A snowmobile/ATV map of the 14 participating counties is produced by this group as well as a silent sport vacation guide. The 2024 budget was itemized. The 58th Governor's Fishing Opener will be held in Burnett County this year and Sawyer will host in 2026 (the 60th anniversary). A pie chart of 2023 highest activities in the county was provide with snowmobile and ATV volume being the highest.

Northwest Regional Planning Commission Report -

No update

Economic Development Corporation Report -

Mr. Lamoreaux advised that he attended the Governor's Conference and housing/daycare were some of the top priorities of the conference. He feels that we will need to be more creative in developing housing options for our county. Several local organizations have written a letter identifying businesses that have undergone economic duress due to the lack of snow this year; there are 60-90% reductions in revenue this season in some areas, and locals have been encouraged to help support these businesses. The EDC was granted a \$25,000 Thrive grant (\$50,000 for two years) for an incubator program which will be located at the LCO tribal plaza on Hwy B.

Library Updates -

A Winter Library written report was provided in the packet; it identifies their calendar of events and current programming. A circulation report was included. A Weiss Community Library written report of circulation statistics and an event/programming calendar was provided at the meeting, reviewed by Ms. Larsen.

Motorized Trail and Non-Motorized Trail Report -

Ms. LaReau advised that the lack of snow has prompted local businesses to develop alternative reasons for people to visit. Many groups have secured lodging for these visits. All lakes have been un-staked; ice fishing tournaments have also cancelled. Mr. Duffy advised that a Birkie announcement will be made on the 12th regarding which activities will be held. Cable has had enough snow for some skiing, and the Birkie will still draw a large number of visitors to our area.

Broadband Update -

No Update

Historical Society -

Mr. Ferguson advised that they received a \$1000 donation this year, and a local author provided a presentation from her book on local history. Their next speaker will be John Dettloff regarding his book on the history of the Chippewa Flowage on April 11th.

LCO Update -

No update

Meeting Date/Time – The next meeting of the Economic Development and UW-Extension Committee will be Monday, March 11th, at 8:30 am in the Board Room.

Meeting adjourned at 9:49 am

Minutes recorded by Lynn Fitch, County Clerk