

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 5, 2023
To: City Council
From: Keith Curley, Economic Growth Board Chair
CC: Katie Behnke, Economic Development Manager
Re: Economic Growth Board Goals and Priorities

Background

The Hudson Economic Growth Board (“HEGB”) is an all-volunteer board established by City Council in 2006 to support Hudson City Council and Staff with economic development initiatives. Throughout its history, the board and its members have functioned as economic development liaisons, business outreach and engagement personnel, research fellows, and event planners. All in the name of promoting economic development in the City of Hudson, Ohio. As The City re-established the staff role of Economic Development Director, Chief Economic Officer, and now Economic Development Manager – the role of HEGB has changed accordingly, but the general direction, to support Hudson City Council and Staff (Economic Development Department) in the pursuit of economic development initiatives. The broad definition of the Board’s role has provided latitude to support the department in many ways, but at times has led to challenges maintaining focus on specific needs. We stand in front of Council to present some recent accomplishments as well as recommendations for potential future board direction, and to receive input from Council on additional needs or services the group may fulfill.

Pre-COVID-19, HEGB was focusing on outreach to local businesses and residents to receive requests for desired support and services from The City that would help drive economic development. This initiative was to begin the same weekend everything shut-down in Spring 2020. Alas, it did not go forward and HEGB entered an over 6-month hiatus as a ‘non-essential’ board. We reconvened with intermittent online meetings in October 2020. We discussed the economic impacts of COVID-19 but were unable to fully engage with local businesses and residents. The world remained on lockdown. In June 2021, HEGB offered support and donated remaining operating funds to help cover the cost of several hardened outdoor tables in Hudson public spaces so members of the community could visit local businesses again and enjoy take-out dining outside. The board, still in primarily remote meeting sessions, continued to support the EDD with various initiatives, but did not reconvene regularly again until June 2022.

For the past year, HEGB has assisted with the transition of Jim Stiffler as Chief Economic Officer, to Katie Behnke as the new Manager of Economic Development. We worked with the Chamber of Commerce and re-established the Hudson Business Appreciation Breakfast with “Winning Workplaces – Building Culture” at Fleet Response in November 2022. The Business Appreciation Breakfast is intended to be an on-going annual business development initiative with planning already underway for November 2023. Once onboard, Katie Behnke worked with the Board to begin collecting local business workforce needs and outreach entities. We culminated that initiative with another successful program in the Hudson High School Job Fair with 26

businesses and well over 150 students in attendance for the early morning session. It too is set to become an annual program with the intent to be held in the month of April going forward, with specific classes attending throughout the majority of the school day. This has been the focus of HEGB over the past 12-18 months.

Proposed Priorities

If maintained in its current format, HEGB would focus on the following objectives:

1. Continue engagement with local businesses through the Business Appreciation Breakfast and HHS Job Fair.
2. Outreach and Involvement with Other Hudson and Local/Regional Business Development Entities (i.e. CoC; F&M; DH; DC; SCPA; etc...) through representation via board or general membership to liaise between those entities, The Hudson Economic Development Department and The Hudson City Council.
3. Support the Hudson Comprehensive Plan on specific Business and/or Land Development Initiatives.
4. Perform Economic Development Research & Reporting Back to Council.

Another recommendation discussed among the HEGB over the past few years is the reincarnation of HEGB with expanded representation as the City of Hudson's Community Investment Corporation (CIC). The Hudson CIC would be an arm of The City of Hudson and Hudson Economic Development Department for use in expanding targeted financing and tax credits for business retention and expansion. This initiative would take additional discussion and detail to formulate and execute a successful transformation of The Board. (kpc – I have additional notes on this particular approach, but may be an entirely separate topic if considered feasible by City Council.)