***VISITORS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES***

*February 6, 2024 at 8:30 AM*

*City of Valley City Commission Chamber*

Chair Koepplin called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

Members Present: Bobby Koepplin, Mary Lee Nielson, Tammy Jo Taft, Tina Olson

Member Absent: Tyler Marthaler

Others Present: City Administrator Crawford, Administrative Assistant Hintz

Guest: Trinity Nelson with the VCBC Development Corporation

**Minutes**Member Nielson moved to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2024 meeting, seconded by Member Olson. Motion passed unanimously.

**Committee Background & History**

Chair Koepplin, City Administrator Crawford, and Member Nielson shared a history of the current Visitor’s Committee. Initially started as a way to promote Valley City, the group was made up of 5 members representing 5 different distinct groups representing Valley City. A member-at-large, a Chamber representative, Valley City State University representative, a By-ways representative and a Convention Visitors Bureau representative. Open positions are appointed by current committee members keeping those groups in mind. Final approval is done by the Commission.

This Committee gives the Residents of Valley City verification that the Image Enhancements funds that the taxes being collected for are being used as intended.

**Update & Simplify current Applications**

City Administrator Crawford invited Trinity Nelson to discuss her concerns with the length of the current Image Enhancement Application as she is the person who helps small businesses complete the application. The length and qualifications turn people away.

The Committee agrees that they want businesses to use the grants and do not want an application to hinder a businesses’ decision. The goal is to fill empty buildings with businesses. The Committee feels that the historical preservation of the buildings is very important and should remain a part of the application process. They do understand that preserving an older building is very costly and will remain a factor in what the Business owner is able to afford. As important as the historical features are, it is more important to have businesses inside that bring visitors to town.

Member Taft would like to take a look at the current application and restructure it to still closely match the current list of qualifications that are required but streamline as well. If you are a new business you must do this, if you are a current business you must do this. Have one application with all the requirements for a new business then have a separate application for existing businesses with the requirements for them. Make it very clear on the applications that if you are replacing a sign, you are only able to receive a certain amount of funds. If you are updating/repairing your whole store front, you are able to apply for Image Enhancement funds up to a certain value. If you are planning on updating/repairing your building plus historical preservation you are able to apply for funds up to a higher value. Have an \* that states “as funds are available and at the discretion of the Visitors Committee.”

City Administrator Crawford shared that the City is paying the VCBC Development Corp an administrative fee each month and part of that is used for assistance with these things. Crawford suggests that once the application is changed, all businesses requesting funds be sent to Ms. Nelson for her assistance in completing the application and to possibly find other funds that may be available and that they would qualify for.

The consensus of the Committee was to simplify the applications down to 1 or 2 pages. The first one would be if you are a new business. The second one would be for current businesses. Both applications would have listed the percentages of funds that could be awarded but is done at the discretion of the Committee.

Member Taft suggested a review check list be made to follow the process of the requirements at the start of the application and throughout the final review. Businesses would be asked to provide pictures of the project and allow them to be used as part of a press release when the project is completed.

Member Taft agreed to work on current application to restructure and simplify it down to a shorter, more user-friendly application. Member Taft & Member Olson will draft a press release to use when the projects are completed. This will help get the word out about the Enhancement Grants.

**Other**

Discussion was held about an application that had been started and if it would qualify. The consensus was no it would not. Bobby will talk to the Group and let them know their project does not meet the qualifications for a grant.

Discussion was had on Committee Members and the importance of their presence at the meetings.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:53 AM.**