



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

60
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: April 25, 2023

Title of Item: Economic Development Q1 Impact Report

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	Action Requested: <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft)	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing* <small>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</small>
Submitted by: Mark Jeffers		Department: Administration
Presenter (Name and Title): Mark Jeffers, Economic Development Coordinator		Estimated Time Needed: 20 minutes
Summary of Issue: Mark Jeffers will present the Q1 Impact Report to Commissioners at the Board meeting.		
Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:		
Recommended Action/Motion: No action needed		
Financial Impact: <i>Is there a cost associated with this request?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <i>What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$</i> <i>Is this budgeted?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		

Legally binding agreements must have County Attorney approval prior to submission.



Economic Development

Update

Board of Commissioners

April 10, 2023



Priorities to Invoke Change

**Promote Recreation
and Tourism**

**Improve
Broadband**

**Support
Childcare**

**Support Career
Development**

**Business Retention,
Expansion and
Attraction**

**Support Housing
Initiatives**

Recreation & Tourism

- **Communication and Branding:** Branding project has identified the marketing strategy and tagline:

Naturally Better

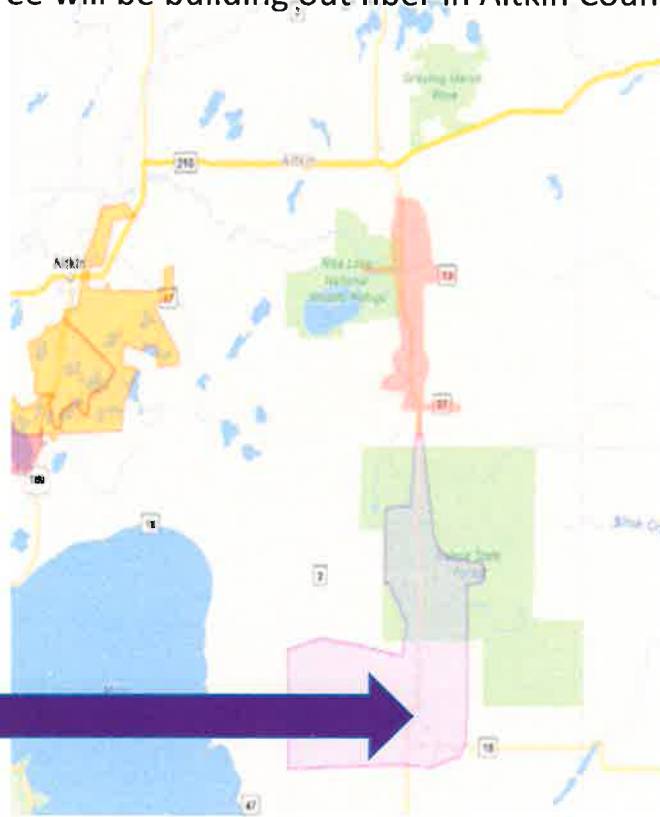
The next steps include meeting with stakeholders (City, townships, chambers, etc.) to spread the message and get all on board to speak the same language. A marketing campaign will kick off on May 15.

- **River Trails:** Economic Development is collaborating with Ripplesippi Trail committee and running a contest to have the community help name our river trail system.
- **Northwoods ATV Trail System:** promoting the trail system and vision for Axtell area to be the “Valley Fair of the North”. Currently building out the Mille Lacs Connector.
- **Arts & Entertainment:** Continued collaboration with community stakeholders that are creating momentum in our community. A great example is the “Entertainment Alley” in downtown Aitkin.
- **Business Development & Recreation Grant:** The purpose of this grant fund is to leverage county funds, private funds and volunteer efforts to increase small business development activities in Aitkin County, with an emphasis on increasing sustained tourism and recreation activities. The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners, have approved funding to be used to directly impact the Community of Aitkin County by executing the Aitkin County Business Development & Recreation Grant.



Broadband

- **McGrath Project:** Construction will begin as soon as the snow melts with a project completion goal of October, 2023. The grant completion deadline is March 31, 2024.
- **Digital Connection Committee:** Minnesota Office of Broadband is requesting our help. Aitkin County is the lead on a team of local community leaders focusing on identifying the specific needs for broadband in our community. This committee work will benefit our unserved and underserved residents.
- **DEED Border to Border Grants:** Mille Lacs Energy, Savage Communications and Paul Bunyan Communications have all applied for the current B2B grant round. All three will be building out fiber in Aitkin County in 2023.



McGrath Project



Child Care

- **DEED Economic Development Childcare Grant:** Aitkin County was awarded \$100,000 to be used to increase new childcare facilities in Aitkin County
- **2023 Childcare Acceleration Grant:** \$100,000 (DEED Grant) will be awarded to potential new childcare facilities in Aitkin County. Eligible applications can include licensing and training fees, home remodel to meet state requirement standards and equipment and supplies for new childcare providers. We are also developing a scholarship program with Central Lakes College for Aitkin County residents to study early childhood education.



Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction

- **Revitalization Grant:** The purpose of this grant fund is to help support local businesses to upgrade/revitalize the outside presence of their business property in our community in an effort to drive economic growth. As business owners and members of our community, it is important that we establish and maintain an image of growth and success. The fund will help support upgrades of awnings, signage, outdoor aesthetics and general business image and appearance.
- **Business Attraction:** We continue to work to attract and this will increase as the marketing program and momentum continues.
 - **New Businesses to Aitkin County:**
 - Tractor Supply
 - Smokey Jake's
 - Hallett Antique Mall
 - The Locker Room
 - The Sandy Beaver
 - Sampaguita
 - White Oak Ambiance



Strategic Plan Tracking

Completed
Not on Track
Caution on timing
On track or Completed

Priority	Project	Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Status
Promote Recreation and Tourism	Aitkin County Branding Project		June, 2022	June, 2023	Completed
	Ripplesippi naming of trails		March, 2023	May, 2023	Completed
	Boost Grant		2022	2023	Completed
	Business Development & Recreation Grant	Annual County Grant		ongoing	Completed
Improve Broadband	McGrath Project	CDBG Grant, 5 Million to build internet availability	Aug, 2021	March, 2024	Completed
	Border to Border Projects	continued support of ISP projects in Aitkin County	June, 2021	ongoing	Completed
	Blandin Accelerate Cohort	County led committee on broadband knowledge	June, 2021	December, 2021	Completed
	Digital Inclusion Committee	County led committee on inclusion of rural residences	April, 2023	August, 2023	Caution on timing
Support Childcare	Childcare facilities grant program	2022 Aitkin County Grant	April, 2022	Dec, 2022	Completed
	Childcare summit		June, 2022	June, 2022	Completed
	DEED Childcare grant		Dec, 2022	Dec, 2023	Caution on timing
	Childcare Acceleration Grant		Dec, 2022	Dec, 2023	Completed
Support Career Development	Aitkin HS FAB LAB	Collaboration with School District to improve program		ongoing	Caution on timing
	Collaboration with JET			Feb, 2023	Completed
Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction	Business Revitalization Grant	Aitkin County Grant	Jan, 2023	Dec, 2023	Completed
	Community Grant Program	Aitkin County Grant	Jan, 2022	Dec, 2022	Completed
Support Housing Initiatives	Housing Strategy Sessions			ongoing	Not on Track

