

Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative

Joint Task Force Meeting Agenda

Mount Ayr Golf and Country Club

2443 230th Ave., Mount Ayr, Iowa

Tuesday July 2, 2019 - 1:00 p.m.

1) Welcome

- a. Governor Reynolds, Lt. Governor Gregg and Sandy Ehrig welcomed Task Force and Iowa Rural Development Council members.

2) Roll and approval of the December 13, 2018 joint meeting:

- a. Members had received the December 13 meeting minutes for review prior to meeting. Voting and approval took place via the attendance sheet for the July 2nd meeting.

3) Briefing on Empower Rural Iowa Act and ongoing work required by Task Forces – Lt. Governor

- a. Task Force members had received copy of the ERI Act to review. Briefed members on outcomes in the legislature that came out of final recommendations:
 - i. Broadband: Extended the sunset of the 2015 broadband bill for an additional 5 years, to July 2025. Also extended the property tax exemption to 5 years. Although not included in this year's bill, an additional \$5.0 million was appropriated for broadband improvements.
 - ii. Workforce housing: The existing Workforce Housing Tax Incentives Program was popular, and funds have been allocated for five future years. Changes to the program include:
 1. Increased credits from \$20.0 to \$25.0 million per fiscal year starting in 2020.
 2. Increased small city set-aside from \$5.0 to \$10.0 million
 3. Award process will be competitive instead of first-come, first-serve, starting July 1, 2019.
 4. Directs the entire \$25.0 million allotted for FY2020 to be applied towards small city projects registered in the last fiscal year, to clear up the backlog.

4) Introduction of the ERI Coordinator and Center for Rural Revitalization's vision

- a. Another recommendation from the task forces was to create a center to could serve as a statewide clearinghouse and point of contact. Legislative authority was not required, and the Center for Rural Revitalization was created and housed at the Iowa Economic Development Authority. Liesl Seabert started July 1 as program manager for the Center. The Lt. Governor introduced Liesl who provided background info. She is looking forward to serving as point person and working with the task force and IRDC members.

5) Discussion of new charge for the Task Forces:

- a. Lt. Governor had provided a summary document of next steps for the task forces. The overall charge is to implement the 2019 ERI Act, as well as develop additional recommendations for the next legislative session.

- b. For implementation:
 - i. The ERI Act provided for \$300,000 in Rural Innovation Grants (\$100,000 for each task force area). Each task force will need to determine award criteria for projects that are scalable and replicable.
 - ii. The Investing in Rural Iowa task force will need to determine housing needs assessment grant criteria.
- c. Going forward: Investing in Rural Iowa:
 - i. Look at suggestions from Idea Summits for additional program opportunities.
 - ii. Review existing programs dealing with delinquent buildings to see if efficiencies across programs can be found.
- d. Going forward: Growing Rural Iowa:
 - i. Develop a rural leadership program. Decide what we want future leaders to know and empower them. It could incorporate existing programs. We should be able to track how many go through the program.
 - ii. Creative placemaking as rural development; how can communities find their uniqueness?
- e. Going forward: Connecting Rural Iowa
 - i. Drive applications to utilize the \$5M allocated to demonstrate need for additional funds. Be strategic with task force meetings to help make the case statewide for why broadband is important. Hold meetings where we can demo examples of telehealth, precision ag, self-driving cars, etc.

6) Sharing of resources and collaboration opportunities: Sandy asked members with programs that could benefit the three task force topics, to share information.

- a. Investing:
 - i. Terri Rosonke: Almost every county in Iowa (96) are served by a State Housing Trust Fund and members are encouraged to get to know their county organization. IFA provides money for the Funds for local disbursement. The money comes from the state and is capped, but they are looking at ways to increase funding.
 - ii. Grant Menke: USDA has two low-interest loan programs that require no down payment. They also have a community facilities program that can help with infrastructure for housing development, and a program for homeownership repairs through grants and loans for rural communities.
 - iii. Lisa Houser: Habitat has 27 affiliates across the state providing new home construction and rehab of affordable housing. They serve about 325 families per year and provide disaster recovery across the state. Have been working in Marshalltown and now looking at flood recovery. In addition to Habitat, she also sits on the Board of Iowa Housing Partnership which is a collaboration of developers, service providers, policymakers and others. This is a new group and they are trying to build membership to collaborate statewide.
 - iv. Gary Taylor: ISU Extension has developed a rural housing readiness assessment for communities to use prior to doing a full housing assessment. They recently

presented it at a housing workshop in Fairfield and are hoping it will be available online by end of July. Communities can work through assessment themselves or an ISU field rep can come assist. Might make a good presentation for the Investing task force.

- v. Clint Sloss: McClure is currently working with Wayne County on housing plan. They work with communities and counties to develop actionable plans, including funding, to make sure final project can be implemented. Zach Mannheimer would be able to present to the task force if interested.
- vi. Steve Eggleston: HUD no longer works with affordable housing. Local governments have down payment assistance programs, but even with those there are still gaps between what is needed vs what is available.

b. Growing Rural Iowa:

- i. Kathy Anderson: ABI offers the Leadership Iowa program. She recommends having some former graduates talk about that program. At the recent ABI conference, Emily Schmitt with Sukup shared some best practices they are implementing to grow, so recommends she present to group.
- ii. Lt. Gov: Talked about the "This is Iowa" video and would like to have a detailed briefing from IEDA on strategy.
- iii. Jason Nieces: Small towns struggle to tell their story. The Community Foundation partners with Orton Foundation on Community Heart and Soul to hear all voices in the community in order to craft a common narrative. It really helps to identify emerging leaders.
- iv. Gary Taylor: ISU Extension has a community engagement program called Leading Communities focused on engaging entire community in projects. The program is active in three counties so multiple communities participate. They have six sessions and at end a community project has been identified. Henry and Lee are done, and now working with six more. Applications can be made through the local County Extension office.
- v. Ashley Moyer: Gave a plug for community colleges as all have some type of leadership program. Indian Hills partnered with the Fairfield Chamber on a leadership program for professionals new to leadership. Programs are not just for young professionals, also have classes for HS students.
- vi. Chris Kramer: Iowa Cultural Affairs had over 11,000 people last year involved in programs that are community based. They offer scholarships for rural arts. Smaller towns need help getting started and have smaller projects, but it helps build leadership.
- vii. Sen. Lofgren: Leadership Muscatine is a program that informs people on the community – local leadership programs are important, so they need to be considered as well.

c. Connecting Rural Iowa:

- i. Dave Duncan: Iowa Communications Alliance members include 120 Iowa owned Telcos. Broadband is a non-partisan and needs to be worked on at state and national level as some of the federal programs don't work so well in Iowa. There

are 316 communities in Iowa with FTTH, and over 180 have Gig service. Grand River Mutual in MO has FTTH in Leon, Lamoni and moving up to Grand River and Blockon.

- ii. Jennifer Crall: They are seeing better soybean yields with precision ag tech, but also want to see livestock stats.

7) Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 2:00