



Committee Members Present: Tyler McDonald, Anna Platz, Jake Monnat, Tom Kalamas, Rachel Garito

Others Present: Jenna Lauraine, Brittany Davis

I. Review Community Connections Applications

- a. Jenna Lauraine, Programs and Partnerships Director, introduced the Community Connections Fund to the committee. She stated the premise of the program, which is to fund placemaking projects that strengthen ties within the community, to develop relationships and to spur economic growth and development through the creation or enhancement of public gathering places or services. This year, we have \$60,000 allocated towards the program, due to not funding a project in 2023. Jenna indicated that the committee could decide to award one \$60,000 grant, or two \$30,000 grants. We received 12 applications for various projects throughout the community, all of which fell within the four “placemaking” fundamentals. The committee and reviewed and discussed all applications:

ReNew Bremen, Inc.: The new community organization is applying for \$60,000 towards Wagner Field upgrades. It was discussed that, while this is a good project for the community, it isn’t “new” or “creative.” It is upgrades to an existing field, and that the investment by the fund wouldn’t necessarily bring more people or community together.

Village of Castorland: The municipality is applying for \$60,000 to create a new Heritage Park and Walking Trail, in anticipation of the future Rail Trail. It was discussed that the village did community engagement and outreach to understand the needs and wants of the community. It is a new project, and they want to complete the project to spur more development and growth of the community.

LC Amateur Hockey Association: The organization applied for \$30,000 for a chiller and other equipment to upgrade the existing ice rink. It was discussed that with warmer winters, this is the only outdoor recreational



opportunity, and the right equipment is needed to keep the ice cool for a longer stretch of time. The committee liked this project but felt that we would be setting a precedent by funding a project that is already in progress. The funding ask essentially is to fill a gap in funding. Similar to ReNew Bremen, they weren't sure if the investment in the chiller itself would bring more people to the rink – that operationally staffing may be a bigger issue to keep the rink open for longer hours.

Railway Historical Society: The organization applied for \$30,000 to enhance public spaces that they own with benches, landscaping, murals, etc. The committee discussed that while it is a great project, they felt that it was still in conceptual form and is not fully fleshed out. The committee agreed to provide them with feedback on how to submit a more concrete application next year.

North Country Public Radio: The organization applied for \$60,000 in funding for personnel to provide stories and conduct interviews of individuals working in the North Country. The committee discussed that the funding would be going out of Lewis County, since NCPR is housed out of St. Lawrence University. The project is not necessarily improving places, but it is more of a marketing project. The “story” that NCPR creates is the asset in this project. It was also discussed that this project is still going to happen, even without funding, just on a smaller scale.

Maple Ridge Center: The organization is applying for \$60,000 in funding to renovate the garage space attached to the main house into more community space. The committee discussed that while this is a good project, the timeline for completion was a bit longer than 1 year. The committee recommended that they come back next year for another application.

Village of Port Leyden Festival Committee: The organization is applying for \$30,000 to go towards facade improvements of the Opera House, the building which the organization operates out of which is privately owned. The project is a building revitalization effort, and the committee agreed that there are other funding sources out there for this sort of project and to direct them to those sources instead.



Double Play Community Center: The organization is applying for \$60,000 towards the Dare to Dream Park, which is an “amphitheater” style seating onto greenspace along with a concession stand. The project would only fund the seating and concession stand, not the acquisition of the fields. The committee discussed that because total cost did not include the fields, would the project be impactful if the seats and concession stands aren’t being used? The organization also does not own that greenspace yet, so the committee agreed that they should come back next year for another application.

Lewis County General Hospital – Nursing Home Unit: The organization is applying for \$30,000 to upgrade their pavilion into a three-season pavilion for residents and families. The project is specific for nursing home families and staff and would not necessarily be used for community uses. The committee noted that while we do have an aging community and that a more quality pavilion would be a good project for this audience, the fact that it isn’t for the greater community does not make it a good fit for this fund. The committee wanted staff to go back to them with the idea of making it a larger project in a different location and a pavilion that could be used for the farmers market.

Village of Port Leyden: The municipality is applying for \$60,000 towards Port Leyden Park Improvements, which would include a new pavilion, landscaping, trees, murals and play set. The Village conducted community engagement sessions to discuss needs/wants as it related to Community Connections funding. The committee overall liked this project because it would provide new opportunities for growth in their community.

The Society for the Preservation of the West Martinsburg Church: The organization resubmitted an application for Steeple Renovations, which was a revised application from last year. Brittany Davis noted that Pratt Northam did fund \$17,000 this past week at their board meeting. The committee felt, once again, that the project itself wasn’t a good fit for the application, as the project itself would not bring people together.

Moose River Fish & Game Club: The organization is applying for \$30,000 to modernize their restrooms on site. The committee felt that this was a very specific project and that the Fish & Game Club has a very specific audience



and is not generally community wide. They felt that this application was not a good fit.

After reviewing all applications, the committee agreed that the following three applications rose to the top:

- Village of Castorland and Village of Port Leyden – The projects both work to bring people together and “connect community.” There was discussion on the usage of those parks. These two fit the best in creating community spaces. The community said they wanted to ensure they would be used and not sit empty. It was noted that the “new” enhancements would likely bring more people to the area, since there is nothing to be offered in those locations currently.
- There was discussion on what expenses would drive more “new” traffic to these spaces. I.e. would a score board bring more people to New Bremen? Would a new chiller bring more people to the rink?
- The Lewis County Hockey project also was a topic of discussion – the project is already started, while it is a great project, the committee felt that we should not set the precedent to fund projects that are already started.

After lengthy discussion, the committee all came to a consensus on the applications to fund:

**The committee recommends the Village of Port Leyden and Village of Castorland public projects be funded at \$30,000 each, with the recommendation that they go to other funding sources, such as Pratt Northam Foundation to assist with funding the gap.**

## II. Small Things, Big Impacts Fund

- a. Jenna Lauraine introduced the Small Things, Big Impacts Fund, noting that we received five applications, with roughly \$11,500 left in the STBI fund. The committee discussed each application and voted:

Crown Jules Realty: A real estate company in Croghan, NY, applying for funding for new branding. Yes – 5, No - 0

North Country Cycle Works: A local bike repair shop in Carthage, is applying for funding for a new sign. Yes – 5, No - 0



Boondocks of Lyons Falls Inc.: A restaurant in Lyons Falls is applying for funding to purchase a digital service to streamline their website, social media and advertising. Since they already purchased the service, the committee determined that this would be retroactive. Yes – 0, No – 5

3 Willows Event Center: Applying for funding for a brand-new sign on State Route 12. Yes – 5, No – 0

Town of Diana: Applying for funding for a fence that would eventually have a mural painted on it. The committee agreed that this fund should fund the mural, not the fence. The committee asked staff to go back to them to come back with a revised application with the mural costs, not the fence. Yes – 0, No – 5

**The committee moved forward and approved full funding asks for Crown Jules Realty at \$1,000, North Country Cycle Works at \$1,000, and 3 Willows Event Center at \$1,000.**