

MINUTES
INDUSTRIAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (IEDC)
Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 7:00 a.m.
Monticello Community Center

Members Present: Chairperson Jarred Merchant, Vice Chairperson Mike Huey, Luke Dahlheimer, Liz Kokesh, Sarah Kortmansky, Sonja McElroy, Eric Olson, Rob Stark, Tony Velishek, Darek Vetsch

Members Absent: Joni Pawelk, Cory Ritter, Greg Schultz, Joe Elam, Charlotte Gabler, Shawn Hafen, Andrew Tapper, Aaron Holthaus,

Liaisons Present: None

Liaisons Absent: Deb Meyer, Missy Meidinger, Dave Tombers, Tim Zipoy

Staff Present: Jim Thares, Rachel Leonard, Bob Ferguson, Tyler Bevier

1. General Business

A. Call to Order

Chairperson Jarred Merchant called the regular meeting of the Monticello IEDC to order at 7:07 a.m.

B. Roll Call

Chair Merchant did not call the roll.

C. Approval of Minutes

ROB STARK MOVED TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 3, 2025, AND NOVEMBER 5, 2025, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES.

Jim Thares, Economic Development Manager noted a correction to the November 5, 2025, meeting minutes, that Charlotte Gabler was shown in attendance, when she was in fact absent. The prepared meeting minutes should be updated to reflect the attendance correction update of Charlotte Gabler not being in attendance at that meeting. Rob Stark accepted the change.

LUKE DAHLHEIMER. SECONDED MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

D. Consideration of Adding Items to the Agenda

None

2. Regular Agenda

A. Consideration of electing 2026 IEDC officers (Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary)

Mr. Thares began with the report in the packet noting that typically the current serving vice chairperson transitions to the chairperson role, and a new vice

chairperson is nominated for that role; all of which is subject to the IEDC members nominating prerogatives and approval of the individuals for the respective offices.

CHAIRPERSON JARRED MERCHANT OFFERED A NOMINATION OR A MOTION OF UNANIMOUS SUPPORT FOR MIKE HUEY, CURRENT VICE CHAIR TO SERVE AS CHAIRPERSON FOR 2026. MIKE HUEY ACCEPTED THE NOMINATION.

SARAH KORTMANSKY NOMINATED ROB STARK TO SERVE AS VICE CHAIRPERSON. LUKE DAHLHEIMER SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Jarred Merchant stated that city staff would offer to serve as the IEDC Secretary again. It was a consensus among members to have city staff remain as Secretary.

Jarred Merchant turned the meeting over to 2026 Chairperson Mike Huey.

B. **Consideration of Adopting 2026 IEDC Position-Action Statements**

Mr. Thares provided an overview of the position-action statements for 2026, with a comparison to the 2025 statements. Mr. Thares highlighted the few changes to the position-action statements that reflect the advisory capacity of the IEDC, the business retention and expansion (BR&E) visits, and the annual manufacturers' breakfast. Mr. Thares further pointed the "hotel and restaurant support position statement item" as raising a question of whether it possibly should be removed when considering overall hotel-restaurant factors. He suggested that maybe the position statement would be better intended to lean toward the possibility of a future hotel study as a precursor to further support of another proposed concept hotel with a conference center. This ties into the IEDC actions statement(s) regarding additional public funding for such a development. He then updated the members about the status of the current Fairfield By Marriott Hotel (98 rooms) that is currently under construction. It's expected to receive a certificate of occupancy (CO) in late July or early August 2026. He also shared information about the concept Broadway Plaza hotel, restaurant, and museum development, which is involved in continuing search for sufficient funding to move forward. Members concurred that there is likely no longer a need to have the hotel attraction item in the position-action statements.

Discussion was also held about the importance of downtown area revitalization and redevelopment and that it should remain a key focus with Mr. Thares sharing that the EDA is looking to commission another downtown Small Area Plan (SAP) study focusing on the east side of TH25 to gain more understanding of the community needs-preferences and the best strategies and in early 2026.

LUKE DAHLHEIMER MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2026 POSITION-ACTION STATEMENTS AS DISCUSSED.

SARAH KORTMANSKY SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

C. **Consideration of Table Topics for 2026**

Mr. Thares began with an overview of the table topics for 2026. He encouraged the members to discuss the potential topics and add, delete, modify them as preferred. Discussion was held to condense and merge several of the table topics under broader, more relevant topics, with a focus on items relating to transportation, economic development, industrial park, building permit indicators, and county updates. Members also expressed the continued importance of the legislative update at the end of the Minnesota legislative session.

Staff highlighted the increased importance of the manufacturer's breakfast. It was pointed out by several members that discussions and planning steps should start earlier in the year. Discussion was held to potentially look at a Wednesday or Thursday luncheon, versus a Friday morning breakfast, to see if that would help increase attendance, as well as exploration of a location change if feasible, with future topics of AI and the economy as the headliner. Mike Huey, Rob Stark, and Jarred Merchant expressed interest in reaching out to local manufacturers in the coming weeks and months to report back to the IEDC at the March 3, 2026, meeting.

3. **Liaison Updates**

A. **Wright County Economic Development Partnership (WCEDP)**

Rob Stark, Vice Chair for the WCEDP, spoke of the upcoming annual meeting and the changeover in staff for the administrative and marketing assistant position.

B. **Chamber of Commerce**

Jarred Merchant gave an update on the annual banquet's success and upcoming events, including the new regional civics bee contest, scheduled for March 21, 2026 at the Middle School (involves 6th, 7th and 8th grade students).

C. **Economic Development**

Mr. Thares presented the following City economic development updates:

- Sales Tax Collections Update Actual vs Projections
- Projects Update
- Residential, Commercial, and Industrial building permits and activity
- Prospect List
- Downtown Façade Forgivable Loan Program
- January 6, 2026, Planning Commission Agenda

City Administrator Rachel Leonard gave an update on the Data Center PUD Ordinance, where action is recommended to be postponed at the January 6, 2026,

Planning Commission Regular Meeting. She also noted a joint City Council-Planning Commission workshop planned for January 15, 2026 which will allow further discussion and sharing of information among all members of the two bodies findings of a planned January 8, 2026 field trip to the Des Moines, Iowa metro area to discuss data center development with various city leaders and view-tour the developed data center sites. The goal is to bring forward those findings and final recommendations at next Planning Commission Regular Meeting in February (02-03-26) for consideration. The next action step for the Data Center PUD Ordinance will be final consideration by the City Council at the end of February.

D. **City Council**

Ms. Leonard gave an update on the City Council-adopted budget, where the final levy increase was smaller than the preliminary levy, as well as an update on the history of bonding projects. An additional update of the public works facility contract redesign for future proofing of the project was presented.

Ms. Leonard also gave an overview of the proposed Twin Pines multi-family project (96 market rate units) and spoke about the update of the final draft of the AUAR (Alternative Urban Areawide Review) environmental review document and the next steps in the process involving the EQB (Environmental Quality Board).

4. **Next Meeting Reminder** – Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2026

5. **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned by consensus at 8:14 a.m.

Recorded By: Tyler Bevier
Date Approved: March 3, 2026

Attest:



Angela Schumann, Community & Economic Development Director