

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Economic Development Committee of Council  
Held in Council Chambers of the Municipal Building  
On Monday, February 18, 2019**

Councilwoman-at-Large Tammy Holtzmeier, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M.

Committee Members Present:

Chair, Councilwoman-at-Large Tammy Holtzmeier

Councilman-at-Large Brian Fischer; Ward 1 Councilman Bob Butkowski

Others in Attendance:

Law Director John Gasior; Council President Craig Witherspoon; Mayor Bryan Jensen; Ward 2 Councilman Dennis McBride, Ward 3 Councilman Tony Moore; Ward 4 Councilman Scott Radcliffe; Planning/Economic Development Coordinator Pam Fechter; Business Development Consultant Sheri Seroka; Consultant Paula Pitasky

**Discussion of the “All About Avon” Website**

Ms. Fechter stated that they were very excited about this website as it has been in the works for over a year. They wanted something for our Visitors Bureau that gave our residents and our businesses a place to go that was very clean, informative, and gave them everything they need. She then introduced Sheri Seroka, the Business Development Consultant for the City, and said that Ms. Seroka would present the website.

Ms. Seroka stated that they researched hundreds of economic development and convention bureau websites to get a feel for best practices. She found that she liked parts of countless sites but not a site that she liked everything about so they sort of threaded those parts together. She also contacted several directors and managers of visitors bureaus and economic development teams across the country just to find out what brought them to the decision to put in the content that they did on their sites and the agencies that they used. We discovered that Accrisoft was the designer/developer that built the majority of the sites that we really kept landing on. We ended up interviewing about six agencies and invited four of those to provide us bids for the project and in the end we chose Accrisoft and it was for a variety of reasons. Their quote was very competitive and they live totally in the economic development and visitors bureau space so they know how to get you to your end result.

Ms. Seroka then said that she would walk everyone through [allaboutavon.org](http://allaboutavon.org). She noted that some of the sites that she went to that had great content were so overwhelming with content that it was just visual noise and you got lost; you did not know where to go or what to click on. They had slide shows and pop-up videos and just too many things happening. So we really wanted a very simple website that would take users to exactly the information that they were looking for, so we use a lot of clean, streamlined design, graphics, a lot of white space in between and a lot of bright colors to help people navigate through the process.

Ms. Seroka displayed the page that users land on when they open [allaboutavon.org](http://allaboutavon.org) and it is kind of a Cliff Notes version of what is on the overall site. As you scroll down this page, you get to these four big call-out boxes. There is hover-over animation on each one of these and these would take you to each of these four categories. You get to a factoid page, which just gives a little snapshot of Avon, and then these cool little factoids. That would be more from the residential and Visitors Bureau perspective and then you get

down here to this month-view calendar feature. The three most current events will always populate here and once an event has passed, it will automatically drop off. Then you come down here to this map to show how central Avon is to so many metropolitan areas and depending on what kind of device you are using to look at this, the text reformats. Then you come down to the “Welcome to the Neighborhood” section, so we will always be featuring the newest businesses to the City and these link out to the businesses’ websites as well. Down here at the bottom, it is just informational but we have included a Mayor’s message, so this is an opt-in portion of the site, and if they provide us with their email, then once a month they will get an informational letter from the Mayor. And we will be archiving the letters, so if somebody misses one, they will be able to go into the archives and pull up the Mayor’s message.

Ms. Seroka said, coming back up to the top, and these top level navigation buttons, we have the City of Avon so if you click on the City of Avon, the sub-level navigations are the five most clicked-on links for the City’s site and that is where these links will take the user. If you click on the City of Avon, we wrote a short history of the City. Any of these pages that you are on whatever sub-level navigations, there is an easy reference over here so no matter where you are, you can always navigate to that section of the site. And when you come over to Economic Development, we have an animation feature that identifies the economic development component of the site but then if you come over here to “Things to Do” we have the Visitors Bureau. We were just trying to identify those two big silos of information so it was clear to the user that they were either out here in the Visitors Bureau or in Economic Development. So when you click on the Economic Development piece, we have an introductory vision statement, a mission statement, and then economic development factoids here that would be relevant to a business that might be considering coming to Avon.

Ms. Seroka stated that as we begin to develop the Visitors Bureau, one of the thoughts she has is to develop sort of our own Avon-centric business to business networking meeting like a standing monthly meeting. We would invite a business to sponsor it and then they would be the featured business for a month on the website. There would be a little story about them and a link to their website. This will live on every page because she wanted the opportunity to keep this as visible as possible to get as much business interest as we can in the events that we are having in the City. Typically, she emails all the businesses to let them know about the different sponsorship opportunities and this will live out here forever so anybody that wants to get involved in any of our events can fill out this form and send it right back to her.

Ms. Seroka said so then when you go back up to the top, one of the first features here was site selection of the Economic Development site; we partnered with GIS Planning for our site selection. If you are searching for properties, buildings, or parcels, this is a really easy to use tool and you can customize it any way you want. Our goal is to have the brokers reach out to us and get administrative privileges so that they can load their own properties. It is meant to be interactive. We do not have a lot of properties in there right now but we hope to grow this pretty quickly.

Ms. Fechter stated that, on a side note with that site selection, we as a City do not have the ability to go in there and control our properties. When the State of Ohio created Jobs Ohio, they chose this as their site selection tool so currently the County is the one who is the contact information and populates everything and we are working through that. We did purchase Avon-specific demographics so now we are getting Avon-centric data and it is updated on a monthly basis so even though we have to share that site selection with the County and the State, at least we were able to get something that was Avon-specific out of it.

Ms. Seroka said that one of the really cool things about this is that it is real-time demographics. So if there is a federal update to the census, it automatically pushes the information out to us. If not, then this is powered by Applied Geographic Solutions and every six months they update this information. She said, but what she really liked about this is that each one of these is a colorful chart or graph. So let's say that a business is looking to come to Avon and whatever information is important to them, demographics, labor force, education...etc., can all be easily downloaded as a jpeg pdf and dropped right into their presentation if they are getting back to their corporate stakeholders. It is just really dynamic, interactive information. There are collapsible headers that tell them the closest freeway system, the ports, the airports, and the rail system. Whatever system they use to get their goods and services in and out of the City, we provide them the method to do so. And the labor force has the same sort of interactive graphs and charts that they can download. On this page we did include the list of the largest employers in the City. She said she would eventually like to add their websites to it, just from a marketing perspective. The more websites that you have that link out to an outside business, the more you optimize your search engine, and especially with colleges and universities. When somebody is looking at labor force, we want them to know the labor pool that they have available to them and having an edu extension is the most important extension as far as getting traffic back to your website.

Mr. Butkowski asked, in regard to the demographics, if you could find out more data about a particular age group. If a business wanted to find out what level education it would be working with in regard to a particular demographic, could it find that out? Ms. Seroka responded, yes; these are all different reports but when you go back to labor force, it gives you that breakdown and it breaks it down by the numbers as well.

Ms. Seroka said, for business resources, to extend the reach to the businesses that might be looking to come into the City, they put together a list of just anything they might need to know. Whatever the resource is, they tried to put it all under one listing and those will have the phone numbers and website addresses to them as well. So they bring them to everything they need to know about doing business in the City, starting with the State to get their business registered, the form from RITA that the Finance Department requires, the forms that the Planning Department requires and what the Planning Department does, and the same with Zoning. We have included these links that take them to a pdf that is available on the State website that tells them everything they need to know about the various zoning codes that might relate to their business and their building code requirements. Also, there is a link to all of the contacts within the Planning, Zoning, Building, and Engineering Departments of the City.

Ms. Seroka said, when we go over to the Visitors Bureau side of it, we wanted to shine a bright light on all of the businesses in the community so we looked at retail and the hospitality establishments and area attractions. At the top of each one of these, there is a "Call to Action" for all the businesses so if they want to change their listing or logo or refresh a picture, or update the description, etc. they just send it to us in an email. She said that she posts it up and it goes live immediately. For each of the retail establishments, there is a link to their website and then everything is mapped to google maps to take a user right to that location. Every business in the City should be in here but Ms. Seroka said to please let her know if anyone found any omissions or changes. There is also a listing for local entertainment. Ms. Seroka added that besides the retail and hospitality establishments, there is a business directory. We wanted to be able to showcase every business in the City, so whether it is a service-oriented business, a doctor, a dentist, etc., they are all in here and we have broken them down by categories and their website will be on there. Also, there is a listing of community resources and that is just what it sounds like; all the City resources and local resources.

Mr. Radcliffe asked what could be done to help market this to businesses outside of the City that are looking for this information but do not know that this website exists? Ms. Fechter said that they have been so focused on getting everything in the site that they have not really looked into that yet. She might check if we can get it out on one of the water bills to start and then look at some of the trade industry publications that come out to see if we can get the word out that way. Also we might inform the library or different places like that; we want to get the word into everybody's hands so they know to pass it on as well. Ms. Seroka added that the Chambers of Commerce are going to help us locally to start to get the website out there as well. Right now we are going to do as many social media blasts as we can and hopefully the shares of that will help us get it out there but she does not think we have come up with a grass roots initiative on how we will start to market ourselves from an economic development perspective yet.

Ms. Fechter stated that she would get the link out to everyone in the next day or two and over the next couple weeks, she would like them to go through the website and look up things that are of interest to them, see if they like the format or if they are missing anything. Any ideas at all are welcome. This is a work in progress and they are going to continue to change it as they move forward and would love the help of everyone in doing so. Ms. Seroka added that this is a soft launch which will just be available internally within the City for the next two weeks so they can work out the bugs and then they will go live at the beginning of March.

Mr. Moore asked if this is a stand-alone website and not a part of the City of Avon's website and Ms. Seroka answered that it is a stand-alone website. Mr. Moore then asked if there was a link from the City of Avon website to the "All About Avon" website. Ms. Seroka answered that some links have been threaded into the new City of Avon website which will be launched in a week or so that will take you to the "All About Avon" website and there is an "All About Avon" link on there as well.

Mrs. Holtzmeier adjourned the meeting at 7:25 P.M.

Transcribed by Gail Hayden, Assistant Clerk of Council