



Russell County Economic Development and Convention & Visitors Bureau Advisory Board Meeting



Thursday, February 15th, 2024 @ 7:30am @ Meridys

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Duke Strobel, John Fletcher, Jeannine Byers-Long, Malinda Walker, Karla Berry, Jeannie Stramel, Don Varner, Dustin Madden, Jon Birkey, Kayla Schneider, Maggie Holloway, Lisa Sandberg, Mike Parsons, Aaron Talbott (virtual) and guest Jon Quinday (virtual).

Call Meeting to Order:

John Fletcher called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Review and Approval of Minutes: John Fletcher made a motion to approve, Jeannine Byers-Long seconded; Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Review: Mike presented the financial statements for the month of January and discussed the CVB #150 and ED #155 accounts by line item. Total expenses for the month of January - \$18,100.14. The 2024 Budgets for CVB #150 and ED #155 were also presented to the board.

Loan Program Updates:

- **Russell County Loan Program** – No delinquencies. No pending applications. Remaining Balance of \$68,542.38
- **GrowKs Loan Program** – No delinquencies. No pending applications.
- **E-community Loan Program** – Discussion was had about changes to the administration of the loan program. Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission will no longer administrate the program - Network KS will take care of all the clerical work. Still two delinquencies in the program - working with NetworkKS to resolve the issues.

Projects/Clients:

- **Sunflower Solar Field:** Working with Sunflower Electric on the timeline of the solar development to communicate with our businesses and lodging options. Estimate of 150 contractors in town during the project.

- **Mecca Plaza:** Working with the new owners of the plaza to place clients/explore business plans that could work for the available spaces for rent.
- **Housing:** Updates were provided on the Senior Housing project and the search for infrastructure funds. Proposal presented to State Leadership for financial assistance.
- **Childcare:** Discussion was had about the current childcare climate and the possibility of grant funding for local projects. Changes to CDBG programs and the duplexes that are currently on the market were the focus.
- **Trojan Horse:** Confidential recruitment effort.
- **Building Repurpose Proposal:** A plan to start exploring the repurposing of existing county buildings was discussed. Grant funds to create 3D rendering/models of potential uses will be pursued.

Additional Conversation: Discussion was had about Project Toothache - no action.

Programs/Events:

- **Storefront/Signage Grant Program:** Countywide apps approved. Lucas applications are still being reviewed. Notice of funding will be sent before the end of February.
- **KARL Program:** Mike presented the details for the KARL program - with the intent to apply to participate in the program. \$30,000 value, cost of roughly \$6,000.
- **Kansas State Fair:** Maggie presented the option to purchase a Russell County booth at the state fair. Potential partnership with Lucas. Discussion was had about the dates/times with the board recommendation to purchase the booth.
- **International Boat & Travel Show:** Maggie will travel to Omaha Nebraska for a vacation-oriented show in partnership with NWKS travel.
- **Be Our Guest Academy:** Working to develop program with BCC to educate and train or service industry works. Much discussion was had with the board deciding to have Maggie participate in the program as a trial to further explore our options for the program.

Note: Don Varner excused from meeting @ 8:10 a.m.

- **OC Internships Planning:** Working to set the budget to support the program again this year, planning to help support a total of 8 interns.

Office Miscellaneous:

- **ED Policy Changes/Bylaws-** The updated bylaws for CVB and ED were presented to the board for review and changes. The existing bylaws do not reflect the current operations and need updated to fit the current board structure and operations of the office. Much discussion was had about the funding sources and board structure segments. Several proposed edits and changes were noted, and the documents will be updated and resubmitted to the board for ongoing updates.

- **Grant Work/Planning-** Mike discussed creating a list of proposed projects and grant funding options/timelines, will email to board.
- **FAM Trips-** KS Tourism partnership to promote and highlight our region. Maggie will help host the familiarization tours.
- **Legislative Work/Updates-** Mike provided an overview of past and future legislative work in Topeka.
- **Billboards-Contact Extensions-** Discussion was had about the price and term of the billboard contracts, deciding on two-year terms.
- **Development Sites-** Submitted and discussed with state leadership to promote for future recruitment endeavors.
- **Youth Onboard Initiative-** Exploring the addition of RHS students to the board, focusing on community engagement.
- **Meeting Location-** Mike requested we move the meetings to the ED/CVB office - the board approved the venue change. Discussion was had about parking.

CVB Funding Request:

- **Russell Sunrise Kiwanis-** Maggie presented the funding request of \$1800. After board discussion Aaron made the motion approve \$500, John Fletcher seconded; motion carried.
- **Blessing of the Bikes-** Maggie presented a request for \$500. After board discussion John Fletcher made the motion approve \$500, Duke seconded; motion carried.

Community Updates, Additional Announcements, and Open Conversation: Malinda provided an update on the log cabin and mentioned the fish fry coming up in March. Kayla provided an update on current projects.

Motion to Adjourn: John Fletcher made a motion to adjourn, Jon Birkey seconded; Motion carried. Meeting adjourned @ 8:56 a.m.