



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



*Thursday, January 23rd, 2025 @ 7:30am @ Russell County Economic Development & CVB
Office*

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Jon Birky, Duke Strobel, Dustin Madden, Kayla Schneider, Karla Berry, Jamie Malone, Jeannie Stramel, Jeannine Byers-Long, Aaron Talbott (online), Malinda Walker (online), Lisa Sandberg, and Mike Parsons.

Call Meeting to Order:

Jon Birky called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Opening Announcements: None.

Review and Approval of Minutes:

Karla made a motion to approve the minutes from November, Jeannine Byers-Long seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Financial Review: Mike gave a general overview; CVB fund #150 has spent 96% of the budget for the year, YTD \$88,007.82 with a remaining balance of \$4,092.18. ED fund #155 has spent 92% of the budget for the year, YTD \$229,537.53 with a remaining balance of \$20,462.47. Mike stated they don't usually use that much of the budget but with the storm damage and purchasing a new vehicle it's a little higher.

Board Elections: Duke made a motion to elect Jon Birky and President and Dustin Madden as Vice President. Jeannine Byers-Long seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Open Conversation: Discussion was had about board member absences and options for replacements. Mike will start the communication.

Board Terms: Mike made a board term calendar; it was pointed out that it needs some work.

Loan Program Updates:

- Russell County Loan Program – No current updates.

- E-Community Loan Program – They got a Patterson Foundation grant to turn it into a forgivable loan for E-community and GrowKS.
- GrowKs Loan Program – No current updates.
- Other- There are applications on Mike’s desk, they will be reviewed by the committee soon.

CVB Funding Request:

Grassroots Art Center- They are requesting \$1,000.00 for the grand opening and April Fools-A-Palooza. After board discussion, Jamie Malone made a motion to approve for \$1,000. Duke seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Planning ahead: LaSada Lodge will be hosting the KSSCA State Sporting Clays & Super Sporting Championships May 29th-June 1st. Discussion was had about what could be done to support LaSada Lodge for the event.

Projects/Clients:

- **Great Plains Land Pride Infrastructure:** Working with Department of Transportation and Department of Commerce. Greely Ave is in disrepair; conversation was had about what it would take to get it repaired.
- **Flintwood housing Complex:** Paperwork has been started at the state to release the funds, we should have them soon.
- **Workforce Housing Taskforce:** Mike gave a quick update; he stated that the committee met with Purefield Ingredients about workforce housing. Looking to form a public/private partnership as things move forward.

Open Conversation: Duke asked what the median for affordable housing was, Jeannine Byers-Long provided insight on her experience with housing loans.

- **Project AA:** They have started another project; they will be putting in another loan application in the future.
- **Project GI Joe:** Confidential matter.
- **Project Candy Cane:** In Waldo they are doing a soft open of sorts with a Valentine’s dinner, but their plan is to be fully open later in the year.
- **Project Beano:** Mike stated C store is currently closed with bags on the pumps, while the restaurant/bar is still up and running.
- **Project Crystal Ball:** This is a new client, business startup.
- **Project Stone:** Client is pursuing a loan/grant mix for a business expansion.
- **Project Topsy Bull:** The business is back up for sale and being advertised for \$250,000.

Programs/Events:

- **Love, Kansas-** With our office being shorthanded this program isn’t getting a lot of attention right now.
- **Make My Move-** Mike stated someone is trying to move here, and has passed the background check, they are trying to line out the details.

Office Miscellaneous:

- **Billboards-** Mike spoke with the board about needing to decide on the billboards, possibly another grant program, no action was taken.
- **Promo Video-** Mike said the video is completed; he is in touch with Collins Media regarding edits that need to be done.
- **USDA Grant-** Mike and Lisa have been working on a \$25,000 grant alongside Locable. The due date is next Friday but we are going to try to submit everything tomorrow.
- **Visitor Guide-** Tabled until a later date.
- **Dues/Memberships-** Mike discussed the dues/memberships for 2025 with the board to see which one should be continued, nothing was decided.

Open Conversation: Mike gave an update that Gorham Fire Department is applying for a Community Foundation Grant, and he is reviewing it for them. Gorham also received a CDBG in the amount of \$542,663.00 for their splash pad. Mike told everyone about the Russell County Chamber of Commerce Banquet on Monday night. Jeannie said the coffee shop at Switchgrass in Lucas is open. Mike added, storefront/signage grants were awarded and stayed under budget.

Motion to Adjourn: Jeannie made the motion to adjourn, Duke seconded; motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:46 a.m.

Next Advisory Board Meeting: February 20th @ 7:30 am @ Russell County Economic Development & CVB Office