



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



Thursday, February 12th, 2026 @ 7:30am @ RCED&CVB Office

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Jon Birky, Dustin Madden, Duke Strobel, Karla Berry, Lacie Austin, Jamie Malone, Jeannine Byers-Long (online), Kayla Schneider, Alex Lofland, Lisa Sandberg, Ryleigh Wagner, and Mike Parsons.

Call Meeting to Order:

Chair Jon Birky called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

Review and Approval of Agenda:

Dustin made a motion to approve the minutes, Jamie seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Review and Approval of Minutes:

Karla made a motion to approve the minutes, Duke seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Financial Review:

- **2026 Budget Adjustments:** Mike shared that the Community Support budget was adjusted following the receipt of a \$5,000 external grant from the RCACF, and the Advertising budget was expanded to accommodate upcoming promotional efforts. A related funding reallocation was approved to closely align revenue sources with corresponding expenses, including shifts in promotional costs and utility allocations.
- **2027 Budget Planning:** A draft of the 2027 budget has been prepared but has not yet been finalized or included in the packets. The board will have the opportunity to review the budget in full before it is submitted to the commission.

Public Comment:

None.

Board Reports or Announcements:

Karla shared the Historical Society is hosting a Thank You Coffee next Tuesday for the community to show appreciation for their help with the Kansas Day celebrations.

Staff Reports or Announcements:

- **USDA Grant:** Our office secured a \$47,500 USDA grant, which will be strategically allocated to county-wide marketing, downtown revitalization, and business succession planning. This funding aims to support promotion, infrastructure improvements, and continuity for local businesses.
- **Project Clover:** Initial planning for Project Clover is underway, including a site walkthrough to discuss future office and facility arrangements. The focus is on optimizing visitor engagement and traffic flow while exploring potential location adjustments to best support operations.
- **KS Archeology Program Event:** A pre-program event is being organized for March ahead of the main event scheduled for June 4–15. The main event is expected to attract 200–300 participants, who may stay for varying durations and actively engage with the community.
- **Historic District:** Local Organizations and interested business owners are working to define the process of establishing a downtown historic district in order to access state redevelopment incentives. Survey efforts and funding plans are currently underway.
- **HEAL Grant:** Two local projects are in the final review stage for the Department of Commerce’s HEAL Grant. Both advancing to this stage is encouraging, with a decision expected in the next few weeks that could significantly impact each project.
- **Impact Report:** Ryleigh provided an overview of the impact of transient guest tax funds on community events, showing that a \$13,700 investment generated significant economic activity and tax revenue.
- **State Incentive Reporting:** A bill that passed last year requires city and county incentives to be reported on a state website, and the team plans to coordinate to ensure full compliance.
- **Flintwood Ribbon Cutting:** A reminder was given that the ribbon cutting will be held on 2/20 @ 10:00 a.m. City Manager and Board Member Kayla Schneider provided an update that the roadwork construction has progressed well.

Unfinished Business:

- **2027 Travel Guide:** Acknowledging the shift toward online information, the group chose to use a digital platform with dynamic QR codes to promote local events. They approved a paid ad to direct traffic to this continuously updated resource, serving as a central hub for the community.
- **Promotion Item Quotes:** Ryleigh presented the board with quotes and samples that would be distributed county-wide; after board discussion, Jon made a motion for CVB to spend \$5,000.00 on promotional items, Alex seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **Memberships:** Mike presented the board with annual dues and memberships that our office has received. Karla made a motion to pay the dues and membership, Jon seconded; motion carried unanimously.

New Business:

- **Election of Officers-** After board discussion, Duke made a motion to re-elect Jon Birky as Chair and Dustin Madden as Vice Chair. Karla seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **Rural Champion Program Grant-** There were discussions about a grant opportunity, during which it was noted that the application deadline is fast approaching.
- **Billboard Grant - Community-** The board is reviewing nine community billboard applications to select four for professional design and public voting, ensuring the final choices reflect community input. Feedback will be collected via an email questionnaire with a prompt deadline.

Executive Session (Time – Start and Finish):

At 8:52 a.m., Jon made a motion to enter into a 50-minute executive session to discuss confidential projects, Karla seconded; motion carried unanimously.

At 9:39 a.m., the meeting resumed with no action taken.

Adjournment:

At 9:39 a.m., Dustin made the motion to adjourn, Jon seconded; motion carried.

Next Advisory Board Meeting: March 19th @ 7:30 am @ Eco Devo & CVB Office