



# Russell County Economic Development and CVB Minutes

**Date:** 2/16/2023

**Time:** 7:30AM

**Location:** Online- Zoom

**Call to Order:** Ashely at 7:32AM

## **In Attendance**

Ashley Wickham, Mike Parsons, Maggie Holloway, Jon Quinday, John Fletcher, Janet Funk, Duke Strobel, Jon Birky, Jim Cross, Karla Berry, Malinda Walker

## **Approval of Minutes**

John Fletcher moved to approve minutes from January 2023. Janet Funk seconded the motion. Motion approved.

## **Approval of Financials**

No review.

## **Russell County Loan Program**

Current remaining balance is \$53,499.49. Several clients are going through business plans, currently no applications.

## **E-Community Loan Program**

Several clients are going through business plans, currently no applications.

## **Economic Development Update – Mike Parsons**

- **Buc-ee's – County Wide Campaign:** The VP of Buc-ee's reached out to Mayor Jim Cross after the county wide campaign. The City of Russell, 3 county representatives, and Russell Development had a meeting via conference call with Buc-ee's VP Joe

O'Leary on Tuesday. Workforce is the big question- around 300 employees needed. Currently working on a community tour date and a workforce proposal with Andrea from Russell Development to highlight regional workforce numbers and different opportunities in the region.

- **Hell Creek Bridge:** Hell Creek Bridge is in need of repairs. The state of Kansas launched a tourism grant (SPARK), applying for this grant was the original direction we were going on this project. However, in discussion with Kansas Wildlife Parks & Tourism they have pointed us in a different direction. We now have meetings set up in Topeka for Thursday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> with the federal government, K-DOT & Kansas Wildlife Parks & Tourism.
- **Development Land-** A client reached out; they have development land in the City of Russell that is available. There are some clients that would like to build so we are going to present that land to them. The property in is a higher traffic area.
- **Project Open Mind:** Client is looking for some buildings around the county that he could renovate. Possibly turn the upper levels into housing and the bottom levels into storefronts. Client is currently going through a business plan. The funds are lined out.
- **Disaster Recovery Regional Tabletop Exercise –** Mike was invited to attend. The meeting is in Oakley on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Team training for disasters.
- **NRP-** We have 7 or 8 approved applications; people have started building. Mike has started working with the City of Lucas and the City of Bunker Hill to guide them on their own plans for their incorporated areas. Keeping the rebate levels, the same as the county plan.
- **Commonwealth Youth Academy –** On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, Mike helped host the Ogalla Commons, Commonwealth Youth Academy at the high school. There were about 40 kids that attended. They toured a couple businesses in town (Russell Regional Hospital and Agri-lead). This partnership with the High School and Ogalla Commons has had and will have more internships in the future.
- **Retail Tax Workshop-** We will be hosting a Retail Tax Workshop next Wednesday at noon via Zoom. Attendance has been an issue. QuickBooks for Small Business was brought up as a workshop. We will bring that to the board next meeting, that workshop isn't free, we will get prices.
- **When Everyone Leads-** When Everyone Leads is a book that the Kansas Leadership Center released. Mike learned about it at a presentation at FHSU. He has books for the advisory board.
- **Ogalla Commons-** Internships coming up. Need to start narrowing those internships down around the county.
- **Business Bootcamp-** Building a “How to” packet for people who want to open a business but don't have the funds or the business knowledge to do so. That way people know what they will need to get started. Going to launch that packet with a business bootcamp, at least one business bootcamp program this year.
- **Billboard Grant Program-** Closes March 1<sup>st</sup>. The commissioners will choose the winners. Still looking for another billboard in the same price range to the East.
- **Childcare-** New grant programs launched. Two clients have gone through the Child Care Aware Business Startup program around the county.

- **Legislative Work** – WKREDA hosted legislative session. Not a lot of legislators showed up. More work to be done.
- **Half-cent Sales Tax Campaign**- Starting to develop the campaign, will be on the ballot this November.
- **Project Doghouse**- Oilfield company, business plan is developed. Were going with the SBA but now pursuing other funds. Going to go with a Women in Minority loan/grant mix.
- **Stay Connected**- Social media campaign, trying to build an updated contact list for our database. We will start the business survey after we have the info from this campaign.

### **Tourism Update- Ashley Wickham**

- Ashley attended the Denver international Sports Show and was able to get the Denver Bass crew to come to Wilson Lake this spring and fall. She is working with them on accommodations.
- Attended Destination Statehouse February 7<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup>. Good learning experience in seeing how they run things in Topeka.
- We attended the RCACF Grant writing workshop on Monday. Learned good information on what to put in Letters of Support to help strengthen grants.
- Ashley is heading to Omaha February 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> for the Omaha Sport Show.
- The 2021 Russell County report that was purchased should be arriving in the next week or two.
- Ashley is developing a class to help the lodging, attractions, and eateries when it comes to tourism. The purpose of the class would be to help educate places about Russell County tourism and what we have to offer.
- Promotional Video/Marketing Grant- To use funds from the state marketing grant we cannot start the promotional video project ahead of time.
- The governor proposed an increase to the tourism budget of \$2.2 million. \$1.2 million would be towards marketing and \$1 million would be added to the attraction development grant. During the legislative days they were confident in the \$2.2 million being passed, this would be passed with the governor's budget. Currently there is \$400k available to use which is now open and applications are due March 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Funding Requests**

None.

