



Russell County Economic Development and CVB Minutes

Date: 1/12/2023

Time: 7:30AM

Location: Meridy's – Russell

Call to Order: Mike Parsons at 7:31AM

In Attendance

Ashley Wickham, Mike Parsons, Maggie Holloway, Jon Quinday, John Fletcher, Janet Funk, Duke Strobel, Jon Birky, Don Varner, Jim Cross, Aaron Talbott, and Sarah LaRosh – Network Kansas

Approval of Minutes

Jon Birky moved to approve minutes from November 2022. Jon Quinday seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Approval of Financials

Ashley had \$25,000.00 at the end of 2022 moved to help with salaries, her normal transactions include advertising, utilities, and community support. Mike reviewed the Economic Development funds with a diagram to help explain the separation of accounts. The diagram was presented to all board members in their packets. Everything will now be coming out of fund 155- the operating budget, including salaries. CVB will still transfer \$25,000.00 in 2023 to help cover salaries. Discussion was had about the revenue on the financial sheets coming out at \$0. This could be due to the new program. John Fletcher moved to approve financials from December 2022. Jon Birky seconded the motion. Jon Quinday opposed; motion approved 7 to 1.

Russell County Loan Program

Currently there are at least 6 or 7 people going through SBCD for business plans. Current balance is \$52,344.80. There were 2 delinquent loans, one of the two has gone to the county attorney. The other one is almost in the black.

E-Community Loan Program

Sarah LaRosh from Network Kansas came to talk about the Patterson Family Foundation and their GAP financing program. Any businesses that go through E-Community funding can apply for the Patterson Family Foundation program. This is a calendar year program. First come, first serve. The Start-up Kansas fund has been closed. There will be no YEC for Russell High School this school year (a Network Kansas program). Aiming for next school year with Mr. Banker.

Economic Development Update – Mike Parsons

- **Strategic Plan:** Mike provided handouts. There are 5 main objectives (housing, childcare, community development, workforce development and business retention/recruitment and expansions. This document fluctuates and is always changing. The key performance indicators will indicate objectives that have been met.
- **NRP Launch:** Has launched, we have received 5 applicants in two weeks.
- **Project Bookworm-** A community group in Luray has acquired the old Luray school building. The building is in immaculate shape. The goal is for a community center with other things like a kitchen/restaurant, gym, possibly a daycare. Working on funding, applied for the SEED Grant but did not receive it.
- **Workforce Development Proposal:** Northwest Kansas EICI (Economic Innovation Center Inc.) has a program we'd like to apply for. Mike has been in communication with Kayla at the City of Russell. They would like to meet with the area's top employers. The program would offer grant funds that could be used for employee recruitment or retainment. They have started exploring a workforce plan and once it's in place they will get started on the grant. The program has \$60,000.00 in funds available.
- **Project Promise-** Confidential project. It's in the city of Russell and expanding outside of Russell. They filed their paperwork with the state. The paperwork is in for \$1.15 million. A possibility of 3 to 5 jobs.
- **Project T-Bone-** A partner has been found. They are currently going through a business plan and meetings to find a building. A building has potentially been narrowed down.
- **Buc-ee's Recruitment Effort-** Buc-ee's released expansion plans. The effort to recruit Buc-ee's is a partnership with Russell Development. The acreage is available. There are instructions on their website on how to submit for a new location. The plan is to show everyone step-by-step on how to get there on their website and have everyone send in the same phrase. We would like to do a flyer or promotion explaining what to do. The thought is if they see multiple requests from Russell, KS they might consider our location.
- **Project Freaky Fast-** Jimmy Johns owner bought a house and land for hunting. The thought is maybe we should reach out and see if he'd like to invest in the community, he bought some land in.

- **Project Pivot-** Working with a client in the K18 area on a business startup with a potential of creating 3 to 5 jobs.
- **Project Lantern-** Going through a business plan for a floral/gift shop. Client is currently working on a lease for a new building.
- **Community Roundtables/13 Ways Planning-** 13 Ways program has been taken over by the Russell County Leadership Program. We are starting back up this year with community roundtables. There has been discussion about doing the roundtables during Chamber Afterhours. This has not been confirmed, so for now they will do them at 12:00 at Espresso Etc every 3rd Thursday.
- **SFSG/Billboard Program-** Storefront/Signage Grant has closed and we were able to give out the max of \$14,000.00. A total of 7 applications were received, with that number they did not have to be sent out for review. The press release will be going out soon. Woodpecker Archives, Good Karma Dairy, Lucas Community Theater, Paul Lampert, Russell Specialty Books and Gifts, Russell Rec, and The Lodge at Russell. The Billboard program was approved by the commissioners and has been launched. 2 businesses will split the board for 2 years. The commissioners will approve the applications. So far 7 applications have been received. Mike is currently trying to find another billboard on the East side of Interstate for the same price - \$155/per month for the Northern communities in the county. The goal is that the businesses see the worth in billboards and will get their own after the 2 years is up. Applications will be open until March 1st, 2023. Discussion was had about the e-mail blast to the businesses in the county about the program. The office needs to compile the office email and business lists so we can go through them with the board and get everything updated during the next meeting.
- **Internships/Apprenticeships-** Started communications with Ogallala Commons. Some interns are already lined out and are looking for some funds. Switchgrass is looking at one and Agrilead, Inc. is looking at doing it again. There might be a partnership with Russell High School. Need to start working with the City of Russell to see what they want to do with their internship program, this was part of the city dues.
- **Promotional Video-** Ashley and Mike have discussed doing a new promotional video to promote development opportunities, what we have to offer, tourism, etc. They are exploring options. Working on getting quotes in. Estimating it would probably cost somewhere between \$12,000.00 to \$15,000.00.

Other Projects

- Project Open Mind – New client who wants to live in Russell County. He always purchases a building to fix up. They have already done some building tours. He may lease building out for business or include living spaces.
- LATCF Funds (Local Assistant Tribal Consistency Funds) – The county has the option to apply for \$100,000.00. \$50,000.00 this year, \$50,000.00 next year to be used for just about anything other than lobbying. This is something only the County Treasurer can apply for. Trisha is working on it, application date is January 31st, 2023. The office will

hopefully request funds from the commission for some of our projects if the funds are received from this program.

- Housing - Emma Estates has broken ground, already pouring concrete, hopefully they will have the house sitting and up for sale in a month. Mike is also working with a developer that acquired land in the Dorrance area. They would like to do small scale apartment style living.
- Mike was asked to be on the Northwest Kansas Housing Board. They are planning on doing new developments and maybe selling some of the homes they already have around the area and reinvesting in the new. They already have some land in the area to build on.
- Project Tooth-ache- After looking at some properties he has decided he's going to build.
- Mike has a client that's looking into opening an insurance brokerage company for Medicare and other things.

Tourism Update- Ashley Wickham

- Ashley and Mike have ads up at the Dream Theater.
- Tradeshaw season has started. Ashley is leaving today for the Sports and Travel show in Denver. Feb. 7th – 9th she will be in Topeka for the “Destination State House” Legislative updates. It will be her first time attending. Feb. 23rd – 25th Ashley will be in Omaha for the Omaha Sports show.
- Ashley purchased the Russell County 2021 report through the state. That should be coming in. It shows the sales tax that was brought in, how many visitors we had, etc. Last report purchased was in 2017.
- Ashley is helping one of the hotels get in contact with KDOT for interstate signage.
- Ashley is still the Northwest Kansas Rep for tourism so she will be attending the roundtable meeting in Topeka on January 17th, 2023.
- Fairport has a new Air B&B. The Port at Fairport. They have been requesting tourist information from the office every time they have someone stay.
- April 15th, 2023, there will be a Road Trip USA convention in Hays with travel writers. Northwest Kansas will be there to represent. Ashley was asked if she could host some of the travel writers the day before and show them around Russell County. She's working on hotel accommodations for this.
- 2023 Kansas Travel Guides are out. The listings for 2024 have already started so she's been reaching out to the local businesses for that.
- Wilson Lake is on the cover of the Northwest Kansas Travel Guide. The guide is already out.
- Ashley learned at the November I-70 meetings that travelers who drive electric cars use a map that shows electric stations. If your community doesn't have a charging station, they typically don't bother to stop. She believes the 24/7 expansion will include some charging stations which is a benefit for the county.

- The new hotel that is supposed to be coming, received a letter from the City of Russell for a notice of default. It gives them 30 days to take care of the default or request an amendment. They have purchased additional land so some incentives will need to be rewrote.
- There is a marketing grant Ashley would like to apply for to help fund the promotional video. The grant doesn't open until June 1st, 2023, and closes August 1st, 2023, with them announcing grant recipients in September. The max on the grant is \$20,000.00. Mike asked if they could start on it before receiving grant funds, Ashley is going to look into that.
- Discussion about the success of sport shows was brought up. Aaron came up with an idea of using a promotional discount card with area businesses. That way we would be able to track how many cards have been used and how many visitors from the trade shows are visiting Russell County.

Funding Requests

Lucas Chamber of Commerce requested \$500.00 for help with their brochures. We have funded this in the past. Jon Quinday motions that we fund the \$500.00 request, Jim Cross seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Community Updates

- Russell – Water Softening Plant is about 60% complete. South Fossil/Edward Ave project is still going. This summer there will be a mill & overlay on West Wichita. State Street (Fossil to the Senior Parking lot at the high school) sidewalks will be rebuilt this summer. Received federal funds for public safety radios and roads. The city is doing good on grants to fund their projects. They will have another investment profile in Site Selection Magazine. Working on lobbying efforts. Also working on the R9 Ranch. Jim and John had a good meeting with Senator Moran. They are also currently looking for storage for rent or lease for 4 to 5 years.
- Luray is bringing back the Fish Fry.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Thursday, February 16th, 2023, at 7:30am via zoom.



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 23rd 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 23rd. 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 2nd, 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 1st. 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 7th -9th. 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 23rd – 25th 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 31st.

Funding Requests

None.



Russell County Economic Development and CVB Minutes

Date: 3/9/2023

Time: 7:30AM

Location: Meridy's – Russell

Call to Order: Ashley at 7:31AM

In Attendance

Ashley Wickham, Mike Parsons, Maggie Holloway, Aaron Talbott, Janet Funk, Duke Strobel, Jon Birky, Jim Cross, Karla Berry, Malinda Walker, Jeannie Stramel, Jon Quinday

Approval of Minutes

Jon Birky moved to approve minutes from February 2023. Aaron Talbott seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Financial Review – No questions/comments.

Bylaws – Mike provided the bylaws from 2002-2003, the original existing bylaws between the Chamber of Commerce, Russell County, and the City of Russell from 1992-1993 and the most recent ones we have on file changed in 2015-2016. Discussion about what needs to happen with the bylaws was had. It was discussed to review the most recent bylaws, adjust them, and then approve in an upcoming meeting. We will put bylaws as an official agenda item for the next two meetings, review them, make changes, have the county lawyer and city lawyer look over them and hopefully get a new set approved.

Tourism Update- Ashley Wickham

- SPRINT Grant got extended to March 14th. Entities that are applying have received their letters of support from the CVB office.

- Ashley spoke with Bridgette (State Tourism Director) about the Russell County report, should be here today or Friday. There was a delay with sending them out. Ashley will send them out via e-mail or bring copies to the April meeting.
- She met with the new hotel that is coming to Russell. Sounds like they'll start over with their incentives- which require updated info, project budget and timeline. They are hoping to start work in June. Project will take 16-18 months to complete.
- The construction going on next to Sonic is for Tesla charging stations. This means we can be added to the charging station map, hopefully they will attract visitors we have been missing. 24/7 is also planning on adding some charging stations in their expansion.
- Listings for the 2024 Kansas Travel Guide are now open. There are 7 signed up, she's waiting to hear back from 4 others. Connie with the Chamber in Lucas handles the Lucas listings.
- National Travel & Tourism Week is May 7th-13th. We will do a thank you and spotlight our attractions, lodging, shopping on social media.
- There is a Mural and Public Art Grant out, it's due March 13th. ROAR and the Lucas area is aware of it.
- We received leads from Tour Kansas for the American Bus Association Conf. that was in Detroit. We are a part of Tour Kansas, so we get those leads. She is reaching out to get some of those bus tours here.
- Partnered with the hospital for some promotional stuff for Russell County to help attract new doctors and other new employees.
- The Kansas Media Event will be in Wichita on August 30th, Ashley plans on attending.

Funding Requests

Lovegrass Music Festival- \$3000.00 – Jim Cross motions to fund \$3,000.00, Aaron Talbott seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Russell County Loan Program

Current remaining balance is \$53,499.49. There have been no new loans or applicants.

E-Community Loan Program

We have an application in for a E-community loan, Grow Kansas loan and a Women in Minority loan. It's for business purchase and expansion. This will go to the loan review committee. Looking at a total loan amount of well over \$300,000.00 which is why there are mixed loans. One business, 3 different applications. There was discussion about the review board and how to be on the review board.

Economic Development Update – Mike Parsons

- **Buc-ee's Update:** Been in a discussion with Buc-ee's. They wanted 300 employees; our workforce doesn't meet their needs. A press release will go out regarding this information since this was a county wide community effort. We will reach back out and follow up with them again.
- **Project Bookworm/Childcare:** Luray school building. Group Daycare - is the first goal. They had a meeting with the state. There are a few steps to do- need to send off architectural drawings of future plans to the Fire Marshall for fire code purposes.
- **Hell Creek Bridge-** Representation from the county went to Topeka for a meeting regarding the repair of Hell Creek Bridge. We are currently looking for funds for the repairs. There was an agreement with Wildlife & Parks, they will pay \$500,000.00 over the next 2 to 3 years. The state wants us to use their company, which will cost \$4.1mil. They will give us \$1.6mil if we go through the state. We are going to stay active on this, there is more work to be done.
- **Project Doghouse:** Oilfield company. The lead operator wants to purchase it.
- **Project Open Mind** – Client wants to purchase a building and redo it. He is currently pursuing a business plan at FHSU.
- **Project Blank Canvas-** Young entrepreneur who works in the insurance business who is looking to expand on her own. Currently looking for an office. She's planning on providing services for auto and home insurance and Medicare.
- **Project Sofa** – Existing business downtown that is in the process of purchasing another building to move to. She's trying to get incentives, there's a lot to work to do on the new building.
- **Billboard Grant Program-** Closed March 1st. Had 10 applicants, the commissioners will review them next meeting.

Other Clients/Projects/Programs

- Mike was in Hays yesterday for the Dane G. Hansen forum, Doug Griffiths (author of 13 ways) spoke at the forum. Mike and a group of people from the community are meeting with Doug Griffiths today over lunch in Hays. Hansen gave out some good information on funding and recruitment. They had some recruitment statistics from a nationwide survey - #1. Quality of Life #2. Workforce #3. Infrastructure #4. Incentives #5. Taxes. The office wants to do a promotional video to showcase the quality of life and what the county offers for recruitment along with our unique aspects. We are wanting to go after some grants for the funding. The Department of Commerce just launched 2 more programs. Discussion about video production was brought up, maybe check with FHSU or Smoky Hills Public Television – Mike McQuade.
- A lot of clients are going through the Small Business Center right now.
- Stay Connected Survey- 30 responses so far. We are in the process of re-formatting the business list.

Community Updates

- Lucas- April Fools-A-Palooza is April 1st... Lucas also opened the bids for the new water tower and nitrate plant.
- Luray – Luray Fish Fry- March 17th at the American Legion.
- Russell – \$13.5mil grant they received for roads is going through HUD, from west Wichita from Fossil to Van Houten will be milled and overlaid this summer. Sonico in Hutchinson (closed) is who takes the cities carboard, paper and magazine recycling. Typically takes 400 tons a year. Possibly found another vendor but decisions still need to be made. After 7 years the R9 Ranch hearing starts on July 19th. Should know something in the next 14 to 15 months. Shayla Peck was promoted to City Treasurer.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Thursday, April 13th, 2023, at 7:30am at Meridys.

Adjournment

Jim Cross motioned to adjourn; Aaron Talbott seconded. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:32am.



Russell County Economic Development and CVB Minutes

Date: 4/13/2023

Time: 7:30AM

Location: Meridy's – Russell

Call to Order: Mike at 7:34AM

In Attendance

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

Approval of Minutes

Jon Birky moved to approve minutes from March 2023. Karla Berry seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Financial Review – No questions/comments.

Bylaws – Waiting for the agreements to be done before bylaws are discussed.

Russell County Loan Program

The current remaining balance is \$53,792.52. There have been no new loans or applicants.

E-Community & Grow Kansas Loan Program

Had an E-community Loan and a Grow Kansas Loan approved and closed on for \$340,000.00 for Big Slicks Well Service in Russell. \$145,000.00 of the \$340,000.00 came from the E-Community Loan & Grow Kansas Loan Programs. There are more clients looking into those loan programs, no applications have been received.

Funding Requests

Blessing of the Bikes- \$500.00 – Jon Birky motions to fund \$500.00, Duke Strobel seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Historic Park - \$10,000.00 – The \$10,000.00 requested would be split between Eco Devo & CVB (\$5,000.00 each). Discussion was had about this project and other funding options. There are LATCF funds available by request with permission from the commission. Jon Birky motions to table the decision for after the commission meeting on Monday, April 17th, 2023, Karla Berry seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Tourism Update- Ashley Wickham

- In the January meeting it was brought up about tracking tradeshow traffic. Ashley has sent out emails about doing a coupon tracking system with the businesses. About 4 to 5 have responded showing interest.
- New hotel- Plans on turning dirt in June.
- Visitor Guides – Working on a re-design and looking into a different printing company for cost purposes.
- Meet Kansas- Leads from people around the state & country looking to host a meeting. Meeting size varies. Considering stepping away from Tour Kansas (Bus Tours).
- The Tourism Conference is in Dodge City this year – October 17th-20th.
- Denver Bass fishers Ashley connected with at the Denver Trade Show will be here June 2nd – 4th and October 20th – 22nd. She's waiting for numbers from them so we can get rooms booked.
- Lawrence Magazine called- they are doing a story about the 100th year of Bob Dole's birthday, Ashley directed them to the Historical Society.
- Disc Golf- The state is going to start advertising disc golf courses that communities have. Ashley sent them information about the disc golf course at Memorial Park.
- National Travel and Tourism Week is May 7th – 13th.
- Ashley is working on budgets; they are due May 11th.
- Economic Impact Number have come in. Ashley passed out packets and discussed the results with the board. Visitor spending increased 29% in 2021, visitor spending also passed pre-covid number by 8%. The lodging index jumped over 75 points in 2021, restaurant spending in Russell County was higher than the States due to the covid impact. Total employment numbers surpassed by 22 points in 2021. As total overall numbers were higher in 2021 than even before the pandemic. The report will be posted on the website.

Economic Development Update – Mike Parsons

Other Clients/Projects/Programs

- Looking into Wally's which is a family truck stop about half the size of Buc-ees. A connection was made with Quick Trip, a proposal was sent. They are not interested.
- FHSU Business Plan- 13 clients going through the program.
- Stay Connected Survey- 30 responses so far. We are in the process of re-formatting the business list.
- Project Bookworm- Luray school group home daycare (up to 12 kids)- needing approval from the state Fire Marshal. There are about 4 grant applications that they are wanting to send in, some remodeling will need to take place. This project is being done by the Luray Community Foundation.
- A childcare business has just opened in Lucas.
- Ling Chang reached out. He was looking for a 2 storied building on I-70 with living quarters upstairs and a Chinese restaurant downstairs. The building needed the kitchen already in it. We currently don't have any buildings with those specifications available.

Community Updates

- The Edwards Ave project is on schedule, the new hotel has new plans and will now have 65 rooms and they are still looking for retail as well. There are now 8 Tesla charging stations at Sonic, the city is waiting on a transformer to accommodate the power load. There is an unclaimed property list on the city website. Plant A is still under construction, they are waiting on parts. Information about rebuilding North Fossil and repairing East 15th was reported. There are 2 requests in, one for an electric distribution rebuild and one for a pipeline from Schoenchen pipe. They have 100% grant funds to rebuild the sidewalks from the police station to the high school. Also looking into changing some of the lights, redoing Main Street and replacing public safety radios. The Truck stop is supposed to be done this fall.
- Lucas- New city employee was hired. Art day was a big success, around 300 people. The Art Center has a new exhibit- about 90 people attended the open house. A new mural is going to be done.
- Luray- Buzzards Day is this weekend. Alumni, Luray Community Pride Karaoke are also coming up and planning for Luray Friendship Day has begun.



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



Thursday, May 11th, 2023 @ 7:30am @ Meridys

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance

Duke Strobel, John Fletcher, Jon Birky, Don Varner, Karla Berry, Malinda Walker, Jim Cross, Jeannie Stramel, Aaron Talbott, Jon Quinday, Maggie Holloway, and Mike Parsons.

Call Meeting to Order

Mike Parsons called the meeting to order at 7:32 am.

Opening Notes:

The board received a letter of resignation, due to medical reasons, from Janet Funk. The office and board thanked Janet for her service to the board and wished her the best as she battles her ailments.

Review and Approval of Minutes:

Jon Birky made the motion to adjourn, second by Karla.

Review and Discussion of Financials:

A review of account 150 (CVB financials) and account 155 (eco devo financials) was held. No questions or concerns.

Loan Programs:

Russell County Loan Program remaining balance of \$56,939.64. The monthly E-Community Profile was presented to the board. It was reported that the E-Community Program has two delinquent loans. Mike will work with NWKS PDCI and Network KS to get those back on track. No loan applications have been received, but several clients are exploring the programs.

Clients/Projects/Programs:

Luray Log Cabin – Fundraising efforts update, quote from contractor for \$9,500 to replace roof. Partnership to help promote the project, roof work to start 2-3 weeks.

Russell Play Park - Discussion was held around the play park project, cost of 1.5 million, it was asked if a cvb funding request was suffice for their project, thoughts were that is draws people from other communities and off the highways, the board will entertain an application. We will reach out with an application at a later date.

KDC Exporter of the Year Award – Nomination for the award was made by the office for Agrilead, Inc., after further review the program is for international exports only – not US exports. The application was withdrawn.

Office Structure/Duties – Duke announced that after Ashley Wickhams resignation Mike was named Executive Director, Maggie was promoted to Tourism Director, and the receptionist position is currently being advertised.

Project Rooster – Business upgrades and expansion at LaSada Lodge.

IDEA Works/Maker Space – General introduction to the project – more to come next month. Discussion of LATCF funds and their potential use for project. Place for entrepreneurs to learn, network, and grow. Jim talked about the city cost of the buildings and the hopeful use of two downtown buildings.

Project Bookworm – Childcare project in Luray, partnership with Luray Community Foundation and Luray Childcare Coalition. Group home childcare provider in the old school building, working with Fire Marshall and grants.

Recruitment Efforts – working on pitching to Wally's for the RDI land, Louisiana clients (agricultural tarps manufacturing and distribution) still have potential to move to area – trying to keep contact.

Project Quest – Business startup (automotive industry), making plans and exploring funds - \$250,000. NRP incentive and use of program funds.

Project Laser – business startup (laser engraving), possible RCED Loan.

Ash Apartments – 9-unit renovation, exploring state incentives to find a fit, more discussion in the future, haven't presented findings/options to client yet.

Intern Program – number of interns was discussed, placement of said interns and the funding sources was also discussed.

Potential Upcoming Programs – request for quick books program – finding more information and cost, discussed other wants or needs for area programs.

Bargin Bin Shopping – new client looking for commercial space on main street, working to place him. SFSG was discussed, buildings were discussed.

Advertisements and Promotions:

Much discussion was had about tracking advertisements and the possibility of using online promotions and QR codes to do it. The office requested advice on moving forward with large cost ads and how we track them. Further discussion was had about the benefits of digital media ads over paper. Maggie presented her newly designed ads for review.

CVB Funding Request Form Updates:

The board was asked to review the application and make corrections/additions to make it work for them.

Additional Conversation:

Further loan discussion was had about the process of loan approval and background checks. Mentorships for clients was discussed.

Community Updates:

Big Kansas Road Trip in Lucas next year, grants for tourism were discussed, Jon Quinday spoke about current city projects and endeavors, he also spoke with the board about comments/questions from past meetings and working together, and Duke spoke about the county and city working on an updated agreement.

Motion to Adjourn:

Jon Birky made the motion to adjourn, second by Karla.



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



Thursday, July 20th, 2023 @ 7:30am @ Meridys

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance

Duke Strobel, Karla Berry, Malinda Walker, Jeannie Stramel, Aaron Talbott, Kayla Schneider, Dustin Madden, Maggie Holloway, and Mike Parsons.

Call Meeting to Order

Mike Parsons called the meeting to order at 7:30 am.

Opening Notes:

Welcomed Kayla Schneider to the board and introduced our new receptionist, Lisa Sandberg.

Review and Approval of Minutes:

Aaron made the motion to approve, Duke seconded with no corrections. Motion carried.

Review and Discussion of Financials:

To date, 47% of the CVB budget has been expended, leaving a remaining balance of \$48,534.20. 39% of the Economic Development budget has been expended, leaving \$150,960.96 remaining.

Loan Programs:

No applications currently. Conversation was had about delinquencies – there is currently one. The annual Network KS E-Community Agreement was discussed and signed by the board. Training for the loan review committee was also discussed.

Projects/Clients:

CDBG-CVR – With the assistance of Northwest Kansas Planning & Development Commission, the office is applying for \$150,000 of grant funds. If received, eligible for-profit Russell County businesses can apply for these funds for upgrades such as: point of sales systems or e-commerce enhancements. Applications will be reviewed by the board.

Project Sofa – Perfect Print is pursuing the CDBG - Commercial Rehabilitation program in the amount of \$250,000. The office will assist however possible in the process.

Project Whitetail – New sporting goods business in Russell.

Housing – The priority of senior patio homes was set. Partners notified of project. Meetings to be schedule soon.

LATCF I.D.E.A. Works Maker Space – Commission approved a funding request from Russell Pride in the amount of \$25,000 to support the project.

NRP Updates – The Lucas City Council approved the proposed NRP program. It will match the countywide program. Assisting the city with paperwork and public hearings. The City of Bunker Hill is next on the list.

Workforce – Planning has started to partner with Kansas Works to host a mobile job fair this fall in Russell.

Development Sites – Updates are being made to LOIS. Promotions are also being development to highlight our communities and our available sites.

Programs/Events:

OC Intern Updates - 10 Interns with our partnership with JAG at RHS. Still working with the City of Russell on their positions.

Office Miscellaneous:

Budgets – The 2024 budgets were presented to the board.

Visitor Guide – Maggie has spent time getting video footage and is in the process of amping up the visitor’s guide. Maggie just got done with the resource page and is now doing the business page. She is in the process of pricing QR codes to help use as the education of tourism in our county.

½ cent sales tax renewal – Campaign preparations are starting. The renewal will be on this fall’s ballot.

2023 Business awards – The office is nominating one business for each category. Discussions are being had about a joint business ceremony with the Chambers this year.

Welcome/Visitor Bags, Attraction Education/QR Codes, and Other Promotions – Working to partner with chambers and RMSI to promote Holiday Shopping/Shopping Local and Small Business Saturday. Waudby’s – Americas Best Restaurant promotion/filming was discussed.

CVB Funding Requests:

Ad Astra Music Festival - Duke motions for funding of \$3,000.00 Karla seconded. Motion carried.

Lucas Adam’s Apple Festival - Melinda motions to approve 3,000.00 Duke seconded. Motion Carried.

Luray Friendship Day - Jeannie motions to approve 1,000.00. Duke Seconded. Motion carried.

Community Updates, Additional Announcements, and Open Conversation:

Malinda provided an update on the log cabin project in Luray. Jeannie spoke about upcoming projects and events in Lucas, such as: the new water tower and plant. The Luray Community Foundation daycare project was discussed. They received grant funds and are moving forward. Kayla gave an update on the Holiday Inn Express, 24-7 expansion, and the main street revitalization.

Motion to Adjourn:

Aaron made the motion to adjourn, second by Duke. Meeting adjourned at 8:36 am.



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



Thursday, October 19th, 2023 @ 7:30am @ Meridys

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance

Duke Strobel, John Fletcher, Karla Berry, Kayla Schneider, Aaron Talbott, Dustin Madden, Jon Birky, Don Varner, Jeannie Byers-Long, Lisa Sandberg, and Mike Parsons.

Call Meeting to Order

John Flecher called the meeting to order at 7:31 am.

Opening Notes:

Jon Quinday is no longer on the board – Jeannie Byers-Long was appointed as his replacement. Thank you to Jon for his years on the board.

Review and Approval of Minutes:

John Fletcher made the motion to approve, and Duke Strobel seconded with no corrections, motion carried.

Review and Discussion of Financials: The county budget provided by the clerk's office does not run by the line item – the bord requested to see where we stand YTD by line item on each budget. The 2024 budget and YTD expense and report is included in the packet.

Loan Program Updates:

The E-Community loan report is included in the packet -it shows one delinquent loan, the client did reach out to the office requesting information. After reaching out to NWKS PDC, they did receive a check. We will continue to follow this loan to make sure it stays current. Mike is still working with multiple clients, but there are no applications on his desk currently.

Projects/Clients:

Senior Housing Complex- Potential land and complex layout – working with the city, developers, and contractors. Next steps: city ED application, CBA at WSU, and agreement. The state application is due in January.

Luray Community Center / Bank Building: Purposed purposes of Community Center include kitchen, market, gym, thrift store and daycare. Applications and paperwork submitted to the state and DGH – Water and sewage infrastructure issues are holding up the project. They have \$4,600.00 of the \$10,000.00 project cost.

Dentist recruitment: Dr. Jones retires in the spring, and we don't want to lose access to dentistry in the county. We are reaching out to Jones to promote and offer help with recruitment.

Storage/Distribution Facility: A Client has reached out to Kayla at the City of Russell. They are partnering to hopefully/provide resources and options for the building on Main Street.

Current Business Plans: There are several going through the process, however, the follow through action is slow.

Programs/Events:

Storefront/Signage Grant Program + Big Kansas Road Trip- Applications are open, they close on January 5th, 2024. The total funds that are available are \$19,000.00, it is usually \$14,000.00. Applied for and received a \$5,000.00 grant to help the COL with the BKRT.

Job Fair- There were six participants and two will be reaching out for assistance on resumes.

Existing Childcare Provider Training / Becoming a Childcare Provider- It is scheduled for the Winter. 20 providers from the area to update or renew their needed training.

Banker/Investors Luncheon- Looking to schedule for this winter, bringing our bankers, investors, and relators together for a lunch to learn about office and regional partner resources.

Office Miscellaneous:

SBDC Changes- FHSU will no longer be our partner for SBDC – It will now be run out of the Innovation Center in Norton. These changes should take place around the first of the year.

½ cent sales tax- KRSL, social media and newspaper promotions have started. Spoke at a few meetings and planning to speak and present more. Kayla Schneider suggested Mike present to Rotary.

Visitor Guide – The first draft is being finalized and going to the printer ASAP. We will have them in hand by January 1st, 2024.

Promotional video/grant update: The contract with the state has been signed - adjustments need to be made, communication with the state has been started. Maggie is looking to update bids.

USD 407 Steering Committee- They have a meeting and have spoken with a new architect and engineer, hoping to present a plan soon.

Economic Development Policy Updates: Needs updating, stating the process with the commission.

CVB Funding Request:

None.

Community Updates, Additional Announcements, and Open Conversation:

Other topics were highlighted that were not included in the meeting such as Lucas Art Center elevator, Purple Heart Ceremony, Craftique, log cabin, A Step Back in Time, Dr. Jones retiring, USDA housing, job fair, and childcare training. Full Circle Floral is where Lana's used to be and is run by Holly Calvin. Fall turkey season being suspended was also discussed.

Motion to Adjourn:

Don Varner made the motion to adjourn, Jon Birky seconded, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:15 a.m.



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



Thursday, September 21st, 2023 @ 7:30am @ Meridys

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance

Duke Strobel, John Fletcher, Malinda Walker, Jeannie Stramel, Aaron Talbott, Dustin Madden, Jon Birky, Maggie Holloway, Lisa Sandberg, and Mike Parsons.

Call Meeting to Order

Mike Parsons called the meeting to order at 7:31 am.

Opening Notes:

Mike proposed adjusting the agenda to start with the items that required action or a vote.

Review and Approval of Minutes:

Dustin Madden made the motion to approve, and John Fletcher seconded with no corrections, motion carried.

Review and Discussion of Financials: ED has spent 53% of their budget. CVB budget is running very low.

Additional Conversation: Conversation was had about transient guest tax if you are a VBRO, Air B&B etc. Jon Birky requested to see the line budget more broken down, we will have a graph at every meeting moving forward.

Loan Program Updates:

No applications currently. Funds look good, e-community is almost out of delinquency.

Projects/Clients:

Senior Housing Development- Mike provided information of a potential senior housing complex in Russell. This would be a partnership between the office, the city of Russell, and a developer.

SEED Grant projects: Open until the end of October, one application is for a childcare center in Russell and the second is for the food program.

Workforce/Family Recruitment Program: Remote worker recruitment grant program offered by the Innovation Center – application submitted with community partners.

CDBG-CVR: Application submitted to the State of Kansas. This grant would provide funds to businesses countywide for ecommerce additions/upgrades.

Lucas NRP: Working with the City of Lucas and Attorney General's office on legal description.

Business Plans/ Interest Rate Increase: Susan Penka is still working on the business plans, but a lot of the businesses are small start-ups. The interest rate is a big hurdle.

Programs/Events:

Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge at RHS/RMS- Searching for a partner at USD 407. Hope to have an event this school year at RHS.

Bankers Luncheon- Planning to host this winter. The goal is to bring all of our resource partners and lenders together to share funding options and where to start.

Leadership Program Mike and Magge both spoke at the September Russell County Leadership session and will continue to be active.

Storefront/Signage Grant Program- Launches October 1st. A total of 14,000 is available for 7 applications. There is an extra page on the application specifically for Lucas, we received an additional grant.

Office Miscellaneous:

½ cent sales tax- ½ cent sales tax is up for renewal in November, the ads will all be run shortly. We have drafts ready but are waiting for quotes. Mike has already done a couple presentations on this topic. You will be seeing and hearing a lot on this topic. Mike is going to try to get on with the city council for a pitch on the half cent sales tax.

Visitor Guide – Hoping to send to the printer by October 20th. Consolidated printing out of Salina gave a quote of \$6395 for 5,000 copies. Jeannie Stramel made a motion to approve, Jon Birkey seconded, motions carried. It will also have to be taken to the commissioners because it is over \$5,000.

Big KS Roadtrip- A \$1,500 advertising grant was received and \$499 of it will be used on a wrap for the billboard by Salina for the Big Kansas Road Trip.

TIAK KS Tourism Conf. – Denver/Nebraska Trade Shows- The big state conference is in Dodge City. There are also trade shows in Denver and Nebraska at the beginning of the year. We will piggyback off another booth to help with costs.

Vice President Nominations: A proposal was made to nominate Jon Birky as Vice President. Birky agreed. All present members voted in favor of the nomination.

CVB Funding Request:

Bricks, Broncs, BBQ/Brew Me- Requesting \$1,000. \$500 for Bricks, Broncs, BBQ & \$500 for Brew Me. Duke Strobel makes a motion to approve, Jon Birky seconded, motion carried.

Hays Bass Anglers- Requesting \$100 John Fletcher motions to approve, Duke Strobel seconded, motion carried.

Luray Craftique- Requesting \$500 Jon Birkey makes a motion to approve, Jeannie Stramel seconded, motion carried.

Paradise Fall Festival- Requesting 1,000. Dustin Madden makes a motion to approve, Jon Birky seconded, motion carried.

Russell Rotary- Requesting \$2,000 and we have never funded them before. John Fletcher motions to approve, Jeannie Stramel seconded, motion carried.

Russell Masonic Lodge- Requesting \$500. It has been funded in the past, Duke Strobel makes a motion to approve, Dustin Madden seconded, motion carried.

Flatland Car Show- Requesting \$500 we have funded \$400 in the past. Jeannie Stramel makes a motion to approve, Jon Birky seconded, motion carried.

Open Conversation: Jon Birky asked what all we use the visitors guide for, so Mike explained that it is really a roustabout document. A visitor's guide, a relocation guide, there is an interactive map in it, anywhere Mike speaks at they get handed out. ½ cent sales tax will be paying for the visitor's guide, it is also available in digital flip book. Turnaround time is before the end of the year. It was stated that starting January 1, there should be a deadline for the CVB funding requests. They should be submitted 60 days prior to the date of their event taking place. Dustin Madden motions to approve, Jon Birky seconded, motion carried.

Community Updates, Additional Announcements, and Open Conversation:

Other topics were highlighted that were not included in the meeting such as Lucas Art Center elevator, Purple Heart Ceremony, Craftique, log cabin, A Step Back in Time, Dr. Jones retiring, USDA housing, job fair, and childcare training. Full Circle Floral is where Lana's used to be and is run by Holly Calvin. Fall turkey season being suspended was also discussed.

Motion to Adjourn:

Mike made the motion to adjourn, Jon Birky seconded, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:49 a.m.



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



Thursday, November 16th, 2023 @ 7:30am @ Meridys

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance

Duke Strobel, John Fletcher, Malinda Walker, Karla Berry, Jeannie Stramel, Dustin Madden, Don Varner, Kayla Schneider, Maggie Holloway, Lisa Sandberg, and Mike Parsons.

Call Meeting to Order

John Fletcher called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

Opening Announcements:

None.

Review and Approval of Minutes:

Karla Berry made the motion to approve, and Duke Strobel seconded with no corrections, motion carried.

Financial Review:

CVB has spent 73% of their budget, and ED has spent 63% of their budget this year.

Additional Conversation: Maggie requested to do the CVB funding request early in case someone needs to leave early.

Loan Program Updates:

All loans are current. Have not received monthly report however, the last update from NWKSPDC showed no delinquencies.

Projects/Clients:

Project toothache – Dental Recruitment: Toured Dr. Jones office on 11/3 with client, well received. Meet with client and contractor on 11/17 to discuss options.

Project Eagle- Manufacturing Expansion: Working with client to develop marketing plan with the plan to expand his market/business. Possible partnership with KSU Development Institute.

Project Ice - Distribution Center: Looking for the right partner to discuss the possibility of a local ice distribution center. Exploring business plan.

Project Stone – Construction Expansion: A client is working with SBDC on a business plan, looking to pursue funding for expansion.

Project Bookworm – Daycare & Food Access: Project received grant from DGH, Fire marshal has updated plans/requested different scope. Waiting for inspection.

Programs/Events:

NRP Updates- 9 applications received so far – estimating 1.75 million project costs.

Childcare Programs-

Childcare provider training is scheduled for November 30th at 6:30 at Masonic Lodge.

The Childcare Startup meeting is moved to after the first of the year. Partner conflict.

Youth Entrepreneurship Program- Partner does not have the allowance in their schedule this year. Planning for next year.

National Travel & Tourism Week- Maggie would like a budget to give back to the community attractions and lodging as Thank You.

Storefront/Signage Grant Program- Applications open until 01/05/2024. Application then compiled and sent to surrounding counties/partners for review.

Big Kansas Road Trip- Maggie expects all our hotels to be full.

Rural Opportunity Zone Program- Resolution will be presented to Commission on 11/20.

Office Miscellaneous:

ED Policy Changes- Office has not made changes yet, there are plans to present changes/discuss at Commission meeting at the first of the year.

RDI Project Updates- There is brainstorming about revamping one of the tennis courts in Russell into a pickle ball court.

Visitors Guide- A sample guide was handed out, finalizing corrections, then will be sent to the printer.

Build Kansas- We have partnered with commission and Road & Bridge; and are discussing options.

Shop Local Holiday Campaign Partnership- We are partnering with Russell Area Chamber of commerce and the Lucas Area Chamber of Commerce for a shop local during the holidays campaign.

QR Codes- Leaning toward dynamic QR codes that can be edited as events/business' change.

CVB Funding Request:

Community Thanksgiving Dinner- They have never been funded by us before, they are requesting \$500 for food and advertising. John Fletcher made the motion to approve, Duke Strobel seconded, motion carried.

Additional Conversation: There was conversation about the Historical Society's billboard being open for a new owner there was also conversation about the billboard grant.

Community Updates, Additional Announcements, and Open Conversation: The Meeting Venue/Location was discussed with different options and the meetings will resume at Meridy's for now with further conversation in the future.

- **December Meeting – Holiday Schedule:** Karla made the motion to not hold a board meeting in December, John Fletcher seconded, motion carried. The next board meeting will be held on January 18th @ 7:30a.m. @ Meridys.

Motion to Adjourn: Dustin Madden made the motion to adjourn, Duke Strobel seconded, motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 a.m.



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



Wednesday, November 22nd, 2023 @ 9:00am via zoom

Meeting Agenda

➤ **In Attendance**

Duke Strobel, John Fletcher, Malinda Walker, Jeannie Stramel, Aaron Talbott, Jeannine Byers-Long, Jon Birky, Maggie Holloway, Lisa Sandberg, and Mike Parsons.

➤ **Call Meeting to Order:** John Fletcher @ 9:02am

➤ **CVB Funding Requests:** 425 Youth – Funding for a Camel for the live nativity set
Jon Fletcher made a motion to deny, Duke Strobel seconded, motion carried.

➤ **Motion to Adjourn:** John Fletcher @ 9:09am