



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



*Thursday, August 20th, 2025 @ 7:30am @ Russell County Economic Development & CVB
Office*

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Jon Birky, Dustin Madden, Duke Strobel, Karla Berry, Jeannie Stramel, Jamie Malone (online), Jeannine Byers-Long, Malinda Walker, Kayla Schneider, Alex Lofland, Angie Muller (online), Lisa Sandberg, Ryleigh Wagner, 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: Dustin made a motion to approve the minutes, Duke seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Financial Review: Mike gave a general overview; CVB fund #150 has spent 48% of the budget for the year, YTD \$44,842.07 with a remaining balance of \$47,257.93. ED fund #155 has spent 46% of the budget for the year, YTD \$30,345.13 with a remaining balance of \$134,541.92.

Loan Program Updates:

- Russell County Loan Program – No current updates.
- E-Community Loan Program – No current updates.
- GrowKs Loan Program – No current updates.
- Other- Mike stated he has the Network Kansas agreement for review; there were a few changes made but they are just clerical. It will need to be signed by Jon, Duke, and himself.

Community Updates/Open Conversation: Kayla stated they received several bids for the main street extension from contractors but have settled on the estimate from Arrowhead. Jeannie stated Chandler resigned as the Director at the Grassroots Art Center and Adams Apple Festival is about to take place. Angie Muller gave an update on the grants

available. Duke said the estimate for the hell creek bridge has gone up by one million, Malinda stated Luray Friendship Day was coming up and that Luray Craftique currently has 110 vendors signed up.

CVB Funding Request:

Luray Craftique- They are requesting \$500.00; After board discussion, Jon made a motion to approve the funding request for \$500.00, Duke seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Paradise Fall Festival- They are requesting \$3,000.00; After board discussion, Duke made a motion to approve the funding request for \$1,200.00, Jeannie seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Projects/Clients:

- **Project Beano/Jumpstart:** Mike and Ryleigh met with the new owners; they are putting work in for a remodel of the gas station; the restaurant will not be retained.
- **Project Asteroid:** Once financials are received for the loan committee, a meeting will be held.
- **Holiday Inn Express:** Mike and Kayla are reaching out to state and regional partners to help close the gap in funding.
- **Fossil Creek Hotel & Suites:** Mike stated the new owners are getting settled in and have hired some new employees.
- **Project Smoke:** Their loan was finalized yesterday, and they are making great progress.
- **Kansas Originals:** They have temporarily moved into a location in Wilson, still looking at options closer to interstate.
- **Meridy's:** The business is still up for sale and avenues are being explored to retain it as a restaurant.

Programs/Events:

- **Billboard Grant Program-** Our office is hoping to launch this by October 1st, half of it will be a community contest and the other half will be a for-profit and nonprofit business. All businesses in Russell County can apply.
- **Countywide NRP Program-** The current NRP expires on 12/31/25, Mike is working to renew it and hoping to do a 5- or 10-year program instead of a 3 year.
- **Storefront/Signage Grant Program-** Mike stated Lisa already has a list of people who have requested the application by email when it is released on 10/1.
- **Workforce Recruitment Program-** Received a \$60,000 grant, there will be a meeting next week to review the claw back and agreements.
- **2026 State Shoot-** LaSada won the vote for the state shoot next year; Lodging around the county is already filling up. This year the state shoot brought in \$5,009 in transient guest tax.

Office Miscellaneous:

- **2026 Strategic Plan-** Ryleigh is redoing the childcare portion, it will be available for review at next month's meeting.

- **Convention Recruitment-** Ryleigh is in the process of applying to host a two-day conference in Russell County.
- **Phase 2 Housing Development-** MIH funding was cut; conversations have been started for phase two on housing and what that may look like.
- **Historical Society Billboard Invoice-** Mike asked if the board would like to pay for their billboard again; Jon made a motion to pay \$2,340. Duke seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **Building Database-** Ryleigh has been building a database for main street buildings, it will help when people are looking for more information.
- **Childcare Coalition-** Ryleigh gave an update that they will be attending the RCACF board meeting on August 26th to request funds to help build a childcare center.
- **MicroMansions-** Incentives are being sought after to get a spec home put on a vacant lot.

Executive Session – Confidential Projects

Motion to Adjourn: Jon made the motion to adjourn, Duke seconded; motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:01 a.m.

Next Advisory Board Meeting: September 18th @ 7:30 am @ Russell County Economic Development & CVB Office