



# 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 14<sup>th</sup>. 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 7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>. 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 13<sup>th</sup>. 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 30<sup>th</sup>, 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 1<sup>st</sup>. 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 1<sup>st</sup>... Lucas also opened the bids for the new water tower and nitrate plant.
- Luray – Luray Fish Fry- March 17<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup>. 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 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 7:30am at Meridys.

## **Adjournment**

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

