



# 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 17<sup>th</sup>, 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 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>.
- Denver Bass fishers Ashley connected with at the Denver Trade Show will be here June 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> and October 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>. She's waiting for numbers from them so we can get rooms booked.
- Lawrence Magazine called- they are doing a story about the 100<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>.
- Ashley is working on budgets; they are due May 11<sup>th</sup>.
- 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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.

