

# The Economic Alliance

## Board Meeting

May 26, 2021  
Zoom Meeting

### **Attending Board Members:**

Chris Branch, Chairman, Okanogan County Commissioners  
Lael Duncan, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman, No County #1, OCCAC  
Kurt Danison, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner  
Jon Culp, Mayor of Okanogan, City Representative #2  
Aaron Kester, No. County #2, Tonasket Natural Food Co-op  
Kristi O'Neill, Central County #1 Rep., WorkSource

George Brady, Pt Chair, So Co Rep #2, Cascade Biological Sply  
Alan Fisher, Central County #2 Rep., CEO Mid Valley Hosp  
Maria Lassila, Treasurer, Omak Mirage Theater  
Stacy Luckensmeyer, At-Large Representative #2, WVC  
Rachelle Haven, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2, GCD Chamber

### **Absent Board Members:**

Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., Clerk of the Brd  
Anna Dalbey, Secretary, South County #2, Coldwell Banker  
Mayra Pamatz, Community Finance Rep., Umpqua Bank  
Michael Porter, At Large #1, Omak School Superintendent  
Ted Piccolo, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Rep. #1, NNDF

Sally Ranzau, Mayor of Winthrop, Methow Valley #1  
Amanda Jackson-Mott, Arts Comm. Rep., MAA  
John St. Pierre, Colville Planning, CCT Rep  
Jonnie Crossland, CTFC Representative  
Don Linnertz, MV #2, Twisp Works & Winthrop Chamber

### **Guests/Staff:**

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director  
Carolyn Davis, Admin Assistant  
Keila Sepulveda-Diaz, Economic Recovery Coordinator  
Eric Hovee, E.D. Hovee & Company

Justine Salazar, WorkSource  
Sheila Corsen, Okanogan PUD  
Alice Brown, NCW EDD

Chairman Chris Branch called the meeting to order.

Addition or Changes to Agenda: Changed to add Alice Brown and Eric Hovee to discuss the regional economic development CEDS and the Okanogan County CEDS.

Consent Agenda: Kurt Danison made a motion to approve consent agenda (minutes 4/28/21). Lael Duncan seconded. Motion passed.

### **Reports**

Executive Director Report: (see attachment #1) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that Keila Sepulveda-Diaz and she have been working on outreach follow up with businesses that have received funding through the grant programs. They are also working on getting survey about childcare study out to all employers to find out how the lack of available childcare is affecting their employees. A lot of people have not gone back to work because they cannot find childcare.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach is still working on our ADO contract with the state. The new census data is needed to determine amount that would be available to the Economic Alliance. We should hear back next week about WSMA funding to provide technical assistance to the Latino community to determine current small business needs and future services and program development and training for Retail businesses to get online. We should hear back on the USDA grant by June 4<sup>th</sup>. There is also new RBDG funding that is open and due in July to assist businesses located next to a body of water and have been impacted by a natural disaster.

Financial Report: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the Economic Alliance is doing well. The Balance Sheet and current Income Statements as of the end of April were sent out prior to the meeting. The audit is looking like it could start the second week in July.

Business Education: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she will be meeting with Stacy Luckensmeyer on Friday to hear about what the WVC for Entrepreneurship is doing and if we receive the USDA grant, we will have some funds for training.

Board Policies Annual Update: The Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics statements – if you have not signed and sent back, please do so as soon as possible. Roni Holder-Diefenbach will send out the documents via Adobe-sign so Board members that have not sent in their signed forms can do so online.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we usually start the process for prioritizing projects in Fall, but we need to change that to get applications in June and have presentations in July and then get ranking list to the EDD. Projects are still getting funding even if it is not from the county's infrastructure fund. Having the ranking is important for funding applications. Roni Holder-Diefenbach spoke with the county commissioners, and they could possibly open the fund for projects when the bond is paid off.

Chris Branch spoke about Okanogan County projects that are on Senator Newhouse's list. Kurt Danison asked if they can just edit last year's application. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that applications are in Google Docs, and she will see if they can import and make a few changes.

Covid-19 Response: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we need to get all employers to fill out the Child Care Survey. The Economic Alliance is facilitating grants for new businesses (started after March 2020) and they are available and we are still accepting applications until the end of the week. We have not received very many applications yet. A one-year post Covid business survey will be sent out to gather information to see if those who received grants are still in business and how they are doing after one year.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she is working with Earth & Sky Studios to update the Economic Alliance web site. It will have the Economic Dashboard, will be user friendly, have post recovery information and have written into the contract to include continued updates throughout the year.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach has also been keeping track of what is available at the federal and state level and sharing information with local businesses and the public.

Summer Schedule: Roni Holder-Diefenbach discussed the current schedule and asked if we were going to continue to meet through the summer or cancel July/August meetings as we did in the past due to lack of getting a quorum. Chris Branch stated he felt it was very important to meeting in person, he felt that the "side meetings" that happen at in person meetings were very valuable. Roni Holder-Diefenbach discussed that we have had success with meeting via Zoom and that maybe we could meet in person on a quarterly basis and continue zoom meetings in between. George Brandy and Lael Duncan felt we should continue through the summer with meetings via Zoom and then do quarterly meetings in person for the months of March, June, September, December. Kurt Danison made a motion to continue to meet through the summer and then meet in person on a quarterly basis for September and December 2021 and March and June 2022. George Brady seconded. Motion passed.

### Contracts

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we are moving forward with all the Economic Alliance contracts.

### Discussion

Chris Branch asked for a good matrix of Covid recovery funds. He found a matrix from Texas that the framework might work for Okanogan County. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that she had sent the county commissioners an example from the Thurston County Task Force on how they are distributing funds. She will reach out to other ADOs to see how they are making decisions on how to distribute funding for recovery. It was felt that the Economic Alliance could play a vital role in getting this done.

Guest Speaker:

Eric Hovee, E.D. Hovee & Company, has been hired to do a Okanogan County Comprehensive Economic Development and Recovery Strategy (CEDRS) for Okanogan County. He felt we should break the county up in several regions and through the initial data gathering. He will be looking for prioritized projects in the county, plus infrastructure needs, such as Broadband, as well as downtown business programs, housing, and tourism. He will be doing background research and data compilations and will prepare a draft report. It was felt that some of the smaller communities do not know how to spend the funds they will receive or have received from the Covid response. The larger and smaller communities also need help with grant administration, grant writing, etc. A survey went out and he asked that it be filled out, especially mayors and administrators, as soon as possible. We need to identify the needs, opportunities, and community priorities. There is not usually enough of a percentage allowed for grant administration. Mr. Hovee stated that people can either email or call him or can give information to Roni Holder-Diefenbach to share with him. (360) 696-9870 and his email is [ehovee@edhovee.com](mailto:ehovee@edhovee.com)

Mr. Hovee and Alice Brown, with the EDD, might be in Okanogan County next week and can set up meetings or schedule Zoom meetings, but wanted to start with the initial survey.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 23, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Davis, Administrative Assistant



May 2021

**Overview:**

*This month we received notice that we were awarded the funding from the Department of Commerce to complete some projects related to recovery and covid-19. We negotiated contracts to complete a Comprehensive Economic Development Recovery Strategy and to update our Economic Alliance website which will include the Economic Recovery Dashboard which the data will continue to be updated by the UW data and statistics department. The Covid Recovery Coordinator has been working on contacting all the recipients from the Grant programs that the Economic Alliance facilitated last year to gather jobs data and to verify that the businesses are still open. We are also working with the NCW Education services district for our region to conduct a survey on childcare and how employers and businesses are being impacted by the lack of available childcare in the county,*

**ADO Funding:**

*In the final Operating Budget, ADO funding is **increased by \$1 million per year**, for a total of \$4.3 million per year – from the General Fund (which is important) -- just as requested in [WEDA's 2021 Economic Recovery Legislative Agenda](#), and in our budget request letters. There is a new “floor” for all ADOs to receive at least \$75,000.*

**Budget:** *We won't be able to finalize the allocation model for the ADO budget until the new Census numbers are available and a few other items.*

**New Data Collection and Reporting:** *The guiding principles regarding our data collection and reporting will be:*

- *Simplify*
- *Better Data*
- *Addressing Equity, Diversity and Inclusiveness*

**LOCAL/REGIONAL:**

**Economic Recovery Dashboard:** *Will be incorporated into our NEW website and UW will be updating the information for us.*

**CEDRS-***Conducting meetings in the county to gather data and information needed to complete the study by June 30, 2021.*

**Downtown Academy-** *Okanogan County has 2 communities, Brewster and Oroville who are participating in this project is funded through the USDA.*

**Okanogan County/CCT Broadband Action Team:**

*We will continue to meet monthly and are scheduling presentations from the different industries directly impacted by COVID-19 and how lack of broadband access has affected their business and industry. We are applying for a USDA grant with the assistance of ACRS.*

**External Board of Directors:** *Currently I am representing the Economic Alliance on the following boards:*

<i>NCW Economic Development District</i>	<i>NCW Career Connect Leadership Team</i>
<i>NCW Workforce Development Council</i>	<i>Family Health Centers Board</i>
<i>CFNCW Helping Hands Grant Committee</i>	<i>Washington Economic Development Association</i>