

# The Economic Alliance

## Board Meeting

July 28, 2021  
Zoom Meeting

### Attending Board Members:

Chris Branch, Chairman, Okanogan County Commissioners  
Kurt Danison, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner  
Maria Lassila, Treasurer, Omak Mirage Theater  
Aaron Kester, No. County #2, Tonasket Natural Food Co-op  
Kristi O'Neill, Central County #1 Rep., WorkSource  
Mike Mauk for Anna Dalbey, Secretary, South County #2, Coldwell Banker

George Brady, Pt Chair, So Co Rep #2, Cascade Biological Sply  
Jon Culp, Mayor of Okanogan, City Representative #2  
Alan Fisher, Central County #2 Rep., CEO Mid Valley Hosp  
Rachelle Haven, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2, GCD Chamber  
Amanda Jackson-Mott, Arts Comm. Rep., MAA

### Absent Board Members:

Lael Duncan, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman, No County #1, OCCAC  
Sally Ranzau, Mayor of Winthrop, Methow Valley #1  
Stacy Luckensmeyer, At-Large Representative #2, WVC  
Ted Piccolo, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Rep. #1, NNDF  
Mayra Pamatz, Community Finance Rep., Umpqua Bank

Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., Clerk of the Brd  
John St. Pierre, Colville Planning, CCT Rep  
Jonnie Crossland, CTFC Representative  
Michael Porter, At Large #1, Omak School Superintendent  
Don Linnertz, MV #2, Twisp Works & Winthrop Chamber

### Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director  
Carolyn Davis, Admin Assistant  
Mikaela Marion, SubKulture Co.  
Jenny Rojanasthien, NCW Tech Alliance

Karen Frisbee, Oroville Chamber  
Sheila Corsen, Okanogan PUD  
Anne Young, Winthrop Marketing

Chairman Chris Branch called the meeting to order.

Addition or Changes to Agenda: Add under "Motions" Distribution of leftover funds from Career Fair to Fire.

Consent Agenda: George Brady made a motion to approve consent agenda (minutes 6/23/21). Maria Lassila seconded. Motion passed.

### Guest Speakers

Jenny Rojanasthien, Executive Director for the newly named NCW Tech Alliance (formerly GWATA). She moved to the area 10 years ago and was a manager of a Target store prior to moving to the Wenatchee area. She and her husband own two businesses in the Wenatchee area. The mission of the NCW Tech Alliance is to bring people and technology resources together while supporting entrepreneurs, STEM education, and technology in North Central Washington. Since 1999, they have been the voice for connecting and supporting both technology companies and entrepreneurs. Their three pillars are Technology, Entrepreneurship, and STEM Education. Their service area is Chelan, Okanogan, Grant, and Douglas Counties and looking at extending into Ferry and Adams Counties. A 501(c)3 non-profit organization, they serve 165 businesses and support over 45 events every year. They host the annual Innovator Awards Luncheon, the Flywheel Investment Conference, and serve as co-lead of the Apple STEM Network, which drives resources to support STEM opportunities for students, educators, and the community. They are currently working with Microsoft on the iLumina program – lighting a way for people in rural communities. Ms. Rojanasthien spoke about Network Advisors with this program, which would be a two-year commitment. The iLumina program is a rural resilience and digital inclusion campaign that brings resources to rural communities. MicroSoft Tech Spark's investment shines a light on what is possible and committee partners will illuminate a path forward. The strategy is to understand the gaps. Digital inclusion, digital transformation, entrepreneur innovation and rural leadership development is the strategy for this program. Kristi O'Neill stated that we need to comprehensive engage our youth and get out to meet with people / communities and build relationships. Below is a link to her slide show presentation.

[https://www.canva.com/design/DAElbVI7pZY/R\\_Z7V6ucSoNsHTPUyGQNsQ/view?utm\\_content=DAElbVI7pZY&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=publishpresent](https://www.canva.com/design/DAElbVI7pZY/R_Z7V6ucSoNsHTPUyGQNsQ/view?utm_content=DAElbVI7pZY&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishpresent)

## Reports

**Web Site/CEDRS Update:** Executive Director Report: (see attachment #1) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the Economic Alliance web site update is still in process and hopefully by the end of the month we can go live. The Comprehensive Economic Development and Recovery Strategy completed by Eric Hovee was accepted. This is a 5 – 10-year strategy for Okanogan County and should be reviewed on an annual basis. It has priorities, objectives, features, and outcomes.

**Office Search:** Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she is looking at the county's Hancock Building in Okanogan for a larger office space. We have given our current landlord notice. Since the office is owned by the county, we need to go to the courthouse steps to submit our bid for this space on August 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Latino Business Survey:** 54 businesses responded to the survey. We will continue to work on concerns and suggestions.

**Job Opening:** We are also looking at hiring for a position for the Tech Center and have received 12 applications and will be interviewing for the position next Friday.

**Board Member Participation:** Some Board members haven't been participating regularly. Roni Holder-Diefenbach plans to contact those that have not been participating or attending meetings and make sure they still want to be on the Board. We also still have vacant positions available.

**Financial:** A current financial Income Statement and Balance Sheet was sent out prior to the meeting. The Auditor will be giving a report at our August meeting. We have finally signed the contract for 2021 with SBDC and have sent them a bill for the first two quarters (\$15,189). We have been having to upfront all the expenses for this program since the first of the year. Roni Holder-Diefenbach will continue to put pressure on the state SBDC office to get billings processed and the payments sent out.

**Business Education:** Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the Retail Strategies workshop had 18 registered participants. The training was translated in Spanish and sent to 16 Latino businesses.

**Infrastructure Committee:** Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the prioritization process has been moved up, but because of the fires we extended the deadline. As of today, we have received 27 applications from cities and community projects. On August 9 the Infrastructure Committee will be hearing from applicants and then will ask questions and prioritize the projects. This list will then be presented to the county commissioners and if approved, will be submitted to the EDD for ranking in the three-county process. Having the ranking is important for funding applications.

**Vacant Buildings Subcommittee:** This committee held its first meeting last week and had about nine people attended. Discussed how to fill vacant store fronts. It was a good conversation and if anyone else would like to participate, please let Roni Holder-Diefenbach know. Next meeting is scheduled for August 26<sup>th</sup>.

## Motions

**Ratify Executive Committee Motion:** Kurt Danison made a motion to approve Roni Holder-Diefenbach to sign a lease with county for new office space for .43 cents per sq. ft. Maria Lassila seconded. Motion passed. Chris Branch abstained.

**Use of Funds from Career Fair:** Roni Holder-Diefenbach and Kristi O'Neill spoke about the funds that were not used for the Career Fair. Because of Covid there was only the virtual fair and now there are left over funds (\$2,227.13). Kristi O'Neill has spoken to all the sponsors that contributed funds for this event and they are all in agreement to donate the funds to the Foundation for Youth Resiliency and Education (FYRE). Marie Lassila made a motion to transfer the remaining funds \$2,227.13 to the FYRE. Jon Culp seconded. Motion passed.

### Discussion

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the Economic Alliances has contracted with ACRS for \$40,000 to do study on costs of “Fiber to Premise”. With funding from USDA RBDG, the Broadband Action Team will continue to look at getting fiber to all of Okanogan County. The funding is dictating where to go first, which is the Pine Creek area.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also reported that with the Small Business Resource Technology Center grant the Economic Alliance will be hiring an Economic Development Specialist as the point of contact for the new center. They will work to market the space to businesses and community groups and identify training needs, as well as work with local cities to develop marketing materials for commercial and industrial properties. Hope to get someone hired and equipment purchased as soon as possible.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she is still hoping to have funding to continue the Okanogan County Economic Recovery Dashboard. She also reported that she is keeping a close eye on all the upcoming funding for businesses and organizations and will keep everyone informed as funds become available.

Mikaela Marion, SubKulture Co., reported that she is working with local women artists in the area and trying to get someone to learn their profession (photography and tattoo artist) and she asked what resources were available to help. It was suggested that she contact Amanda Jackson-Mott with Arts Alliance or maybe the Soroptimist, or Women Empowering Women. Roni Holder-Diefenbach will send Ms. Marion some information.

Meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 25, 2021, via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Davis, Administrative Assistant



July 2021

Here are a few of the highlights from the month of July:

- **New office space**-gave our 30-day notice to our landlords, then learned that the county has a process that they have to follow in order to lease space out to non-county entities. We will have to apply on the steps of the courthouse on August 9<sup>th</sup>.
- **Prioritization Process**-Extended the due date to July 28<sup>th</sup> due to the fires. Several communities were not able to get their applications in so we made the exception to extend.
- **Audit**-Abby Bailey was here on July 14&15 to conduct our federal audit. She will present her findings at our September board meeting.
- **USDA Grants**-
  - Currently advertising for a Economic Development Specialist, interviews will be held on August 6<sup>th</sup>.
  - We entered into a contract with ACRS to continue the work that they are doing for the BAT to expand our study to include fiber to the premise.
  - Loomis Fire Station-Met with Loomis and the County to discuss the RFQ process and schedule for their Feasibility Study. The EA wrote the RFQ and it will run for the next 3 weeks. The goal is to select a consultant by September 8<sup>th</sup>.
- **Housing**-We participated in 2 listening sessions regarding housing in Okanogan County. The Okanogan CHI led these conversations and wanted input from stakeholders and community leaders on the existing housing study and how we can start addressing these issues as communities and a county.
- **Broadband**-There have been 2-3 NOFR for the state and the feds on requests for projects. We worked with the OK PUD and ACRS to submit our projects and priorities for the Okanogan County/CCT Broadband Action Team. The Tribe was able to submit their projects

#### **LOCAL/REGIONAL:**

**Economic Recovery Dashboard:** Will be incorporated into our NEW website and UW will be updating the information for us. We are currently working with the NCW CHI and UW to determine where we go after Oct 2021 to keep this updated.

**EA Website Update**-This is still a work in progress.

**Downtown Academy**- Okanogan County has 2 communities, Brewster and Oroville who are participating in this project is funded through the USDA. This project was funded through the statewide competitive process. Discussions/Work begins in October 2021.

**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.

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

NCW Economic Development District

NCW Career Connect Leadership Team

NCW Workforce Development Council

Family Health Centers Board

CFNCW Helping Hands Grant Committee

Washington Economic Development Association