

The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting
December 1, 2021
Zoom Meeting

Attending Board Members:

Chris Branch, Chairman, Okanogan County Commissioners
Lael Duncan, 1st Vice Chairman, No County #1, OCCAC
Aaron Kester, No. County #2, Tonasket Natural Food Co-op
Anna Dalbey, Secretary, South County #2, Keller Williams Realty
Maria Lassila, Treasurer, Omak Mirage Theater
William Marchand, Colville Planning, CCT Rep
Julie Tate-Libby, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works

George Brady, Pt Chair, So Co Rep #2, Cascade Bio. Sply
Alan Fisher, Central County #2 Rep., CEO Mid Valley Hosp
Michael Porter, At Large #1, Omak School Superintendent
Rachelle Haven, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2, GCD Chamber
Kristi O’Neill, Central County #1 Rep., WorkSource
Amanda Jackson-Mott, Arts Comm. Rep., MAA

Absent Board Members:

Kurt Danison, 2nd Vice Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner
Lionel Marcell, At-Large #3, Red Rooster Restaurant
Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., Clerk of the Brd of Co. Commissioners
Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1 Representative
Vacant, Representative from Finance

Don Linnertz, MV #2, Twisp Works & Winthrop Chamber
Stacy Luckensmeyer, At-Large Representative #2, WVC
Jon Culp, Mayor of Okanogan, City Representative #2
Vacant, At-Large #2 Position
Vacant, Colville Tribal Federal Corp Representative

Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Econ. Alliance
Carolyn Davis, Admin Assistant, Econ. Alliance
Jennifer Howard, Econ Dev Specialist, Econ. Alliance
Sheila Corson, Okanogan Co. PUD
Karen Frisbie, Oroville Chamber

Beth Strohane, Small Business Owner
Adam Amundson, Assoc. Planner, CCT
Mike Mauk, Brewster Chamber
Meg Barton, Mid Valley Hospital

Chairman Chris Branch called the meeting to order. Addition or Changes to Agenda: No changes.

Consent Agenda: Lael Duncan made a motion to approve consent agenda (minutes 10/27/2021). George Brady seconded. Motion passed.

Reports

Executive Director Report – (see attachment #1) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the recent “Open House” for the new office went well. She thanked all the Board members that were able to attend. Lisa Brown, Washington State Director of the Department of Commerce was able to attend and talked about the importance of rural economic development. Julie Haven the Eastern Washington Department of Commerce representative also was able to attend. Commissioner Branch and Mayor Culp also were able to say a few words about the Economic Alliance and the move to the new location.

She reported that she was asked to present on the successes and challenges of economic development in rural Washington State. One meeting was with the TA Tuesday – Washington Technical Assistance Providers, the other was with the Coalition for Health Improvements (CHI). Both meetings had good discussion regarding economic development challenges, housing, childcare, health care, etc.

Financials – Current Balance Sheet and Income Statements were distributed to the Board prior to today’s meeting. We have submitted invoices for the two USDA grants and received payment back within two weeks. The Economic Alliance was not selected for the L&I Grant, it went to another state organization. We will have our 2022 Budget recommendation at our January meeting.

Business Education – Jennifer Farmer reported that she has been doing workshops in-person and virtually. So far, the attendance has been small, but it is increasing. Recent workshop included: Create Your Own Website;

Create an Etsy Shop; Facebook for Your Business; and Social Media 101. Upcoming workshops will include Time Management 101; Creating You Own Etsy shop; Creating an Ecommerce Site on Shopify; and Creating Your Own Website Using WordPress. These are scheduled for Tuesdays, from 9:00 a.m. to about noon. If anyone has any suggestions for topics of workshop, please let us know. All classes are free of charge. Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that things are a little different than originally planned because of Covid. People are still worried about meeting in person. She also asked what type of training opportunities are job seekers and employers looking for?

Infrastructure Committee -- Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she sent out a Doodle Poll to the committee to see when the best time to meeting in January would be. This will be to review and make changes to the application. She hopes to bring something back to the Board in March and then have the next prioritization of projects in June.

Abandoned/Vacant Building Sub-Committee – The committee will meet again on December 30 via Zoom and will again discuss what can be done about some of the vacant/abandoned buildings/houses in our county. Beth Stroshane would like an invite.

Motions

Board members whose terms will expire in 2021:

Kristi O’Niell, Central County #1	William Marchand, CCT Representative
Anna Dalbey, South County #2	Julie Tate-Libby, Methow Valley #1
Chris Branch, County Commissioner Representative #1	

Lael Duncan made a motion to approve the list of Board members as presented for a two-year term. Aaron Kester seconded. Motion passed.

Officers for the Economic Alliance (Executive Committee) are:

Lael Duncan, Chairman	George Brady, Secretary
Kurt Danison, 1 st Vice Chairman	Maria Lassila, Treasurer
Anna Dalbey, 2 nd Vice Chairman	Chris Branch, Past Chairman

Allan Fisher made a motion to seat the Economic Alliance officers as presented. Anna Dalby seconded. Motion passed.

The Economic Alliance also has several vacant positions on the Board currently:

Colville Tribal Federal Corporation Representative	Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1 Representative
Community Finance Representative	At Large Position Representative

Anna Dalby is working on securing a representative for the Community Finance position and Rachelle Haven is working on finding a representative for the vacant Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1 position. Beth Stroshane a local business owner is interested in the vacant At Large position. She spoke briefly about her business that she has recently moved back to the Omak area.

Discussion

Broadband Grant: The Methow Valley Broadband Action Team has joined the Okanogan County/CCT Broadband Action Team. The Broadband Committee has several grants available to further the work of having broadband in most of Okanogan County. Both the Tribe and the PUD submitted preliminary requests and were invited to submit full applications to the Washington State Broadband Office Infrastructure Acceleration Grant. This will cover the areas of Twisp, Pateros, Malott, and Crumbacher. “Fiber to the Premises” will be very expensive in some of our rural areas. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that she is gathering letters of support for these grants.

SBRTC Grant: See report under Business Education. The America Corp volunteer started in November. Jason Flores works on Tuesday and Thursday. He can act as interpreter and will be converting the workshops into Spanish. We are still trying to get the word out about the current Economic Alliance workshops. We need to let people know how to access our services.

Loomis Fire Station: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that a consultant has been hired and he did a tour of the area and met with local fire district members and hopes to have feedback as well as maps and addresses of residents. It is hoped to have this contract wrapped up by March 2022.

January Meeting: Roni Holder-Diefenbach asked if the Board preferred to meet in person in January or have another Zoom meeting or even a hybrid meeting (part in person and part via Zoom). We had originally decided to have quarterly meetings in person, but because of the variants of Covid she wasn't sure if we should meet in person. Lael Duncan made a motion to do January's meeting via Zoom or if wanted can meet in person at the Economic Alliance office. Julie Tate-Libby seconded. Motion passed.

Contract Update: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has reached out to the county, OCTC, etc. to get new contracts in place by the first of the year.

News & Member Updates:

Lael Duncan spoke about Washington State Low Income Housing Alliance and getting additional funding. She also felt that we need to have more vocational training i.e., carpenters.

Kristi O'Neill stated that the Youth Build Program didn't take off in our area at the time and invited anyone to help Lael Duncan & Kristi O'Neill to push forward with training programs.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she is the new chairman for the NCW Workforce Development Council and Lisa Romine is the new director replacing Dave Peterson. Becky Day is the local representative for youth programs and vocational programs at WorkSource.

Chris Branch shared information from the Association of Counties and incorporating mental health with other health care. If anyone is interested to learn more, please contact him.

Chris Branch also shared that the county has purchased a new building for superior court with ARPA funds. The superior county has currently been meeting in the Agriplex at the Fairgrounds. The new site (old Forest Service Building in Okanogan) will help with capacity issues and security. They hope to move in by the end of the year. They are also bonding some of the funds to upgrade the building as well as some other county buildings. They have sent out a request for proposals to manage the ARPA.

Lael Duncan also stated that Okanogan County Community Action Council (OCCAC) has funding available to help people that are behind in rent or for mortgage payments. They also have funds available to help with utilities. She also stated that OCCAC is looking to hire case managers.

Meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2022, via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Davis, Administrative Assistant



Here are a few of the highlights from the month of November and December:

- *Open House-We held our Open house on November 1st. Lisa Brown the director of the WA State Dept. of Commerce was attended, and I think it was a great opportunity for board and community members to network with her and Julia. Thank you to Maria for donating the Carmel corn! It was a great event.*
- *I was asked to present to the TA Tuesday-Washington Technical Assistance Providers who meet every Tuesday on Rural Economic Development and Julie Tate-Libby spoke about the work that Twisp Works and the LIN is doing.*
- *I also presented a snapshot to the local CHI on our economy and the workforce shortage in all industries but specifically the healthcare industry and the challenges that we are faced with Kristi, Allen, and other panel members.*
- **USDA Grants-**
 - *Small Business Resource and Tech Center-We submitted our 2nd billing for reimbursement, ordered more equipment and held our first 3 classes. Will submit a 3rd billing at the end of December.*
 - *Broadband Study-We will be completing our next billing for reimbursement at the end of December. The study should be completed by the end of March/April.*
 - *Loomis Fire Station-We met with the Loomis commissioners early in November and will continue working with the Consultant to help them get maps, addresses etc. so they can continue to move forward with the study.*
- **Broadband-** *Our next BAT meeting will be on December 30th from 2-3. At our last meeting we met with the Methow Valley BAT who have made the decision to join our BAT and work with us as we move forward with applications for infrastructure funding. (NTIA, WSBO, USDA)*
- **Grant Applications:** *We were not selected to receive the L&I grant. They selected statewide organizations to provide the services. We also expect to hear back in early December about the WA State Broadband Office Digital Navigator application. The Economic Alliance would subcontract with NCW Tech Alliance in the amount of \$25k to offer digital navigation services to our county.*

LOCAL/REGIONAL:

EA Website Update-*The website is finally up and going. We continue to make additions, this month we are adding the BAT meeting information and presentation information to the site. We will also be working on adding a page for the Small Business Resource and Tech Center.*

Downtown Academy- *In December Retail Academy will meet with the communities again to roll out the Strategic Plans that they pulled together after the community meetings.*

Okanogan County/CCT Broadband Action Team: *We will meet on December 30th as we moved our meetings to Thursdays to accommodate the County, and the Tribe.*

Abandoned Building Subcommittee-*the next meeting will be on December 30th at 10 am via zoom. If you are interested in participating, please let me know.*

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