

**The Economic Alliance**  
**Board Meeting**  
January 26, 2022  
Zoom Meeting

**Attending Board Members:**

Lael Duncan, Chairman, No County #1, OCCAC  
Kurt Danison, 1st Vice Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner  
Anna Dalbey, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair, So. County #2, Keller Williams Realty  
Chris Branch, Past Chairman, Okanogan County Commissioners  
Julie Tate-Libby, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works  
Amanda Jackson-Mott, Arts Comm. Rep., MAA

Kristi O'Neill, Central County #1 Rep., FYRE  
Alan Fisher, Central County #2 Rep., CEO Mid Valley Hosp  
Don Linnertz, MV #2, Twisp Chamber  
Michael Porter, At Large #1, Omak School Superintendent  
Jon Culp, Mayor of Okanogan, City Representative #2

**Absent Board Members:**

George Brady, Secretary, So Co Rep #2, Cascade Bio. Sply  
Maria Lassila, Treasurer, Omak Mirage Theater  
Stacey Luckensmeyer, At-Large Representative #2, WVC  
Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., Clerk of the Brd of Co. Commissioners  
Vacant, Colville Tribal Federal Corp Representative  
Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1 Representative

William Marchand, Colville Planning, CCT Rep  
Lionel Marcell, At-Large #3, Red Rooster Restaurant Stacy  
Aaron Kester, No. County #2, Tonasket Natural Food Co-op  
Rachelle Haven, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2, GCD Chamber  
Vacant, Representative from Finance  
Vacant, At-Large #2 Position

**Guests/Staff:**

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Econ. Alliance  
Carolyn Davis, Admin Assistant, Econ. Alliance  
Jennifer Howard, Econ Dev Specialist, Econ. Alliance  
Aaron Parrott, Career Connect Washington Network

Alyce Brown, NCW EDD  
Rachelle McClure  
Sue Kane, Career Connect Washington Network

Chairman Lael Duncan called the meeting to order. Addition or Changes to Agenda: No changes.

Consent Agenda: Chris Branch made a motion to approve consent agenda (minutes 12/1/21). Alan Fisher seconded. Motion passed.

**Reports**

Executive Director Report – (see attachment #1) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has met with the county commissioners and looked at the prioritization process. Also discussed the criteria for ARPA (America Rescue Plan Act) funds for match for some of the eligible prioritized projects ranked through the Infrastructure Committee.

She reported that she is doing time allocation for staff to reallocate time, trying to become more effective and efficient. She has been working with the PUD on Broadband funding/projects and grant applications. She has also been working with the consultant on the Loomis Firehall project. She recently met with Soo Ing-Moody, Mayor of Twisp and recently hired by the Department of Commerce as a Community Outreach Specialist covering the NCW region. She has also been working with the NCW EDD on the upcoming Economic Forum which will include a tech team of local people that will identify different funding opportunities for local projects.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also has been sitting in on weekly small business roundtable discussions with legislators to provide input on current bills coming to the legislature. Don Linnertz asked about possible funding/financing for small businesses or is this something for the future.

Still waiting for final decision and how ARPA funds can be used and how to access infrastructure funds to get out in rural areas and help renovate vacant buildings. Kurt Danison stated that cities might be afraid of all the paperwork involved and most cities are looking for help with programs where they might have to raise rates,

such as water/sewer. Anna Dalbey asked if ARPA funds can be used for the Retail Strategies to help build rural communities or if funds can be put into the general fund.

The Board Retreat is scheduled for February 23, 9 a.m. to Noon and Roni Holder-Diefenbach asked if the Board felt if this meeting should be a hybrid or just through Zoom. It was the consensus to do a Zoom meeting.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach will send out the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest form via Adobe Sign and asked Board member to sign and send back. These forms need to be done annually.

#### Guest Speaker:

Sue Kane, Career Connect Washington, spoke about this program. She reported that we have historically treated education and career separately. Career Connect Learning helps students explore, prep, and launch local opportunities. They build skills that could be on a resume. Today's jobs require training of some kind or education beyond high school. However, too many young people are leaving high school without ever having had the chance to explore actual jobs and career pathways and build the skills they will need to pursue those careers. Washington State has many employers who are unable to find people with the right training and qualifications and sometimes need to recruit from out of state. The state expects 740,000 job openings over the next five years – almost three quarters of which require a credential beyond high school. Career connected learning programs are a great way to educate students while exposing them to a variety of careers and real-world skills. Some general categories and examples: (1) Career Awareness and Exploration: Resources and events can provide early exposure to new jobs and industries. This can take many forms, including job fairs, guest speakers, job shadows, job-site tours. (2) Career Preparation: These programs give students hands-on experience with a particular business, career track or industry, and help them prepare to be hired in a professional setting. (3) Career Launch: The most intensive type of career connected learning program, Career Launch programs combine paid, meaningful work experiences with aligned classroom learning so students can receive a credential and become a competitive job candidate. This includes formal registered apprenticeships and Career Launch programs in the K-12, CTC, and 4-year systems.

Career connected learning doesn't force young people to commit to a career too soon; but it supports them as they explore careers and learn about the kinds of credentials and education, they'll need to achieve their goals. Career Connect Washington exists to close gaps by helping local young people get the knowledge and the skills to step into those in-demand, high-potential careers.

Lael Duncan stated that there is a need for construction workers program and/or apprenticeship and this would be a great thing. OCCAC has difficulties getting workers to help with their repairs and weatherization programs. Chris Branch stated that because of technology more skills are required than before. It was questioned if this information about Career Connect Washington was being conveyed to local high schools.

Financials – Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we ended the year very well and added funds to our reserve. A 2022 budget will be submitted to the Board at the February meeting.

Business Education – Jennifer Howard reported that she has still been doing workshops in-person and virtually. There are currently eight workshops in a slide deck. She has compiled workshop attendees into a mailing list and does send information out to them. She hopes to do workshops in Winthrop at new library and has spoken with the new Tech Center in Pateros. She has also made sure to get workshop information on community calendars. Jason Flores, America Corp volunteer, is working on translating workshops into Spanish. Jennifer Howard stated that she is also working increase the Economic Alliance's social media presence. If you haven't already done so, please "like" the Economic Alliance on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Infrastructure Committee -- Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that some of the committee did meet and reviewed the application and process. She hopes to get input from other committee members that couldn't attend the meeting and then present changes.

Abandoned/Vacant Building Sub-Committee – The committee met the end of December via Zoom and now has three separate directions to pursue. The committee will meet on Thursday January 27<sup>th</sup>. If you have any vacant buildings, please get the information about them to Jennifer. [jennifer@economic-alliance.com](mailto:jennifer@economic-alliance.com)

### Motions

New Grant Applications: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she is submitting a \$45,000 grant request to WSMA. This would add new services (webinars, industry expertise, lawyers, etc.) to the Economic Alliance's Small Business Resource & Technology Center. Funds would have to be spent by the end of June.

USDA – RDBG funds would be for Covid Response continued services and providing support.

USDA Broadband – would provide support for the Broadband efforts in Okanogan County.

Economic Development portion of ARPA funds: Roni Holder-Diefenbach submitted a request to the county commissioners for funding for businesses that had to shut down due to Covid. This would also provide Retail Strategies to all communities for one year and funding assistance for the SBRTC for two years.

Kurt Danison made a motion to approve the grant applications as outlined by Roni Holder-Diefenbach. Don Linnertz seconded. Motion passed.

At-large Board position #4. Beth Stroshane is interested in the position. She attended previous meetings. She has an engineering firm in Omak and graduated from Okanogan and now has kids in the Omak School District. Alan Fisher made a motion to seat Beth Stroshane to the vacant At-Large position #4. Kurt Danison seconded. Motion passed.

### Discussion

Broadband Grant: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the Broadband Acceleration Grant was not approved, but the Tribe did receive \$4 million for their application. Okanogan County was not considered a “distressed area” for the Rural Development Reconnect Grant.

Contract Update: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the PUD contract agreement is completed for 2022 and she is looking at an increase for 2023. Department of Commerce ADO contract is ongoing through June 2023 and Okanogan County contract is in the process. SBDC will probably not be signed until June, but we can continue to provide SBDC services and billings. She submitted a new budget a couple of weeks ago and was asked to move Lew Blakeney to a Senior Advisor.

### News & Member Updates:

Chris Branch spoke about the county ARPA funds, and they are looking at final ruling on how to use the funds. Economic impacts showed that sales tax receipts were up, and the public sector revenues was down. The draft proposal the commissioners are looking at for use of these funds:

Support Public Health – 15% -- \$1,230,000

Address Negative Economic Impacts – 20% -- \$1,640,000

Replace Lost Public Sector Revenues – 15% -- \$1,230,000

Provide Preliminary Pay for Essential Workers – 10% -- \$820,000

Invest in Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure – 40% -- \$3,280,000

Total funds \$8,200,000

There are so many areas of need and he felt that there will be changes to these figures especially under the Replace Lost Public Sector Revenues. He would like to hear any comments, and everyone is welcome to provide input. The extended reporting and finalized amount will be April 30, 2022.

Kurt Danison made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jon Culp seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for February 23, 2022, via Zoom and is the Board Retreat 9 - noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Davis, Administrative Assistant



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Executive Director Report

December 21/January 22

**Executive Director:**

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

Office Reorganization, I am having the staff complete a time allocation spreadsheet to determine if we are allocating time and resources correctly and I will be updating job descriptions to match the duties and responsibilities that they are currently doing. This will be presented in February along with the budget.

The Economic Alliance is currently working on two USDA Grants, the Small Business Resource and Tech Center and the Broadband Study. In January workshops include Time Management 101, Facebook for Your Business, social media 101, and Building Your Brand. The Broadband Study should be completed by the end of March/April. We submitted our 3<sup>rd</sup> draw for reimbursement and completed our quarterly reports. We will be applying for 2 more USDA grants for 2022-2023.

We currently continue to work on the Counties USDA Grant for the Loomis Fire District and are working with the contractor to get updates and to provide assistance as needed. This month the community survey has been distributed and the consultant will provide an update after the closing date to let us know if they received enough surveys or if they need additional assistance in community outreach.

In December I met with the County Commissioners and per their request has contacted all the 2022 public infrastructure prioritized projects ranked that are eligible for ARPA funding to get an update on the status of their projects. I received the information and sent the updates to the County Commissioners for their review.

The Economic Alliance's Abandoned Building Subcommittee held a second meeting with those concerned about some of Okanogan County's abandoned and vacant buildings/properties. A follow up meeting is scheduled for January 27th.

The Economic Alliance was not selected to receive the L&I grant. They selected statewide organizations to provide the services that were requested. We will be applying for a WSMA Technical Assistance grant in January.

The Economic Alliance's Executive Director is currently 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

Washington Economic Development Association