

The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting
March 23, 2022
Zoom Meeting

Attending Board Members:

Kurt Danison, 1st Vice Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner
Anna Dalbey, 2nd Vice Chair, So. County #2, Keller Williams Realty
Maria Lassila, Treasurer, Omak Mirage Theater
George Brady, Secretary, So Co Rep #2, Cascade Bio. Sply
Rachelle Haven, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2, GCD Chamber

Julie Tate-Libby, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works
Don Linnertz, MV #2, Twisp Chamber
Alan Fisher, Central County #2 Rep., CEO Mid Valley Hosp
Aaron Kester, No. Co #2, Tonasket Nat'l Food Co-op
Michael Porter, At-Large #1, Omak School Super.

Absent Board Members:

Lael Duncan, Chairman, No. County #1, OCCAC
Chris Branch, Past Chairman, Okanogan County Commissioners
Kristi O'Neill, Central County #1 Rep., FYRE
Lionel Marcell, At-Large #3, Red Rooster Restaurant
Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., Ck of the Brd Co. Commissioners
Vacant, At-Large Rep. #2
Vacant, Representative from Finance

William Marchand, Colville Planning, CCT Rep
Beth Stroshane, Applied Bldg Information, At-Large #4
Amanda Jackson-Mott, Arts Community Rep., MAA
Jon Culp, Mayor of Okanogan, City Rep #2
Vacant, Colville Tribal Federal Corp Representative
Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1 Representative
Vacant, City Representative #2

Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Econ. Alliance
Carolyn Davis, Econ. Alliance
Jennifer Howard, Econ Dev Specialist, Econ. Alliance
Sheila Corsen, Okanogan Co. PUD

Cindy Simpson, WA Federal Bank
Rob Gillispie, City of Okanogan Council
Sarah Brown, Ex. Director, Twisp Works
Mike Mauk, Brewster Chamber

2nd Vice Chairman Anna Dalbey called the meeting to order. Addition or Changes to Agenda: No changes.

Consent Agenda: George Brady made a motion to approve consent agenda (minutes 2/23/22). Kurt Danison seconded. Motion passed.

Presentation

Roni Holder-Diefenbach gave brief presentation on the recently purchased subscription for software program – JobsEQ. This program will provide the labor market software, consulting, and data. She and Jennifer Howard will be getting training on this program, but she has started to play around with it a little and has been able to find some industry reports. It is good for information about education, workforce, and economic development. It will provide information on top local industries, which local businesses employ the most people, your local talent pool's skills, occupations, and demographics, and real-time data on who's hiring. It can run a snapshot of an industry and can also sort by NASIC codes, identify high growth, high wage occupations and can break things down by zip code. It can also do forecasting and projecting. The information is the most up to date that she has seen. It can also project information, so if a large employer were to locate in the county, it could show what would be the impact on the local economy. She is excited to start using the program and getting some reports.

Reports

Executive Director: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the Economic Alliance partnered with the NCW EDD and participated in the NCW Economic Development Forum, which was held yesterday via Zoom. This forum allowed those that attended to develop a new relationship with either a small business team or a community and public infrastructure team. There were funding representatives (i.e., Cerb) available to answer questions and provide input for individual projects. Putting this event together was very time consuming and

she worked closely with Alyce Brown, Executive Director for the NCW EDD. The networking after the event is very important. There were some technical difficulties, but overall, it was a very good event.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also reported that she has been working on Board member recruitment. She invited Cindy Simpson with Washington Federal Bank in Omak to the meeting today and Rob Gillespie with the city of Okanogan. Jon Culp has resigned his position as city representative and has suggested that Mr. Gillespie take his place. Roni Holder-Diefenbach asked both Cindy Simpson and Rob Gillespie to give a brief overview of themselves and why they wanted to be on the Board. Ms. Simpson stated that she is the branch manager of Washington Federal Bank in Omak. She moved to Washington in 1994 and would like to help our community grow. Mr. Gillespie stated that he is on the Okanogan city council since last fall and works for the Okanogan County PUD. He has been a state auditor in the past and is an alumnus of Gonzaga University. He would like to see our county become more economically viable for our residents.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach was invited by the county commissioners to present information on the local economy, the .09 dollars and sales tax revenues to the Bond Rating Committee. This information is used to help determine the county's credit rating for bonds. She felt it was a really great experience.

Financials: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we still do not have a signed contract with the SBDC for 2022, hopefully will have one by June. We did receive payment from the 4th quarter 2021 the end of February. Because of the carry over, our financial situation looks good right now.

Business Education: Jennifer Howard reported that classes for the Small Business Resource & Technology Center are still taking place each Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. In April there will be some changes and she will be offering classes on Tuesday mornings as well as Thursday evenings. She has been getting the word out with flyers and she is also attending local chamber meetings, as well as postings on social media.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the committee met last month and is in the process of updating the application to make it easier for the applicant and for those who listen to presentation and do the ranking. It will be in an Adobe form which will shorten and simplify the application.

Latino Business Network: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported about forming a new sub committee in April and will be holding public meetings in conjunction with WorkSource. If there is an interest, then we can determine the strategies, goals and what the group can work on together. It hopefully can bring the resources that are needed together.

Vacant Building Subcommittee: Don Linnertz reported that the committee met and in the Methow they are working on how to market the empty buildings and creating tools that owners can use if they want to market their building. They want to drive prospective buyers/renters to the Economic Alliance web site for a list of potential buildings and to also drive prospective owners with property and buildings for sale and/or lease to share their properties on the web site. Next meeting is scheduled for March 31, 10:00 via Zoom.

Motions

WSMA: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we received approval of a \$25,000 grant from Washington State Microenterprises Association. This is to provide training, technical assistance and information about access to financing. This contract ends June 16, 2022. Don Linnertz made a motion to approve signing this grant. George Brady seconded. Motion passed.

L&I Grant: This grant with Department of Labor & Industries was resubmitted and awarded for a two-year contract for \$30,000. This is to distribute L&I information, market L&I services, etc. Will get a contract back and signed and will start April 1, 2022. George Brady made a motion to approve the L&I contract, Kurt Danison seconded. Motion passed.

Discussion

Broadband Grant: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the Economic Alliance does not get any funds for assisting with this contract. All the funds go to consultant. They have been working on a grant to Washington State Broadband Office for an Infrastructure Acceleration project for the north county area. She has spoken with the Tribe, and they might be able to provide some administration funding for the Economic Alliance for the Broadband Action Team project.

Loomis Fire Station: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that they held a meeting in Loomis with the consultant last week. He proposed a \$2.5 million conceptual design for this project. The committee had to be very blunt with him and told him the community could not afford such a project. He is to go back and make changes and revisions and then present again to the committee something that is more realistic for this small community.

CERB Board Position: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that George Brady's position on the CERB is ending, and he had encouraged Roni Holder-Diefenbach to apply for this position. He felt it was very important to maintain someone from our area on this Board. George Brady has been on the Board for six years and we all thank him for his commitment to serve on this important Board and represent Okanogan County.

Contracts

Ron Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has a meeting this afternoon with the county commissioners regarding ARPA funds. They are still trying to figure out how to spend this funding. Our prioritization process is being used to look at projects in the county. They have also determined that they will not fully fund any project but could provide funds that would help a project get additional funds for other sources. She had to go back and resubmit applications for the Economic Alliance's funding requests that answered questions about how our projects (SBTRC and Retail Strategies) fit in under the guidelines.

Upcoming meetings: Roni Holder-Diefenbach will be attending a Workforce Development Council Conference in Washington D.C. on April 11 – 15.

Kurt Danison made a motion to adjourn the meeting. George Brady seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned 12:25.

Next meeting is scheduled for April 27, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Davis



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Executive Director Report

March 2022

Executive Director:

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

This month I attended the WEDA conference in Olympia and assisted with the Legislative Reception. This was a great conference, and we were happy to be there as a partner in an award that the NCW EDD received for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for their Backing Small NCW program. When I got back, I attended a Family Health Center 2-day retreat at Sun Mountain Lodge.

During the month of March, we continued to work on the outreach for the Technical Assistance Forum that we partnered with the NCW EDD to put on. This forum had 2 separate tech team tracts 1 for Community and Public Infrastructure Projects and another for Small Business Access to Capital and Resources. Roni facilitated the Community and Public Facility Tech Team which had 14 projects that presented to the funding panels. The panels were made up of federal and state funding sources.

The Economic Alliance submitted the application to the USDA Business Support Grant and was asked to submit an updated proposal to L&I as they want to fund our organization with a few changes. We will also submit a grant to the Community Foundation of NCW by the end of the month and are still working with the County Commissioners on our ARPA requests. We were awarded 25k from WSMA and have 3 months to complete items in the scope of work.

We are continuing to work on the Counties USDA Grant for the Loomis Fire District. This month we attended a community meeting in Loomis where they presented their first draft of the feasibility study. The meeting was a great start for discussion and the community shared their concerns regarding the scope of the project that the consultant had proposed. We will be meeting again to go over the 2nd draft with Fire Commissioners and the Consultant before the next community meeting. We also assisted them in preparing to present to the Tech Team panel at the TA Forum.

The Economic Alliance's Abandoned Building Subcommittee held a meeting with those concerned about some of Okanogan County's abandoned and vacant buildings/properties. Don Linnertz and his subcommittee are working on some ideas regarding promotion of the properties using our website. The Economic Alliance Infrastructure Committee also met in March and reviewed the 2nd draft of a new updated application. We will meet again in April to review the next draft.

The Economic Alliance's Executive Director is currently representing the Economic Alliance on the following boards:

NCW Economic Development District
NCW Workforce Development Council
Washington Economic Development Association

NCW Career Connect Leadership Team
Family Health Centers Board