

The Economic Alliance Board Meeting

April 27, 2022

Zoom Meeting

Attending Board Members:

Lael Duncan, Chairman, No. County #1, OCCAC
Chris Branch, Past Chairman, Okanogan County Commissioners
Kurt Danison, 1st Vice Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner
Anna Dalbey, 2nd Vice Chair, So. County #2, Keller Williams Realty
Alan Fisher, Central County #2 Rep., CEO Mid Valley Hosp

Amanda Jackson-Mott, Arts Community Rep., MAA
Julie Tate-Libby, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works
Don Linnertz, MV #2, Twisp Chamber
Aaron Kester, No. Co #2, Tonasket Nat'l Food Co-op
Kristi O'Neill, Central County #1 Rep., FYRE

Absent Board Members:

Maria Lassila, Treasurer, Omak Mirage Theater
George Brady, Secretary, So Co Rep #2, Cascade Bio. Sply
Michael Porter, At-Large #1, Omak School Super.
Lionel Marcell, At-Large #3, Red Rooster Restaurant
Vacant, Colville Tribal Federal Corp Representative
Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1 Representative
Vacant, Representative from Finance

William Marchand, Colville Planning, CCT Rep
Beth Strohane, Applied Bldg Information, At-Large #4
Rachelle Haven, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2, GCD Chamber
Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., Ck of the Brd Co. Commissioners
Vacant, At-Large Rep. #2
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
Justine Salazar, WorkSource

Cindy Simpson, WA Federal Bank
Heidi Ott, Worksource
Sarah Brown, Ex. Director, Twisp Works
Monica Garza, WorkSource
Rachel McClure, Rep. Dan Newhouse Office

Chairman Lael Duncan called the meeting to order. Addition or Changes to Agenda: Correct date to April 27, instead of April 22.

Consent Agenda: Anna Marie Dalbey made a motion to approve consent agenda (minutes 3/23/22). Alan Fisher seconded. Motion passed.

Presentation

No presentation this month

Reports

Executive Director: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she was able to attend the National Association of Workforce Boards conference in Washington D.C. the week of April 11th. Topics included economic development and workforce working together. She is now chairman of the NCW Workforce Development Council, that covers Okanogan, Chelan, Douglas, and Adams Counties. They are dealing with some of the same issues that others across the country are dealing with.

The Latino Small Business Network program was kicked off with Jason Flores, our AmeriCorps volunteer, and Roni Holder-Diefenbach scheduling meetings to meet with Latino businesses in south, central and north county. Both Jason Flores and Monica Garza, with WorkSource, have been a huge help in marketing the meetings and getting the word out about the program. The Economic Alliance also sent out postcards to all the Latino businesses who participated in our survey last year and who received grants during COVID. We held the first two meetings which has had minimal attendance due to the time we scheduled the meeting which we found out after the event, but we have gathered some good information from those who have been in attendance. Our last meeting is scheduled for April 28 in Tonasket. There is a lot of misinformation about businesses services in our area as well as communication barriers, and it is going to take more outreach to make the impact we want.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also did the first in a series of Business 101 “Interview with the Expert”. This was held via Facebook Live and was held with a representative with Washington Federal to discuss financing for small businesses. It is recorded and Jason Flores was able to also do the interview in Spanish. These short interviews will be uploaded on YouTube for people to access later if they want. The next interview will be with marketing professional, Jenn Tate with Earth and Sky Studios. Also lined up are Aleesha Roedel to discuss government contracting and attorney Bess Derting to discuss legal aspects for a business. We also hope to have someone speak about cottage industries from the Public Health District. We are also in discussions with Roxanne Best to do some classes in person on business startup.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the work with the county’s USDA grant for the Loomis Fire District has been completed. A final community meeting was held in Loomis with the consultant and a follow up meeting with the County Commissioners was held to present the final feasibility study. The Economic Alliance will continue to work with the county to close out the contract and with the Loomis Fire District to strategize the next steps.

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. The funds that show on the financial under SBDC are from last quarter of 2021. We are continuing to build up or reserve funds. Roni Holder-Diefenbach will be submitting another billing to USDA at the end of the month. Our financial situation looks good right now. Roni Holder-Diefenbach had an interview with the Community Foundation yesterday about a grant that would be for operations of the Economic Alliance.

Business Education: Jennifer Howard reported that she has been trying to attend more Chamber meetings. She was in Grand Coulee Dam last week and also attended the Okanogan and Omak Chambers. She is still reaching out to local businesses regarding the classes for the Small Business Resource & Technology Center that take place each Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. She did make some changes and is now offering the classes on Thursday evening also. She can also do a one-on-one teaching if someone wants. She has also been showcasing one vacant building a week on the Economic Alliance web site and on social media. The Economic Alliance’s Small Business Resource and Technology Center also has equipment for businesses to check out if they would like.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the committee was not able to meet this month but will meet in May to discuss the updated application. They hope to have the application broken down, so the cities know what they are requesting. We will start to accept application in August.

Vacant Building Subcommittee: Next meeting is scheduled for April 28, 10:00 via Zoom. Don Linnertz reported that his portion of the subcommittee are working on how to market the empty buildings and creating tools that owners can use if they want to market their building. George Brady has suggested fining building owners when they are not doing anything with their building. Fines would start out small and increase when there is no response or activity on the site. Need something to give owners an incentive to get their building rented or leased or at least clean it up.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported on the Oroville’s Downtown Strategies downtown plan. There were recommendations to set-aside 3 - 5% of the ARPA dollars for economic development. There are suggestions to do a matching program for business owners to fix up their buildings and do façade improvements. The cities concern was they were not sure how it would be sustained after the ARPA funds were depleted. There is a need to educate the community on the reasons to take care of the downtown area. Julie Libby Tate has created a brochure that business owners could use. Jennifer Howard had posted the Chesaw Bar & Grill on social media and got an immediate response from someone that is interested. We need to make sure we let people know that

the Economic Alliance is not a real estate agent and do not sell properties. Chris Branch reported that he met with the city of Okanogan regarding Homelessness and vacant buildings.

Motions

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has been working on Board member recruitment. Cindy Simpson with Washington Federal Bank in Omak and Rob Gillespie with the city of Okanogan, both attended last month's Board meeting. Mr. Gillespie was unable to attend today's meeting. Kurt Danison made a motion to seat Cindy Simpson to the current vacant Financial Representative position (expires in 2023) and Rob Gillespie to the current vacant City Representative #2 position (expires in 2022). Anna Marie Dalbey seconded. Motion passed.

We still have the At-Large #2 position, the Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1 position, and the representative from CTFC vacant.

Discussion

Broadband Grant: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that they are still meeting monthly and are waiting on a couple of grant sources. The CCT said they could possibly have funds available to continue to work with the consultants to keep the work going. The current grant will be complete in April or May. The Okanogan Electric Co-op is also still working with their consultant.

CERB Board Position: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has applied for a position on the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB), this would be to replace George Brady, who has been on the Board for six years. George Brady felt it was very important to maintain someone from our area on this Board.

Contracts

No updates.

Kurt Danison made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Anna Dalbey seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned 12:08.

Next meeting is scheduled for May 25, 2022 via zoom

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Davis



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
Executive Director Report

April 2022

Executive Director:

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

This month I attended the National Association of Workforce Boards conference in Washington D.C. This was a great conference; I was happy to attend as the chair of the NCW Workforce Development Board. This conference had a lot of information about the dealing with the great resignation, how economic and workforce development go hand in hand and information on board strategies and make up can impact the local areas.

During the month of April, we worked on outreach for the Latino Small Business Network. Jason, our AmeriCorps volunteer, and I visited several businesses in the south, central and north county together. We also sent out post cards to all the businesses who participated in our survey last year, and who received grants during COVID. To date we have had 2 of the meetings and have one more on the 28th. We have gathered some good input and will be working on scheduling another meeting soon which we hope to have more in attendance.

The Economic Alliance held it's first Business 101-Interview with the expert: Small Business Lending via Facebook Live. This will be a biweekly event where we will interview a local industry expert in both English and Spanish on Facebook which will allow for questions from our audience. We will then upload the videos to YouTube and establish a library accessible on our website for businesses to access at their convenience. The goal is to ask 5-8 of the most common questions that the expert receives and answer them online in under a ½ hour. We will be interviewing and have scheduled Jenn Tate, Marketing, Aleesha Roedel, Government Contracting, Bess Derting Attorney.

We are still waiting to hear back on our application that was submitted to the USDA Business Support Grant and our updated proposal to L&I was funded for 2 years and 30,000 to help them with their communications. We met with the interview team for the Community Foundation of NCW and should know by the 17th of May if we were funded. We are still working with the County Commissioners on our ARPA requests.

We are continuing to work on the Counties USDA Grant for the Loomis Fire District. This month we attended the final community meeting in Loomis where they presented the final draft of the feasibility study. On the 19th we met with the County Commissioners and presented the final document to them. We will work with the county to close the USDA grant out and continue to work with the Loomis fire district to strategize on the next steps.

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
Pine Meadows Senior Housing Board