

The Economic Alliance Board Meeting

May 25, 2022

Zoom Meeting

Attending Board Members:

Lael Duncan, Chairman, No. County #1, OCCAC
Chris Branch, Past Chairman, Okanogan County Commissioners
Maria Lassila, Treasurer, Omak Mirage Theater
Anna Dalbey, 2nd Vice Chair, So. County #2, Keller Williams Realty
Alan Fisher, Central County #2 Rep., CEO Mid Valley Hosp
George Brady, Secretary, So Co Rep #2, Cascade Bio. Sply

Beth Stroshane, Applied Bldg Information, At-Large #4
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
Rob Gillespie, City of Okanogan Cty Council

Absent Board Members:

Kurt Danison, 1st Vice Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner
Michael Porter, At-Large #1, Omak School Super.
Julie Tate-Libby, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works
Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., Ck of the Brd Co. Commissioners
Amanda Jackson-Mott, Arts Community Rep., MAA
Vacant, At-Large Rep. #2

William Marchand, Colville Planning, CCT Rep
Rachelle Haven, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2, GCD Chamber
Lionel Marcell, At-Large #3, Red Rooster Restaurant
Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep., WA Federal Bank
Vacant, Colville Tribal Federal Corp Representative
Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1 Representative

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
Helen Price-Johnson, State Director USDA
Phillip Eggman, USDA

Lew Blakeney, SBDC/Economic Alliance
Heidi Ott, Worksource
Sarah Brown, Ex. Director, Twisp Works
Rachel McClure, Rep. Dan Newhouse Office
Winnie Adams, Mid Valley Hospital

Chairman Lael Duncan called the meeting to order. Addition or Changes to Agenda: None

Consent Agenda: Don Linnertz made a motion to approve consent agenda (minutes 4/27/22). George Brady seconded. Motion passed.

Presentation

Helen Price Johnson, Washington State Director, USDA Rural Development, gave an overview of programs offered by USDA Rural Development. They are about helping communities thrive. They have 40 employees in Washington State and area offices in Spokane, Wenatchee, Yakima, Mt. Vernon, and Port Angeles and the state office headquarters in Olympia. They are just now starting to come back into the office but can still do online and through phone meetings. There are 60 financial assistance programs for a variety of rural applications in housing, business, renewable energy, and critical infrastructure. If they don't have a program available, they try to partner with other state and federal programs. They want to hear back from local communities on how to improve programs and services. 2022 priorities include (1) assist rural communities recover economically from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic (2) ensure all rural residents have equitable access to Rural Development programs and benefits from Rural Development funded projects; (3) reduce climate pollution and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities. The people at Rural Development work very hard to assist everyone and that is why they are doing these meetings around the state and gathering information to share with the National Office in Washington D.C.

Alan Fisher stated that the paperwork is very cumbersome and way too much of it. The match needed for a small rural hospital like Omak is enormous, way more than they could afford. There is lots of work to put grants together. Don Linnertz thought that having someone from USDA at the Okanogan County Prioritization Process to listen to the various presentations might give them more insight into a project. He also stated that one barrier to funding was that it is a challenge for a small organization to track expenses and complete the

reports that are needed. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that USDA does attend the IACC conference that is held each year in Wenatchee to talk to various project proponents. Beth Stroshane asked if there was a resource to help fill out applications. How can we connect to those that have filled out applications and are familiar with the process? Sheila Corsen asked if USDA can provide grant writing/training or workshops. A lot of staff time/training is needed to prepare a successful grant application. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that the Economic Alliance can assist on a limited basis and Mika McLean, with USDA, has been very helpful. Kurt Danison has been successful with writing grants for feasibility studies. Is there a chance at having a designation between “Rural Washington” and “Remote Washington” communities? The population density of Okanogan County is only eight people per square mile, which has been a problem for the Broadband grant requests.

Reports

Executive Director: (see attachment #1) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she was able to attend the Washington Economic Development Association Board Retreat in Ellensburg. She felt this was a great retreat as there was a lot of focus on rural economic development. They also discussed priorities for the next legislative session which includes asking for increased funding for ADOs. The Economic Alliance also sent out a 2022 Small Business Survey which was sent to all our current clients as well as local chambers. This survey was offered in English and Spanish and Jason our AmeriCorps volunteer has been going to the Latino small businesses to work with them on the survey to get their input. This survey will help us determine what workshops, services, and needs those businesses currently have post Covid.

The Economic Alliance held several Business 101 Interviews with the Expert via Facebook Live. This month we had Jenn Tate speak on Small Business Marketing, Alysha Roedel on Government Contracting and Patrick Dunn on Cottage Industry/Farmers Markets. On May 31st we will hear from Roxanne Best, Trainer and Business Owner and she will speak about the upcoming small business workshops “Business 101” and “Photography for Your Business”. These workshops are free, but we do need people to register.

Financials: Our financial situation looks good right now and we are continuing to build up our reserve funds. Roni Holder-Diefenbach did sign the ARPA contract with the county today and we are still waiting for SBDC contract to be signed, so we can bill them for the first two quarters. The Labor & Industries contract starts this month and lasts for one year.

Business Education: Jennifer Howard reported that she has been trying to attend more Chamber meetings and Chamber events. She will be attending the Job Fair in Brewster on June 7th, the Omak Block Party on June 18. She is starting to review surveys to get an idea of what businesses want. Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she and Alyce Brown with the EDD recently attended the Okanogan Farmers Market to distribute information on various programs.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the committee met this month and reviewed the application and are still waiting for feedback from a couple of committee members. The final will be presented to the Board in June. We will start to accept application in August.

The Latino Small Business Network: Jason Flores, our AmeriCorps volunteer, has been going out and meeting one-on-one 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.

Vacant Building Subcommittee: Next meeting is scheduled for May 26, 10:00 via Zoom. Still working on and discussing the possibility of fining/taxing vacant building owners if their property stays vacant for a long time. Also still gathering information on vacant building and land for the data base.

Motions

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has been working on Board member recruitment. Julie Tate-Libby has officially resigned her position with TwispWorks and from the Economic Alliance Board. Sarah Brown, new Executive Director of TwispWorks, would like to take her place on the Economic Alliance Board. She has attended the meeting the last couple of months. Don Linnertz made a motion to seat Sarah Brown to the vacant Methow Valley #1 Board position term that will expire in 2024. Chris Branch seconded. Motion passed.

Winnie Adams will be taking over as interim CEO of Mid Valley Hospital when Alan Fisher retires. She would also like to take Alan Fisher's position (Central County Representative #2) on the Economic Alliance Board. She has been a nurse for 31 years in a leadership position and will be the temporary CEO when Mr. Fisher leaves.

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 the Broadband grant ends June 16. The Tribe's Cedar Fund contributing is still a possibility. We will have a significant problem if the consultants aren't funded as we move forward with grant applications as the PUD does not have funding to pay them. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that she reached out to the state Broadband Office to see if there is any funding available to continue the work, but they stated they didn't have any funds. The Economic Alliance will continue to facilitate the BAT.

Loomis Fire Station: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the plan is now finished, and they need to identify property and purchase it before they can move forward.

CERB Board Position: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she should hear back soon on whether she is accepted for the vacant CERB Board Position. Janae Delk, Executive Director for CERB and her staff will be here on June 9.

Contracts

The SBDC will be doing a financial review of 2021 contract on June 9.

WSMA was awarded and will end June 20.

L&I grant – Starts this month and last one year.

ARPA – Signed contract with the county for funding for the Retail Strategies for one year and Business Services for two years.

USDA – submitted grant request for \$60,000

CFNCW – The Community Foundation of NCW awarded a Regional Impact Grant to the Economic Alliance for \$10,000.

Meeting adjourned 12:30.

Next meeting is scheduled for June 22, 2022, in person at Magoo's Restaurant in Omak.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Executive Director Report

May 2022

Executive Director:

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

This month I attended the Washington Economic Development Association Board Retreat in Ellensburg. This was a great retreat as there was a lot of focus on rural economic development and how the state can focus on including organizations and groups that support small rural businesses more. There was also discussion regarding the priorities for the next legislative session which includes an ask for an ADO increase in funding.

During the month of May, we rolled out our 2022 Small Business Survey which we sent to all our current clients and sent to all the chambers of commerce to distribute. This survey is offered in English and Spanish and Jason our AmeriCorps volunteer is going to the Latino Small businesses directly to work with them on the survey to get their input. This survey will help us as we determine what workshops, services and needs the businesses currently have post covid. IT will also help us in our scheduling of different programs as we want to offer programs that work within the small businesses schedule.

The Economic Alliance held several Business 101-Interview with the expert via Facebook Live. This month we had Jenn Tate speak on Small Business Marketing, Alysha Roedel on Government Contracting and Patrick Dunn on Cottage Industry, Farmers Markets. 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. On May 31st we will hear from Roxanne Best, Trainer and Business Owner and she will speak about the upcoming small business workshops Bus 101 and Photography for your business.

This month we met with Partners for Rural Washington and invited them to our next board meeting to talk about the work that they are doing in rural Washington. We hope to get them on the schedule for June. We also met with CERB and invited them out to meet with communities at the EA office on June 9th from 9-11am. The SBDC will be sending out a financial review team to conduct a review on June 9th from 12:30-3:30.

We heard back from the NCW Community Foundation that we were one of the organizations that were awarded funding for the Regional Impact Grant in the amount of 10k. We also received our final Contract for signature from L&I which will be a 1-year contract in the amount of 30k. We are just waiting to hear back from USDA in regard to our current technical assistance application in the amount of 60k that will be from June 22-June 23, and we should have signed ARPA county contracts today.

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