

**The Economic Alliance**  
**Board Meeting**  
January 25, 2023  
VIA Zoom

**Attending Board Members:**

Kurt Danison, Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner  
Anna Dalbey, 1st Vice Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty  
Maria Lassila, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair, Omak Mirage Theater  
Beth Stroshane, Applied Bldg Information, At-Large #4  
Sarah Brown, Ex. Director, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works

Lael Duncan, Past Chairman, No. County #1, OCCAC  
George Brady, Secretary, So Co Rep #2, Cascade Bio. Supply  
Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep., WA Federal Bank  
Don Linnertz, MV #2, Twisp Chamber

**Absent Board Members:**

Chris Branch, Treasurer, Okanogan County Commissioners  
Kristi O'Neill, Central County #1 Rep., FYRE  
Rachelle Haven, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2, GCD Chamber  
Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., Ck of the Brd Co. Commissioners  
William Marchand, Colville Planning, CCT Rep  
Vacant, At-Large Rep. #2  
Vacant, At-Large Rep #5

Michael Porter, At-Large #1, Omak School Super.  
Rob Gillespie, City of Okanogan Cty Council  
Aaron Kester, No. Co #2, Tonasket Nat'l Food Co-op  
Amanda Jackson-Mott, Arts Community Rep., MAA  
Vacant, Colville Tribal Federal Corp Representative  
Vacant, At-Large Rep #3  
Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1 Representative

**Guests/Staff:**

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Econ. Alliance  
Carolyn Davis, Program Assistant, Econ. Alliance  
Shelia Corson, Okanogan County PUD

Leonel Marcial, Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance  
Rachel McClure, Rep. Newhouse Office

Chairman Kurt Danison called the meeting to order and asked everyone to write in the chat their name and affiliation.

Consent Agenda: Anna Dalby made a motion to approve consent agenda (minutes 12.7.22). Beth Stroshane seconded. Motion passed.

**Reports**

Executive Director Report: Roni Holder-Diefenbach share her monthly report (see attachment #1). She reported that the Economic Alliance rolled out the Okanogan County Small Business Support Grant and deadline for submittal was December 31, 2022. We received 30 applications, but 9 of those did not complete the application or provide all the necessary backup information. Twenty-one were funded for a total of \$105,000. She reviewed all the documents and made sure these businesses were impacted by Covid. A billing has been submitted to the county for reimbursement from their ARPA funds. Jennifer Howard left the Economic Alliance as of the end of November and Roni Holder-Diefenbach put an ad in all the local papers, but only received two applications. She plans to re-advertise this position. In the meantime, an independent contractor will be hired to fulfil our contract obligations and to do workshops.

A meeting was held with the county commissioners to discuss the .09 Infrastructure Funds. There should be funds to allocate for projects in 2024. She hopes to meet again with the county and the cities to discuss the future and the process for allocating these funds. The county commissioners now think that county projects should also be submitted for prioritization like every other project. This year the NCW EDD did adopt our prioritized list of projects and the top three member projects will be able to access a grant writer.

Financials: Balance Sheet and Income Statement were shared as of December 2023. Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that accounts receivable should come in prior to the next meeting. Fiscal year end had a balance of \$257,437.

Infrastructure Committee: Discussed under Executive Director Report.

Business Education/Communications: There are several workshops coming up in February, Social Media Marketing scheduled for February 9<sup>th</sup> with Shelia Corson, 5:30 to 7:30. Shelia Corson is also doing the

“Interview with the Expert” on February 2, 1:30 to 2:15 about Social Media. A workshop about L&I Updates for general contractors/construction is scheduled for February 16, 1:30 to 3:00 and a workshop Access to Capital, 10 – Noon is scheduled for February 23. There is also a workshop scheduled for March 14, 1:30 to 3:00 about Minor Work Regulations, Resources and Requirements for Employers. These are all scheduled for in-person or via Zoom. All these workshops will be recorded so people can watch at a later date.

Don Linnertz asked about the Retail Strategies report. Roni Holder-Diefenbach suggested that he speak with them directly. The data is accessible for all the communities on the Economic Alliance web site.

Business Outreach: Leonel Marcial has been attending the local chamber meetings to promote the services of the Economic Alliance and has been visiting with businesses. A lot of businesses that he has met with didn't know about the L&I information posters that they need to have in their place of business. Beth Stroshane asked if L&I gives any direction on remote workers. She knew there were special directions but didn't know what they were. Maria Lassila wanted to know if there was a checklist for employers to follow. Roni Holder-Diefenbach said she would check. Roni Holder-Diefenbach will send out a PowerPoint presentation to the Board.

Vacant Building Subcommittee: This committee is going to start back up in February, they wanted to wait until the Retail Strategies reports were completed. There has been lots of discussion in the Omak/Okanogan area about vacant buildings. Next meeting is scheduled for February 23 at 10:00 a.m. Kurt Danison stated that it is a financial burden to the city to have to clean up a vacant building that has been burned or has fallen down. Code Enforcement needs to have some funds attached to the codes to help with the cost.

### **Discussion**

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she is still working on getting a speaker to discuss development of a Port District in Okanogan County.

Broadband Action Team: The legislature has allocated funds to the state Broadband office for WSU to come out to help communities that didn't have BAT to help them get started. Through the Broadband office, NTIA funding to fund project in the Strategic Broadband plan, an equity plan in place. A workbook to have all the plans are cohesive. Funding available to every county, so we can update our current plan so that the plan is updated and consistent to what the state is looking for. Every county needs a plan for the Broadband. Money needs to be spent by mid-June We need to make sure Okanogan County's plans are consistent with what the state is looking for.

### **Contract Updates:**

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she met with the SBDC about the 2023 contract. The Economic Alliance would be a sub recipient of funds from the state contract. It was suggested that we do a six-month contract, while they wait for a signed contract from the federal offices. Hopefully this will help us to be paid in a timely manner.

The L&I contract will be done June 23, 2023.

Okanogan County PUD contract has been signed and it has increase from \$6,000 to \$10,000.

### **Other Business, News, and Member Updates:**

Kurt Danison reported that a Maurice's, a retail clothing store, is coming to Omak in the vacant spot by Safeway. Home Depot is going to do a rental center in their parking lot. Dollar General is breaking ground soon in Bridgeport and Oroville. Also, a 52 planned development has been approved in Twisp for single family homes. Don Linnertz reported that a new 1908 BBQ restaurant has opened in Twisp. There is also a new wine bar that is going to open soon.

Maria Lassila reported that there are free winter movies on Saturday and Sunday for all ages, doors open at 11:30.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported she testified before the legislature in support of an ADO innovation bill, that would increase funding for ADOs. This would not be blanket funds for every ADO but must have a project and rural communities must also have access to some of these dollars.

Meeting adjourned 12:08.

Next meeting is scheduled for February 22, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Davis



**December/January:**

This month has been extremely busy for the Economic Alliance office and staff!

On December 1<sup>st</sup> the Economic Alliance sent out a press release to all the county papers and posted on our social media and website the opening of the Okanogan County Small Business Support Grant, funded by the Okanogan County ARPA dollars targeting businesses impacted by COVID 19 in the Tourism, Hospitality, Restaurant and Retail industries. The application was an online form we offered it in English and Spanish, and businesses had until December 30 to get the required paperwork in to our office to be considered for the grant. We had 21 complete applications and 9 who did not turn in all the paperwork as required. We funded all 21 for a total of \$105,000.00 out of the ARPA Tech Assistance Grant with the county. Which we will have to fund, then get reimbursed for.

In December, our Business Outreach Specialist continued to work with several of our local businesses to get their UEI number which is required by the Department of Commerce to receive the Working Washington Round 5 grant for covid impacted businesses. He also continued to reach out to our retail, hospitality and Tourism based businesses to share the services, grant information and programs that the Economic Alliance offers.

The Economic Alliance has a vacant Economic Development Specialist position, so the Executive Director has taken on several of the tasks that the position has left remaining on contracts that it was responsible for. At this time, we are going to put this position on hold. We received 2 applications and did not feel like we had enough to interview. I spoke to our Board Chair and we are going to hire an independent contractor to complete some of the items to fulfill our contract obligations until June.

Our Executive Director has also continued to work with the County Commissioners on the .09 Public Infrastructure Fund and convened a meeting with City representatives to discuss the future of the fund and what the process could look like. We will continue to facilitate these discussions through this next year.

We have also been working with the OK PUD and the OCEC to obtain letters of support for their Broadband Projects from our local, state and federal leaders for a WSBO application.

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  
CCT & Okanogan County BAT

NCW Career Connect Leadership Team  
Family Health Centers Board  
Pine Meadows Senior Housing Board  
Community Economic Revitalization Board