

The Economic Alliance Board Meeting

March 22, 2023

El Torito Restaurant, Omak

Attending Board Members:

Kurt Danison, Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner

Anna Dalbey, 1st Vice Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty

Maria Lassila, 2nd Vice Chair, Omak Mirage Theater

Sarah Brown, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works

Beth Stroshane, Applied Bldg Information, At-Large #4

Don Linnertz, MV #2, Twisp Chamber

Lael Duncan, Past Chairman, No. County #1

Absent Board Members:

George Brady, Secretary, So Co Rep #2, Cascade Bio. Supply

Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep., WA Federal Bank

Kristi O'Neill, Central County #1 Rep., FYRE

Rachelle Haven, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2,

William Marchand, Colville Planning, CCT Rep

Amanda Jackson-Mott, Arts Community Rep., MAA

Vacant, At-Large Rep. #2

Vacant, At-Large Rep #3

Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1 Representative

Chris Branch, Treasurer, Okanogan County Commissioner

Michael Porter, At-Large #1, Omak School Super.

Aaron Kester, No. Co #2, Tonasket Nat'l Food Co-op

Rob Gillespie, City Rep., City of Okanogan Cty Council

Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., Ck of the Brd Co. Commissioners

Brett Riley, WVC

Vacant, Colville Tribal Federal Corp Representative

Vacant, At-Large Rep #5

Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Econ. Alliance

Carolyn Davis, Program Assistant, Econ. Alliance

Shelia Corson, Okanogan County PUD

Lew Blakeney, SBDC Advisor

Leonel Marcial, Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance

Rachel McClure, Rep. Newhouse Office

Scott Graham, 3 Rivers Hospital

Chairman, Kurt Danison, called the meeting to order. No quorum was established. This will be an informational meeting only.

Consent Agenda: No quorum present. Informational meeting only.

Presentation: Roni Holder-Diefenbach gave an overview of the Broadband Action Team (BAT) activities. In February 2029 they held their first meeting to discuss the creation of the Broadband Action Team. They needed a committee prior to applying for any funding for the Feasibility Strategic Plan. They then applied for funding and used an Emerging Application funds for matching dollars. They selected ACRS Consultants to do the study, then Covid hit. The Twisp Broadband Action Team was a few months a head of the Okanogan County BAT. The state created a Washington State Broadband Office. In 2022, the Economic Alliance applied to USDA for funds to do an update to the plan to include "fiber to the premise" and add four new areas of service. Also, in 2022 the Okanogan County Electric Co-op (Methow Valley) decided to join in providing Broadband to their customers and completed a feasibility study for their service area. The CCT received a NTAI funding award to provide broadband services on the reservation. Zippy also received a WSBO round one award.

At this time we need to complete a Digital Equity Plan and pull all three plans together, funding will flow through the Economic Alliance and we will hire a consultant to do the plan. We will continue to facilitate the process and are working on several surveys to gather information regarding digital equity. The BAT sub committee meets the second Tuesday of each month at 10:00 and the full BAT meets the fourth Thursday from 2 – 3.

Reports

Executive Director Report: Roni Holder-Diefenbach share her monthly report (see attachment #1). Roni Holder-Diefenbach acknowledged Sheila Corson for donating her time to do several workshops for the Economic Alliance. Thank you, Sheila!

The Economic Alliance has been providing a lot of training and they can all be viewed on the Economic Alliance YouTube Channel. Many businesses cannot attend during the day but can access these training through this YouTube on demand. There is currently a small business Disaster Relief Grant available for businesses that have suffered loss due to a natural disaster. There is also the Hospitality Grant available for businesses in the hospitality industry (restaurants, lodging, bowling alleys, etc.). They will need to be in business since April 2021.

A new employee has been hired and will start work on Monday, March 27th. Martha Martinez will be working as the Business Outreach/Marketing Specialist for the Economic Alliance.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach will be attending the WEDA conference next week in Tacoma, with an ADO meeting on Monday night and Tuesday.

Financials: Balance Sheet and Income Statement were shared as of March 16, 2023. We still haven't received funding from SBDC for the fourth quarter of 2022. She is meeting later this afternoon with SBDC to discuss payment and contract for 2023.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she met with the county commissioners yesterday and discussed the process for prioritizing project and what it will look like for next year. They propose to do a pre-app and will be able to screen these. They will still have "community" projects and projects that are eligible for .09 funds. They should have about \$1.7m in the account. It was never the intention of this fund to fully fund projects and we need to track how these funds have leveraged other funds. Discussion about hiring a grant writer using the funds was discussed as smaller area organizations don't usually have expertise or staff to write grants or to even manage a grant if they were to receive one. The county is now willing to have their projects prioritized and ranked along with other projects so we can have one comprehensive list for all Public Infrastructure projects for the county.

Business Education/Communications: Maria Lassila reported that Omak will be holding a Business after Hours starting at the Breadline in Omak 5 – 7 on April 19th. A great way to network with other businesses. Next week, March 29th will be a Creative Arts Economy workshop. 9 – 11, online. Also coming up on April 6th, Getting the Most Out of Your Chamber.

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. He has been helping businesses get their UEI numbers, which they must have to apply for any grants. He is also working on scheduling small business workshops in Spanish.

Vacant Building Subcommittee: This committee is scheduled to meet tomorrow, March 23rd, 9 to 10. We are looking at putting together a presentation to take to the Okanogan County Council of Governments (OCOG). They have looked at a lot of different areas to see how they deal with codes and abandoned buildings. They are also looking at ways that the fees could be used, i.e., façade program.

Contracts: The L&I contract will end in June. USDA contract will end in June.

Discussion

Port District Update: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has reached out to several people and finally spoke with Eric Finch about doing a presentation to our Board. We hope to have someone at the next in person meeting in June. We currently have several vacancies on the Board. If you know of someone that might be interested, please bring them to a meeting.

Board Alternates/Board Vacancies/Annual Board Forms: Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that it is important to have someone designated as an alternate in case the Board member needs to be gone. This helps with establishing a quorum. If you know of someone that might like to serve on the Board, especially if they are a business owner, please invite them to a meeting. Also, each year each Board member need to fill out the forms for Code of Conduct & Ethics and the Conflict of Interest form. Please fill these out today and get them back to Carolyn Davis.

YouTube – On Demand Webinars: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that all our workshops/seminars are available on the Economic Alliance YouTube channel so they can be viewed at any time.

Contract Updates:

The L&I contract ends in June and she is still waiting on the 2023 SBDC contract.

Other Business, News, and Member Updates:

Rachel McClure reported that Double S Meats is now doing USDA slaughter in Tonasket. She also stated that if you are traveling to get your passport renewed now. There have been long waiting periods. Also, if you have any problems getting your UEI number to contact her and she might be able to help.

Anna Dalbey reported that the Brewster State Licensing office will be open in May.

Kurt Danison reported that the Tonasket Perfect Passage will be holding an open house tomorrow to review plans and that Dollar General getting permits for building in Oroville and Bridgeport. There is also a planned development for a 52-unit housing in Twisp.

Meeting adjourned, 1:00 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for April 26, 2023 via Zoom at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
Executive Director Report
March 2023

March:

February has been a busy month!

The Economic Alliance staff have all been very busy working to engage with communities, local businesses and partner organizations. The Washington State Department of Commerce has rolled out several different grant programs that our local businesses are eligible for one is a Disaster Relief Grant, and the other is a Hospitality Grant both of which require a UEI. Staff has been trying to get ahead of the opening of these grants to work with the businesses who still need to get a UEI through the federal government. Our experience has not been great so far, as there are many glitches in the system which are causing issues for some of our businesses.

This month we held interviews for the Business Outreach/Marketing Position. We selected Martha Martinez for the position, and she will start on March 27, 2023. We are excited to have her, she has a background in the medical community working at local clinics and hospitals and has experience with community outreach and is bilingual.

We continue to participate on the WEDA Housing, Legislative and Executive Committees. EA Staff will attend the ADO quarterly meeting in Tacoma on March 28th, and the WEDA winter conference on March 29-31.

During March we conducted a Business 101: Interview with the expert Julie Perales on the Contractor Training Day via Facebook Live, and a Business 101: Interview with the expert on the PreCycle Innovation Challenge 2023. We held our Youth Employment Requirements and Resources for business webinar, and a Communication Strategies with Employees and Customers hybrid training. We will continue to roll out these events through June. All our webinars, in person training, Facebook live posts are available on demand at the Okanogan County Economic Alliance YouTube channel.

The Economic Alliance executive director attended several meetings this month, Family Health Center Board Retreat, Omak Community Meeting, Brewster Chamber Mtg, Broadband Action Team Committee Mtg, Okanogan Workforce Development Meeting, ADO Virtual meeting, Digital Equity Webinar for new requirements for BATS, Weekly Small Business Stakeholder with Finance Chair Rep. Berg and Rep Ryu. We are also meeting with the BOCC on March 21st and several of our communities to continue to discuss the .09 process.

We have also been working with WEDA to support their legislative agenda, as well as been watching several bills that will impact law enforcement, community safety, industries, etc.

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