

# The Economic Alliance Board Meeting

July 26, 2023

Via Zoom

## Attending Board Members:

Anna Dalbey, 1st Vice Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty  
Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep., WA Federal Bank  
Maria Lassila, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair, Omak Mirage Theater  
Chris Branch, Treasurer, Okanogan County Commissioner

Beth Stroshane, Applied Bldg Information, At-Large #4  
William Marchand, Colville Planning, CCT Rep  
Brett Riley, WVC, At Large #A2  
Sarah Brown, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works

## Absent Board Members:

Kurt Danison, Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner  
Lael Duncan, Past Chairman, No. County #1  
Don Linnertz, MV #2, Twisp Chamber  
Kristi O'Neill, Central County #1 Rep., FYRE  
Rachelle Haven, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2,  
Bryon Miller, Colville Tribal Federal Corp. Rep.  
Vacant, Arts Community Rep.  
Vacant, Central County #2 Representative

Michael Porter, At-Large #1, Omak School Super.  
Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., Ck of the Brd Co. Commissioners  
Monica Garza Acevedo, WorkSource, At-Large #3  
Aaron Kester, No. Co #2, Tonasket Nat'l Food Co-op  
Rob Gillespie, City Rep., City of Okanogan Cty Council  
Scott Graham, South County #1, 3 Rivers Hospital  
Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1 Representative  
Vacant, At-Large Representative #5

## Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Econ. Alliance  
Carolyn Davis, Program Assistant, Econ. Alliance  
Soo Ing-Moody, Dept. of Commerce, Twisp Mayor  
Adam Amundson, Colville Tribes Planning

Leonel Marcial, Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance  
Martha Martinez, Business/Marketing Outreach Specialist  
Melanie Neddo, Confluence Health

Vice Chairman, Anna Dalbey, called the meeting to order and asked everyone to sign in on the chat room.

Agenda: Approved as presented.

Consent Agenda: Chris Branch made a motion to approve minutes from June 28, 2023, as presented. Beth Stroshane seconded. Motion passed.

## Motions:

Financials -- Balance Sheet and Income Statement were shared as of July 19, 2023. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that we are doing well with no unordinary expenses. There are a couple of changes to the title of line items to clarify these items. We have invoiced \$73,798 and are waiting to receive these funds. We have to invoice another \$37,000 to the PUD, EDD, and SBDC. Chris Branch made a motion to accept the Financial Report as presented. Sarah Brown seconded. Motion passed.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has spoken with Edward Jones representative about investing up to \$100,000 in a short-term treasury bond (3 to 6 months). CDs for 3 months would earn 4.9% interest and if we invested for six months the interest rate would be 5.3% Treasury bonds would be a little lower. The Edward Jones advisor suggested that we invest in CDs for 3 months, 6 months, and 1 year. This would still leave the Economic Alliance with the option to use funds, if necessary, at 3, 6, or 12 months, or to reinvest if not needed. Beth Stroshane made a motion to invest in CDs for 3, 6, and 12 months and approve the Board Chairman to sign a resolution to do this. Chris Branch seconded. Question: Does anyone see a change in the scope or scale of what the Economic Alliance is doing in the next year? Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that she doesn't see any great or additional costs in the next year. Motion Passed.

## Reports

Executive Director Report: Roni Holder-Diefenbach share her monthly report (see attachment #1). She reported that Leonel Marcial will be leaving the Economic Alliance as of August 11<sup>th</sup>. He has taken a position

with the Omak School District as a culinary teacher. She has advertised the position. She met with the SBDC and has received a signed contract for 2023 (finally). The SBDC will be doing an audit for the 2021 year. We have had to make some changes in our accounting to set it up with classifications. She did a presentation to Okanogan Council of Governments (OCOG) and presented the Abandoned Buildings Committee recommendations. They provided great feedback and have been invited to speak to the city councils. She also met with the County Commissioners to discuss funding. The local Broadband Action Team (BAT) has completed the BAT plan for Okanogan County. The BOCC has set aside \$1 million of ARPA funds for broadband projects for the county, 500k for OCEC, and 500k for the OK PUD.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the process begins at the end of August. She has been working on policies for funding, adding another step and asking for a letter of intent. In the past we have received applications that are ideas, not actual projects. Will be holding a workshop to step people through the process.

Business Education/Communications: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that will start back up in September with workshops and hope to get a survey out to see what training is wanted/needed.

Business Outreach: Leonel Marcial reported that through the Small Business Innovation Fund, we have been working with 25 businesses. He has been going to businesses and meeting face-to-face with them all over the county. He has made some referrals to the SBDC. He has spoken on the Spanish radio station and tries to attend all the chamber meetings and some of the Farmers Markets. He has a meeting on Friday with the Spanish SBDC advisor. This is an underserved sector of the business community in Okanogan County.

Vacant Building Subcommittee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach gave a presentation to the city of Okanogan about the Vacant Buildings Committee and what the committee is trying to do. Still trying to update the list of vacant buildings and struggling to find large buildings for lease or rent for businesses that want to expand or move here.

## **Discussion**

**Non-Profit Board Training:** Anna Dalbey and Kurt Danison attended this training that was held in Wenatchee. Anna Dalbey reported that it was very informative. We need to look at the diversity of our Board and make sure we have a job description for our Board members. We need to make sure our mission matches the purpose of the organization.

**Board Alternates:** Each Board member needs to appoint/designate an alternate that can attend meetings when they are unable to attend. This will help us to have a quorum at each meeting. Please send Carolyn Davis – [cdavis@economic-alliance.com](mailto:cdavis@economic-alliance.com) -- you designated alternate, with the email, address, and phone number.

**Broadband Digital Equity Funding:** The Economic Alliance isn't necessarily going to be an applicant for funding for some of these projects, but there may be funding to continue the facilitation of the BAT. We need to make sure there is digital equity for all. We need to support and help with projects that put in the infrastructure for broadband.

**Port District:** Roni Holder-Diefenbach asked those in attendance if they have approached the subject of a Port District in their community. Sarah Brown said she didn't have answers to some of the questions. Chris Branch discussed past efforts and stated it would take a lot of effort to get this on the ballot. Okanogan County is very diverse, and we need to have conversations with our local communities about developing a Port District and not let it drop off our radar.

### Contract Updates

The SBDC contract for 2023 is now signed. The L&I contract is completed and the ARPA Technical Assistance & Grants is about 56% done. The USDA contract has been expended to September 2023. The WSU Broadband Grant is complete, and the Digital Equity Plan is complete.

Other Business, News and Member Updates: Soo Ing Moody, Roni Holder-Diefenbach and Alyce Brown are attending meetings with the Federal Interagency Coordinating group. Don't have a grant writer on staff. Met yesterday and EDA is coming out to discuss programs they have coming up. There has been a change in designation and Okanogan County is no longer considered a distressed area. It was felt that this designation was not a true indication of Okanogan County. Access to capital is a big need as is accessing local lending groups. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that our representative for the EDA is based out of Portland and the distance was a hindrance. She will reach out to Maggie, our representative again.

Meeting adjourned, 12:30 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for August 23, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Davis



## **July 2023:**

Happy Summer! July is the beginning of the biennium for several of our funding sources, and the beginning of quarter three for several of our other contracts and as such, is a super busy time for us.

Staff at the Economic Alliance continue to be busy conducting outreach to our local businesses, many of whom are still recovering from the impact of the pandemic. Much of this is seen in the lack of workforce, childcare and housing being the biggest barriers to these small businesses who would like to remain open and even expand their current business model. We are sharing resources as they are provided to us by the state and federal entities who are rolling out funding with our local partners. We know that the Economic Alliance cannot be the lead entity to take on all these issues, but we want to be present and work with those who are leading the charge on these items that are crucial to our local economy.

In July the EA had a contract Audit with the SBDC, the visit included Craig Abbs, Administrative Director, Jennifer Dye, Assistant State Director and Craig Lohman, Financial Assistant. The Audit went well, and we had some items that we needed to implement that were considered insignificant, and they had to do with how we class our entries into QuickBooks for match and will help with our other contracts as well. We were able to make those corrections and send them into the SBDC for approval. They did not have any other items that came up. We also received our signed SBDC contract, so we are now working on billing for Q1 and Q2 of 2023. We extended our USDA grant through Q3 due to an excess of funds due to staffing transitions.

Our Executive Director presented the work that the Abandoned Building Committee has put together with recommendations to communities to the Okanogan County Council of Governments. There was good discussion and follow up questions from OCOG members on the impact that it would have to their community. We offered to present the recommendations at city council meetings and asked those interested to contact us to schedule. The ED also met with the BOCC to discuss funding for the .09 projects for 2024. We will work on developing policies to help meet the goals of the program and determine eligibility and county priorities and focus for economic development.

The Economic Alliance continues to facilitate the Okanogan County and Colville Confederated BAT. We met with the BOCC at the end of June to discuss the work that has been done in planning for infrastructure build out, digital equity implementation and funding that has been applied for and awarded. OCEC was awarded 12 million from the WSBO Round 2 for their service area in their service area in the Upper Methow. Our Executive Director worked with County Commissioners to ensure that broadband was a priority when they distributed their ARPA funding. The BOCC set aside 1 million in ARPA funding to go towards broadband projects funded as match. OCEC will be using 500k of it on their project in the Methow Valley.

The Economic Alliance executive director attended several meetings over the last two months, Family Health Center Board Meeting, Broadband Action Team Committee Mtg, Okanogan Workforce Development Meeting, ADO Virtual meeting, ICAP Launch, NCW Tech Alliance, CERB, OCOG presented.

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

Community Economic Revitalization Board  
Family Health Centers Board  
CCT & Okanogan County BAT