

and is working with Roni Holder-Diefenbach to do outreach with the cities, chambers, etc. He has a background in hospitality, insurance, and is outgoing and willing to participate.

Martha Martinez and Roni Holder-Diefenbach recently attended the WEDA conference in Walla Walla. They were able to go to the Walla Walla college and learned about some of their programs such as workforce innovation and about some of their “hands-on” classes that they are teaching, such as welding, nursing, etc. At this event Roni Holder-Diefenbach facilitated a workshop on agricultural and innovation and participated in several discussions regarding rural economic development.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach briefly discussed that she is looking into micro lending and how to become a lender. Craft 3, which took over the NCW Business Loan Fund, is supposed to be covering Okanogan County, but they aren't really doing that. She is also looking at some funding programs but wants to make sure they fit in with our scope of work. Soo Ing-Moody said that the Department of Commerce is doing different programs that could jump start some of these capacity building and tech assistance programs. Brett Riley shared that people are now using Chat GPT to help with grant writing.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that a “save the date” press release will be sent out at the end of August. She met with the county commissioners on Monday and presented some draft policies for funding and adding another step to the process by asking for a letter of intent. Some projects will then be asked to submit a full application and decide which ones are eligible for .09 funds and which are community development projects. A workshop to discuss the process will be held on September 6.

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. Will be doing a basic bookkeeping classes and maybe a QuickBooks 101, which would be virtual. Both Martha Martinez and Nick DeBar will be going through the basic training to certify them as business advisors. It is a three-month course.

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 will be doing a presentation to the city of Pateros and will plan to schedule with the city of Omak in October and trying to get on the agenda for other cities council agenda. She has been talking to city managers and to building owners also.

Discussion

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 -- you designated alternate, with the email, address, and phone number. Aaron Kester has submitted his resignation effective immediately. His position was the North County #2 position. It was suggested that try to get someone from the Oroville Reman and Reload business.

Broadband Digital Equity Funding: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that there will be a training at the NCW Tech Alliance on September 6 & 7 in Wenatchee. Broadband Digital Equity Funding and Training will be the topic, if anyone is interested in attending, please let her know. The Okanogan PUD received \$30 million for Broadband for NE Okanogan County. Over the past few years, we have seen a lot of funding that has come into the county for Broadband.

IACC: The Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council (IACC) conference will be coming up in October 24 – 26 in Wenatchee if anyone is looking for funding for projects.

Port District: Roni Holder-Diefenbach asked those in attendance if they have approached the subject of a Port District in their community. Chris Branch spoke about the Oroville Initiative Group, and they could possibly be interested. Others felt that a new tax would not be welcomed. We would have to do a lot of educating the voters about what a Port District could do and the advantages of having a Port District in our county. Lael Duncan is willing to go to the Oroville Tonasket area to drum up support if Roni Holder-Diefenbach could put something together that Board members could take with them to talk to their communities. Maybe outline some of the projects in a similar size area. Rob Gillespie did mention to the Okanogan City Council, and they are interested, but didn't know the next steps. Soo Ing-Moody suggested pulling information together about what the tax dollars would look like in Okanogan County and what would the governance of this Port District would look like and what type of projects can a Port District do. Chris Branch stated that it would be helpful to have some sort of project that people could see and what the benefits would be. Chris Branch also stated that he would be happy to help. It was suggested that Lee Champman, Jeff Burnell, or Jim ?? might be some people to approach.

Contract Updates

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that all contracts are up to date. She will start in October to get the 2024 contracts in place.

Other Business, News and Member Updates: A possible dialysis clinic is looking to open in Omak. Anna Dalbey stated that at next month's Brewster City Council meeting they are talking about changing some zoning to accommodate nightly rentals / Accessory Dwelling Units.

Sarah Brown reported that TwispWorks hosted a Methow Investment Network pitch night in July which included a \$1.3M request for a bridge loan for affordable housing. They were sure of the final numbers yet on the amount pledged for the bridge loan, but it currently looks like it will be over \$.5M at a significantly lower interest rate than currently available through traditional funding means.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported she met with Paige Colman, Child Care manager with Dept. of Commerce. Childcare is such a huge issue, and they are going to do a pilot project in Okanogan County. She is trying to bring interested people together.

Alyce Brown, Executive Director of the EDD is going to be leaving to take another position. The Board of the EDD will be meeting to discuss the future of the EDD.

The SuperNova business launch competition will hold their finals at the Coulee Farms in Okanogan.

Beth Stroshane announced that she will be running for a position on the Omak School Board.

Meeting adjourned, 12:35 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for September 27, 2023, at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis