

# The Economic Alliance Board Meeting

September 27, 2023

County Commissioners Hearing Room, Okanogan

## Attending Board Members:

Kurt Danison, Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner  
Anna Marie Dalbey, 1st Vice Chairman, So. Co. #2,

Keller Williams Realty

Maria Lassila, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair, Omak Mirage Theater

Chris Branch, Sec/Treasurer, Okanogan County Commissioner Rep #1

Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Rep., Ck of the Brd Co. Commissioners Rep #2

Beth Stroshane, Applied Bldg Information, At-Large #4  
Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep., WA Federal Bank

Lael Duncan, Past Chairman, No. County #1

Don Linnertz, MV Twisp Chamber

## Absent Board Members:

Brett Riley, WVC, At Large #A2

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

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

Bryon Miller, Colville Tribal Federal Corp. Rep.

Sarah Brown, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works

Vacant, Arts Community Rep.

Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1

Vacant, At-Large Representative #5

William Marchand, Colville Planning, CCT Rep

Monica Garza Acevedo, WorkSource, At-Large #3

Scott Graham, South County #1, 3 Rivers Hospital

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

Vacant, Central County #2

Vacant, Nespelem/Grand Coulee #2,

Vacant, North County #2

## Guests/Staff:

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

Martha Martinez, Business/Marketing Outreach, Economic Alliance

Steve Quick, Okanogan School District

Andrew Morse, Central Washington University

Carolyn Davis, Program Assistant, Econ. Alliance

Nate Debar, Econ. Dev. Specialist, Economic Alliance

Rob Ogburn, Central Washington University

Lew Blakeney, Economic Alliance, SBDC

Chairman, Kurt Danison, called the meeting to order and asked everyone to sign in and introduce themselves.

Agenda: Approved as presented.

Consent Agenda: Lael Duncan made a motion to approve minutes from August 23, 2023, as presented. Anna Marie Dalbey seconded. Motion passed.

Motions:

Financials -- Roni Holder-Diefenbach discussed the financials as of September 27, 2023. Total income for the year is \$958,558.91 and total expenses are \$771,117.31, and net income of \$187,441.60. The Economic Alliance has been lucky to receive several contracts that were not anticipated in the budget, such as the Tech Alliance, the NCW EDD SBIF. There were not any out of the ordinary expenses, and we should still be under the threshold for having to do an audit. Don Linnertz made a motion to accept the Financial Report as presented. Anna Marie Dalbey seconded. Motion passed.

Nominating Committee: After discussion, Anna Marie Dalbey, Lael Duncan, and Kurt Danison volunteered to work on this committee. Beth Stroshane made a motion to appoint Anna Marie Dalbey, Lael Duncan, and Kurt Danison as the nomination committee for officers and Board members for 2024. Maria Lassila seconded. Motion passed.

## **Presentation**

Andrew Morse, CWU Regional Tech and Innovation Hub Manager, has been with the university for about one year. In his previous role at the University of North Iowa, he had the pleasure of working with the SBDC and the Economic Development organization. Originally rural communities were going to be excluded from the Tech Hub Designation, but because of their work, rural communities, such as Okanogan County are included.

They are proposing a six-county area encompassing Kittitas, Grant, Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan, and Yakima. They will focus on Advanced Manufacturing and Disaster Communications, including three critical functions: (1) Research, Development, and Tech Commercialization, (2) Education and Training, (3) Entrepreneurship Development and Business Assistance. They have 90 days to design Tech Hub. Innovation entrepreneurship programs and coming into communities to help them select where they want to go. Mr. Morse spoke about a SWOT analysis in the CEDS. Don Linnertz spoke about the Broadband Action Team's efforts and applying for grants. Mr. Morse spoke about ONE Cedar Valley, an organization in Iowa that assists individuals and employers in Cedar Valley to succeed by overcoming barriers to meaningful employment. They are changing the way to find talent by removing barriers from the process, which results in employers hiring their desired workforce and growing and prospering.

We want to introduce careers where kids don't have to be away from home. Helping to create the "Middle Class". The presentation ended with a great discussion on how this project could impact Okanogan County.

## **Reports**

Executive Director Report: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she was able to attend a meeting at a conference in Wenatchee about our Okanogan County Broadband Action Team. She spoke about the status of the NCW EDD and that Alyce Brown, current Executive Director, has taken a new position back east, her last day is October 7<sup>th</sup>. One of the projects that the EDD is facilitating is the SuperNova Business Launch Competition, which will be finished by October 7<sup>th</sup>. The Chelan/Douglas Port has offered to "loan" an employee, Craig Larson, to the EDD. Mr. Larson has been on the Board for the EDD. The EDD Board did vote to accept this offer for one year, then will look to see if they want to extend this further. Still need to keep the regional presence for the EDD.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also gave a presentation to the city of Pateros on the Abandoned Buildings information and will do another one to the city of Omak on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. She also did a presentation to the House of Representatives Economic Development Committee about Rural Economic Development. Please see Executive Director Report for further activities during the past month. (attachment #1)

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the deadline is on Friday for the pre-application letters. She held a workshop about the process and what is needed and had 13 people/organizations attend. She met with the county commissioners, and we will have funds to allocate this year, which could be up to \$1.4 million. Should have the final number soon.

Vacant Building Subcommittee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach made a presentation to the city of Pateros and is scheduled to meet with the city of Omak in October. She is still trying to get on the agenda for other cities council. She has been talking to city managers and to building owners also. There will be no meeting of the Vacant Buildings committee in September. She also reported that Choose Washington has a web site, and we can list all the commercial and industrial properties that we have on this site.

Business Education/Communications: Nate Debar reported that he is still trying to figure out all the activities of the Economic Alliance and feels he is still swimming uphill. He is doing a lot of training with the Economic Development Course, ADO Best Practices, and the SBDC Advisor certification. He will also attend the IACC conference. Martha Martinez reported that she has attended the same courses and has been doing a lot of networking with other economic development professionals. She is sharing in Spanish on social media and giving out some of the Chrome Books to businesses that don't have access to technology. She is also going through the basic training to be certified as an SBDC business advisor. It is a three-month course.

## **Discussion**

Board Recruitment/Alternates: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that Anthony Popelier with Reman & Reload, Kathleen Winebar with the Grand Coulee Dam Chamber, and Steve Quick, with the Okanogan School

District are all interested in a position on the Board. Don Linnertz stated that he will talk with someone about being an Arts Representative.

Meeting adjourned, 1 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for October 25, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Davis



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE  
Executive Director Report

**September 2023:**

Happy End of Summer!

Since our last board meeting, we have had a lot going on! We hired Nathan Debar as our Economic Development Specialist, and he has been going through a lot of training to get brought up to speed on the work that we do here at the Economic Alliance. I have been focused on ensuring that both he and Martha our Business Outreach Specialist has the opportunity to attend trainings that will expand their knowledge about Economic Development and providing Business Services. They both attended the Economic Development Conference held by the Department of Commerce in Olympia earlier this month. They are also both signed up through the SBDC to become Associated Business Advisor, which will allow both to work directly with the small businesses and we would get credit for their work through the SBDC. They both participated in the Digital Navigation training which allows them to work with community members and small businesses to help them to understand and use technology. They are both scheduled to attend the SBDC conference in October and Nathan will go with me to the IACC conference, and Martha will attend the PTAC meeting in Wenatchee.

Our Executive Director presented to the City of Pateros and will present to the City of Omak on October 2<sup>nd</sup> the Abandoned Building information that the committee has compiled. We will be reaching out to the City of Oroville and working with Patrick at Twisp Works to present to the Twisp Chamber, City Council and the Winthrop City Council.

The BOCC adopted the Final policy for the .09 Prioritization Process, which was passed by resolution and adopted by them after we made a couple of corrections to the draft document. We met with them again to discuss the .09 funding allocation for 2024 and came up with a plan. The ED will meet with them before the infrastructure committee hears presentations in November to finalize the number. We did decide to have 3 separate pots, one for Public Infrastructure, one for Planning only, and one for Emerging Opportunities.

We held the pre-application overview workshop on September 13<sup>th</sup> from 1:30-3. We had 13 attendees who asked lots of questions and were interested in learning about the process.

The Economic Alliance continues to facilitate the Okanogan County and Colville Confederated BAT. We were asked to present at the Thriving NCW Virtual Care Conference on Leveraging our BAT to do digital equity, I have also been asked to speak on a panel at the WWA Workforce Conference about our BAT.

The Economic Alliance executive director attended several meetings over the last month, Family Health Center Board Meeting, Broadband Action Team Committee Mtg, Okanogan Workforce Development Meeting, ICAP Launch, NCW Tech Alliance.

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