

The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting
January 22, 2025
Via Zoom

Attending Board Members:

Maria Lassila, 2nd Vice Chair, Omak Chamber
Kurt Danison, Past Chairman, City Rep. #1, City Planner
Lael Duncan, Partners for Rural WA, No. County #1
Scott Graham, South County #1, 3 Rivers Hospital
Michael Porter, At-Large #1, Omak School Dist. Super.
Beth Stroshane, Applied Bldg Information, At-Large #4
Monica Garza Acevedo, WorkSource, At-Large #3

Sarah Brown, Methow Valley #1, Twisp Works
Brett Riley, WVC, At Large #A2
Steve Quick, Central #2 Okanogan School
Lisa Bauer, City Rep., City of Okanogan Cty Council
Rocklyn Culp, Town of Winthrop, Planner
Crystal Gage, Confluence Heath, Central Co. Area #1

Absent Board Members:

Anna Dalbey, Chairman, So. Co. #2, Keller Williams Realty
Anthony Popelier, 2nd Vice Chairman Reman & Reload, North Co. #2
Sarah Jo Lightner, Methow Arts, Arts Comm Rep
Riki Wippel, NNDF, Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #1
Lanie Johns, Ok Co. Commissioners Rep., Ck of the Brd Co Rep #2
Vacant, County Commissioner Representative #1

Jord Wilson, At-Large #5, City of Pateros
Cindy Simpson, Finance Rep, WA Federal Bank
William Marchand, Colville Planning, CCT Rep
Vacant, CTFC Representative
Vacant, Nespelem/Coulee Dam #1

Guests/Staff:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Ex. Director, Economic Alliance
Leonel Marcial, Business Outreach Specialist, Economic Alliance
Kaelyn Marchand-Ankney, Business Outreach, Economic Alliance
Shandie Norris, NCW EDD
Mark Hatate, WA Federal, Community Lending Officer

Carolyn Davis, Program Assistant, Econ. Alliance
Mason Duke, E. Dev. Specialist, Economic Alliance
Rena Shawver, OCCAC
Nancy Zimmerman, Grand Coulee Dam Chamber
Nick Timm, Okanogan County Commissioner

1st Vice Chairman, Maria Lassila, called the meeting to order and asked everyone to sign in to the chat room.

Agenda: Approved as presented.

Board Minutes: Minutes from December 4, 2024, were emailed out. Kurt Danison made a motion to approve the minutes of December 4, 2024, as presented. Lael Duncan seconded. Motion passed.

Financials: Roni Holder-Diefenbach presented the updated financials as of December 31, 2024. Our income is as expected, and we have submitted invoices for the end of the year payments. With the extra grants that were received that weren't in the 2024 budget, we ended the year with a very positive cash flow and started the year in a good position. Crystal Gage made a motion to approve the financials as presented. Kurt Danison seconded. Motion passed.

Guest Speaker

Mark Hatate, Community Lending Officer with Washington Federal Bank, spoke about the Washington Federal Bank. They are moving in a new direction and focusing on small businesses and being an invested partner with them. They also have a foundation with possible funding for nonprofits to help with expenses.

Mr. Hatate stated that the bank is going to start a “small business” bootcamp for small business owners. This training will teach business owners what they need to know about operating a business and financing that business. Washington Federal will pick up the costs for this training program, all but \$300.

Sarah Brown spoke about the Methow Investment Network loan program and asked about the banks rates for borrowers. Mr. Hatate stated that banks usually asked for prime plus a percentage. It depended on the valuation of the collateral. No collateral-based loans are based on the credit worthiness of the borrower. The bank can also purchase loans from the CDFI.

Motions

New Board Member: Commissioner Nick Timm, newly elected to his position as County Commissioner, was asked to be the county commissioner representative #1 on the Economic Alliance Board. Kurt Danison made a motion to accept Nick Timm as the new county commissioner representative. Crystal Gage seconded. Motion passed. Mr. Timm thanked everyone for the work that they have done over the years on the Economic Alliance Board. He looks forward to working with everyone.

Add Executive Committee members: Treasurer – Nick Timm and Secretary – Sarah Jo Lightner. Lael Duncan made a motion to elect Nick Timm as Treasurer for the Economic Alliance, and to elect Sarah Jo Lightner as Secretary. Kurt Danison seconded. Motion passed.

New Check Signers for 2024:

We need to re-do the signature card to change some of the signers on the Economic Alliance’s bank account number: ***** at Wheatland Bank. Crystal Gage made a motion to change the signers on the Economic Alliance bank account to include the 2025 Economic Alliance’s Executive Committee members: Anna Dalbey, Anthony Popelier, Sarah Jo Lightner, Nick Timm, and Kurt Danison, Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director, and Lanie Johns, County Commissioner Representative and to remove those no longer on the Executive Committee (George Brady, Lael Duncan, Don Linnertz) Scott Graham seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Reports

Executive Director Report: (see attachment #1)

Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that staff have been very busy attending chamber meetings and city council meetings. Next week she is doing a presentation at the Omak-Okanogan Rotary Club. We have submitted billings for end of 4th quarter to Washington State Department of Commerce, SBDC, PUD, and WEDFA.

The Economic Alliance did receive a reduced amount from the Department of Commerce for hiring a grant writer (\$25,000), this grant will run through June 2025. Those that have gone through the Economic Alliance’s Prioritization Process are first in line for this assistance. These are usually community and economic development projects.

She is also moving forward with an application to the state’s Community Development Block Grant request. This would be a request for \$250,000 for a three-year program to support Okanogan County’s

Microenterprises through outreach, training, etc. The application is due in two weeks and then we will need to have a public hearing. These funds will need to flow through the county. The Economic Alliance didn't receive the WSMA funding that we requested. This will affect our budget this year and she will share an updated budget at the next meeting.

Infrastructure Committee: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she sent each of our legislative representatives a copy of Okanogan County's list of prioritized projects and explained that each of these projects have gone through the process of being ranked and that this ranking process is important for all projects looking for funding, especially from federal or state agencies.

Business Education/Outreach: Kaelyn Marchand-Ankney reported that she has spent a lot of time this past month promoting the Start Simple classes and keeping the web site updated. Mason Duke reported that he has been preparing for the Start Simple classes, which will start mid-February and will also be offered in a one-on-one format. Leonel Marcial has been focusing on restaurants and helping them with prices and menus, providing them with feedback and encouraging them to participate in the Start Simple classes. Mr. Marcial will be teaching a Spanish version of the Start Simple program.

Discussion

Board Member Recruitment/Alternates: Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that we currently have two positions on the Economic Alliance Board that are vacant. One is for the Nespelem/Coulee Dam area, and one is for a representative from the Colville Tribal Federal Corporation (CTFC). The CTFC is in the process of hiring a new CFO and hopefully that person will appointment someone to fill this position.

Each Board member also needs to select an alternate to attend meetings if they are unable. Each Board member also needs to sign the 2025 Conflict of Interest Statement and the Code of Conduct Statement. These will be sent out to each Board member in the next week.

Port District: No report. Nick Timm and Maria Lassila are interested in working with Lael Duncan on this project. Mr. Timm said he is aware of additional layers of taxes that will be necessary when forming a Port District. Roni Holder-Diefenbach will send Mr. Timm the presentation that was done back in June 2024. No date or time has been set for a meeting for this committee.

Broadband Funding – BEAD funding: Roni Holder-Diefenbach has been gathering letters of support for these applications that are requesting funds from the state Broadband Office through the Broadband, Equity, Access, Deployment (BEAD) funding program. Applications are due at the end of the month and probably won't know who is funded until the end of September. The Okanogan County PUD and the Okanogan County Electric Co-op in the Methow Valley are working on applications for funding to get additional fiber to additional parts of the county. It is going to cost a lot in our huge county to provide fiber in some places and this application process is very complicated.

Contracts/Grant Updates

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she has been in contact with the SBDC office and trying to stay on top of getting this contract sign in a reasonable timeline. We can't submit any billing until we have signed a contract. The USDA Business Development Grant is due by the end of February. Maria asked for a packet to be sent to her. We have also received our annual designation for the Associated

Development Organization (ADO) from the county commissioners and our second-year biennium started July 1, 2024, for these funds from the Department of Commerce. Contracts have been signed with the County and the PUD.

Other Business/News/Member Updates

Maria Lassila reported that she is excited about speaking with Beth Harrington. Ms. Harrington is doing a documentary about the renowned photographer, Frank Matsura. Maria Lassila has agreed to do a film premier on April 18.

Beth Stroshane stated that it is now possible to get wireless fiber in Riverside.

The Okanogan-Omak Rotary will be hosting the Business Week the first week in March. They are always looking for judges and advisors. Mason Duke will be an advisor again this year. Running Start students can now participate in Business Week.

Meeting adjourned, 12:20 p.m. Next meeting is scheduled for February 26, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. **via Zoom.**

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis

Roni Holder-Diefenbach Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roni Holder-Diefenbach', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Executive Director Report

January 2025

Happy New Year! We are excited for 2025 and the work that we get to do partnering with our local communities, county and small businesses! We have been busy with preparing and submitting our year end and quarterly reports.

This month we continued to work to get the word out about our last Town Hall in Twisp and promote the survey which was extended for our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. We have had some challenges with attendance at the Town Halls and folks responding to the 1 on 1 interviews, but we are working through that.

The team and I continue to conduct outreach at Chamber meetings, in the communities and by getting on the schedule to attend City Council meetings to share what the Economic Alliance is working on. We are also looking at service groups like the Kiwanis and Lion Clubs and we are scheduled to meet with the Omak, Okanogan Rotary on the 30th.

This month I have also been working on filling our Executive Committee positions. I met with Sarah Jo and she is interested in the Secretary role and increasing the visibility of the creative economy, and I met with Commissioner Timm after he was sworn into his office to discuss his role on the Economic Alliance Board and as the Treasurer. He is very interested in learning more about the Economic Alliance, the creation of a Port District, and improving our local economy.

In late December we were notified that we did not receive the WSMA funding. I am updating the budget and am working on scheduling an appointment to meet with Jon Gallow with CDBG to review the TA Microenterprise assistance grant application and get any tips or input he might have on our application. We are also working on applying to USDA RBDG to do the same work that we had applied to WSMA.

I met with the PUD General Manager Steve Taylor and discussed our contract, scope of work and shared what we have been doing facilitating the Broadband Action Team for the County and Tribe. We signed our 2025 contract for \$10,000.00 with no changes. They are happy with the work we are doing.

This month I attended several meetings in between the Holidays: BAT Committee Mtg, Omak Team One, FHC Board and Committee Mtg's, Edward Jones on investments, WSMA Crowdfunding Training, CERB Board Mtg.

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