

The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting
February 26, 2014
Koala Street Grill, Omak

Attending Board Members:

Nan Kallunki, 1st Vice Chairman, Ok. Co. Admin Srv Director
Rich Watson, NCW Business Loan Fund
Lael Duncan, OCCAC
Debbie Atuk, Business Director, Colville Tribal Federal Corp.
Andrea Martin, No. Cascades Broadcasting (alternate for J. Andrist)
StaceyLuckensmeyer, WVC (alternate for Mary Watson, WVC)

Arnie Marchand, Oroville VIC
Chris Branch, OCTC Rep.
Sheilah Kennedy, County Commissioner
Ted Piccolo, Image Communications

Absent Board Members:

Kyle Desautel, Chairman, CCT Planner
Coleen Couch, Treasurer, Mgr. Sterling Saving
Amanda Jackson-Mott, Secretary
Dr. Erik Swanson, Omak School Superintendent
Kurt Danison, City Planner
Melanie Wyss, Gebbers Farm

George Brady, Cascade Biological Supply, Pateros
Alison Gillette, Twisp Works
Nespelem/Coulee Dam Position #2 – Vacant
Methow Valley #2 -- Vacant
City Representative #2 -- Vacant

Staff & Guests:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director
Carolyn Davis, Admin. Assistant
Janet Wilson, Okanogan City Council

David Niessner, General Mgr., Omak Wood Products
Faith Wakefield-Mills, Vista Volunteer @ OCCAC

Past Chairman, Rich Watson, called the meeting to order and asked for introductions.

Arnie Marchand made a motion to approve the minutes from January 22, 2014. Chris Branch seconded. Motion passed.

Guest Speaker

Lael Duncan, Executive Director at Okanogan County Community Action Council, introduced Vista Volunteer Faith Wakefield-Mills. Faith spoke about the Bridges out of Poverty program and the Poverty Immersion Workshop. This workshop is a one day program that sensitizes participants into the lives of those in poverty. It gives them a real life experience on what it means to be living in poverty. It breaks down barriers, prejudices, stereotypes. The nursing program at Wenatchee Valley College will be participating in the program and they are looking for funding to offer additional programs. Businesses have seen a benefit in employee retention when they take this course because with greater understanding of challenges, comes better ability to seek solutions such as tardiness, or absence that pale in comparison to the cost of employee turnover.

The Getting Ahead Program is designed to help low-income participants to take control of their own future, by providing a safe, healthy, and structured setting for them to investigate the challenges they face in getting out of poverty. They will construct a personalized plan for overcoming challenges and gain supports and resources to help them achieve their goals.

Lael Duncan also spoke about the Food Bank program. She stated that they now have over 40 to 50 people lined up to receive food on the days that the Food Bank is opened. There is a greater demand for assistance, both for food and housing assistance.

Lael also encouraged folks who know senior citizens or disabled persons who live in Okanogan to apply for their home repair program for minor repairs to be completed in one week by Group Cares, a religious mission trip that OCCAC is co sponsoring in June of 2014. Up to 40 homes in the town of Okanogan will receive free minor home repairs. Volunteers are also sought to help with things like delivering building materials to the homes, etc.

Executive Director Report

Roni Holder-Diefenbach distributed a report for January (see attachment #1). Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported she has been working with Deana Zakar with Kinross Gold to identify the junior taxing districts that have benefited from Kinross Gold. They want these districts to know about the closing plans for the mine and how it will affect them. She also reported that an application was submitted to Kinross Gold for funding, which was approved for 2014. Also the Okanogan County PUD agreement has been approved for 2014.

The Workstart grant is now in place. This is a grant from the governor's strategic funds and will provide training dollars to get a second and third shift operating at Omak Wood Products. There is no administration fee for the Economic Alliance in this grant, but Roni Holder-Diefenbach felt it would have very minimal cost and it was important to go ahead with this grant to get the mill operating at full capacity.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also made a presentation to the Colville Tribe Federal Corporation about the activities and services of the Economic Alliance. She has put together a MOU for financial contribution from CTFC that will be project specific.

When planning the 2014 budget, we were told to anticipate a 20% increase in medical and dental insurance. Our renewal starts on March 1 and actually only have a 6% increase.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach will be participating in Okanogan-Omak Business Week again this year, which runs March 10 – 14 at the Okanogan County Fairgrounds. She felt this was a very good program and gives Omak and Okanogan juniors a good look at what it takes to operate a business.

A Business Startup Workshop has been scheduled for March 27, 9 a.m. – noon, at the Havillah Road Conference Center in Omak.

Board Business

Vacant Positions: The Economic Alliance currently has three vacant positions on the Board, the Nespelem/Coulee Dam #2 position, the Methow Valley #2 position, and the cities representative #2. Janet Wilson attended last month's meeting and is interested in the cities representative #2 position. Janet Wilson stated that she has lived in Okanogan for about 34 years and is retired from the Forest Service. She has served on the Okanogan City Council for the past year and half and was just elected to another four year term. Sheilah Kennedy made a motion to seat Janet Wilson in the vacant cities representatives #2 position, Chris Branch seconded. Motion passed.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also reminded current Board members to select an alternate for their position that can attend meetings when they weren't available. This will help to ensure that we have a quorum for meetings.

Standing Committee Reports

Treasurers Report: Carolyn Davis reported that an updated budget was available on the back table. January's advertising expense was higher than anticipated due to the co-op ad with the Port of Douglas County that was placed in the Choose Washington magazine.

Communication Committee: No report.

Infrastructure Committee: Chris Branch reported that there are three or four bills in the legislature that could impact the Public Facilities Fund (.09 dollars). These haven't gotten out of committee yet. He would still like to have a meeting of the Infrastructure Committee soon.

Business Education Committee: The Job Fair will be held again at the Omak Community Center on February 27, 10 – 1. Businesses still have time to have a table. Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that this gets better every year and stressed that those looking for jobs need to attend and dress appropriately and be prepared for interviews for prospective employers.

Old Business

Rich Watson spoke about the recent article in the Labor Market Report done by Employee Security, that states Omak Wood Products currently has 126 employees. They also have a good supply of logs. David Niessner, General Manager at Omak Wood Products, reported that they are progressing well and most of the employment is local, with 70% Tribal employees. Ted Piccolo with the Northwest Native Development Fund reported that most of the loans they are currently doing is to small businesses wanting to supply logs to the mill.

New Business

Arnie Marchand reported that the Wenatchee Valley College Omak Foundation is looking into developing a building across from the college. Arnie Marchand also spoke about the revamping of the international tourism organization, VIA 97. There is an electric car show coming up and also a gathering of elders.

Debbie Atuk, Business Director with the Colville Tribal Federal Corporation, reported that they are hosting a potential investor for the Omak Business Park. She felt that it was exciting to have someone looking at this property.

Rich Watson, NCW Business Loan Fund, reported that the NCW Business Loan Fund is now a Certified SBA lender for the Community Advantage Program designed for CDFIs to finance smaller loans, \$150,000 and under. They are also looking at the ag side of the economy and small local farmers and niche farming.

Rich Watson also serves on the Board for the Methow Arts Alliance and spent some time in Olympia seeking funding for the arts.

Meeting adjourned 12:45.

Next Meeting March 26, 2014, 11 – 1, at the Koala Street Grill. Please mark your calendars! Kinross Gold will be the guest speaker.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis, Administrative Assistant



Meetings Attended February;

- CTFC Board Meeting
- Kinross Conference Call-Deana Zaker
- Wenatchee Valley College Omak Foundation
- Okanogan County Farm Bureau
- Omak Wood Products/Workstart
- OK County Job Fair (2.27.14)

Upcoming Meeting/Activities (March):

- NCW EDD
- Omak/Okanogan Business Week
- Small Business 101 Workshop
- NCW Loan Fund Board Meeting
- County Commissioner quarterly update

During the month of February we focused on developing a commercial/industrial real estate spreadsheet that has available properties in the communities within Okanogan County. We also took out an ad in the Omak Okanogan Chronicle to advertise the Economic Alliance's Business Retention and Expansion services. We included information regarding the data base to try to bring awareness to the citizens that they could also add their buildings and we would post the information on the Economic Alliance Website.

We have also been finalizing the contract language for the Workstart agreement between OWP and the EA, as well as an MOU between CTFC and the EA that will be project specific. The first drafts are in the hands of both OWP and CTFC and we should have these finalized by the next board meeting.

Robert Adams and I spoke on Open Line promoting the upcoming job fair, at this time there are 34 employers signed up. We have also been finalizing arrangements for a Small Business 101 Class scheduled for March! Check out our February newsletter on Facebook or sign up with Carolyn to receive it by email!