

The Economic Alliance
Board Meeting
September 24, 2014
Koala Street Grill, Omak

Attending Board Members:

Kurt Danison, City Planner
Coleen Couch, Treasurer,
Dr. Erik Swanson, Omak School Superintendent
Andrea Martin (for John Andrist, No. Cascades Broadcasting)

Sheilah Kennedy, County Commissioner
Lanie Johns, Clerk of the Board, Ok County
Lael Duncan, OCCAC
Chris Branch, OCTC Rep

Absent Board Members:

Kyle Desautel, Chairman, CCT Planner
George Brady, Cascade Biological Supply, Pateros
Amanda Jackson-Mott, Secretary
Arnie Marchand, Oroville VIC
Debbie Atuk, Business Director, Colville Tribal Federal Corp.
Rich Watson, NCW Business Loan Fund
Mary Watson, WVC

Janet Wilson, City of Okanogan
Melanie Wyss, Gebbers Farm
Ted Piccolo, NNDF
Alison Gillette, Twisp Works
Nespelem/Coulee Dam Position #2 – Vacant
Methow Valley #2 -- Vacant

Staff & Guests:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director
Carolyn Davis, Admin. Assistant

Terry Lawhead, Dept. of Commerce
Craig Atwood, City of Okanogan

Second Vice Chairman, Kurt Danison called the meeting to order and asked for introductions. Terry Lawhead was added to the agenda as a guest speaker. Coleen Couch made a motion to approve the minutes of June 25 and August 26, 2014. Lael Duncan seconded. Motion passed.

Guest Speaker

Terry Lawhead, Business Development Manager for the Washington State Department of Commerce, was introduced. He stated that he has an emphasis on helping businesses in rural areas of the state. He is currently working with Ferry County on the impacts of the closure of Kinross Gold. He spoke about the Strategic Reserve Funds that is controlled by the governor, but he does provide suggestions to the governor on the use of these funds. If a significant employer is leaving the state, he can provide funding to try to retain that business. Funds were also provided during the Oso Mudslide and to Okanogan County to do advertising to mitigate the negative reporting because of the Carlton Complex Fire. These funds were also used to provide funding to train workforce at the Omak Wood Products, so that they can get a second and third shift of workers started.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also stated that Mr. Lawhead is her “go-to” guy when she needs assistance with other organizations. Mr. Lawhead was asked about USDA and SBA Disaster assistance for businesses and farmers impacted by the Carlton Complex Fire. He stated that the state has a person that is contacting everyone that was impacted by the fire to gather information. Lael Duncan also stated that Okanogan County Community Action Council is working and referring people to the various organizations set up to assist those impacted. They want to help keep people safe and sound.

Executive Director Report

Roni Holder-Diefenbach stated that her Executive Director report for July through September was on the back table. (see attachment #1) Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that during July and August there were lots of meetings with groups about the fire recovery. The Economic Alliance also entered

into a contract with the Department of Commerce and BrandQuery to do advertising to mitigate the effects of the negative reporting and to let the public know that most of Okanogan County was still opened for business. This contract had a very short turnaround time and she was able to contact all chambers and cities to participate in the screening of those that answered the RFQ.

There are mixed reviews on the advertising campaign, mostly from the Methow. Terry Lawhead stated that this was similar to what happened in the Darrington area during the Oso Mud Slide.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach also reported that the state SBDC was going to apply for disaster assistance to provide additional counselors to work with businesses in our area, but have decided not to.

Another survey will be done at the three month timeline to gather information on how businesses are doing. It will also be done at six months, nine months, and 12 months timeline. Mr. Lawhead stated that having this data from the local businesses is very helpful.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that the NCW Economic Development District is exploring accessing funds from the EDA to look at business opportunities that could come after the fire disaster. These funds would require a 25% match and would be funneled through the Economic Development District.

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she had a conversation with HUD about liquidating the property that was purchased to build a small business incubator. Since the committee decided not to build the incubator, we have been working to get the property sold.

Board Business

Vacant Positions: We are still looking for someone for the Nespelem/Coulee Dam Area #2 and the Methow Valley #2 positions.

Standing Committee Reports

Finance/Budget Committee: Coleen Couch reported that the Economic Alliance is doing well at this time, all income and expenses are as projected.

Infrastructure Committee: The Emergency Opportunity Funding opened for applications, but we have not received any applications. Chris Branch spoke about the upcoming Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council Conference scheduled for next week in Wenatchee. He stated it was a good networking conference for cities to hear about funding for infrastructure needs. Roni Holder-Diefenbach will also be attending.

Business Education Committee: No Report.

Old Business

Roni Holder-Diefenbach reported that she was invited to attend a meeting at the Omak Wood Products and stated that as of June they hired their first employees and on September 15 they have 148 employees. She reported that an additional application for funds from the Governor's Strategic Reserve Fund has been submitted to help train employees in the plywood plant.

She also reported that there is currently a shortage of employees. People are taking jobs building the new Tribal casino and the new administration building, these jobs may be good paying, but they are not long term jobs.

New Business

Lael Duncan reported that Okanogan County Community Action Council is leading the Long Term Recovery Program. She stated that people won't ever be back to "normal", but they will create a new "normal". She stated that a lot of people didn't have insurance because of the lack of funds. This is a good chance to shine the light on the lack of affordable housing issue in Okanogan County.

Next Meeting October 22, 2014, 11 – 1, at the Koala Street Grill. Please mark your calendars!

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Davis, Administrative Assistant

Attachment #1



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
July-September 2014
Executive Director Report:

July:

- Rotary Presentation
- Pateros Community Meeting
- Tour of communities affected by fire with Dept. of Commerce
- Meeting with Cascade and Columbia River Railroad
- OCCAC Long Term Recovery Meeting
- Winthrop Business Meeting

August:

- Community Resource Meeting
- ADO Conference Call
- OWP Update Presentation
- Private Business/SBA Disaster Loan
- Disaster Housing Conference Call-Dept of Commerce
- Strategic Reserve Fund-Director of Commerce
- NCW Business Loan Fund Credit Committee
- Private Business/Potential Workstart
- RFQ-Request and Selection Process
- Community Input Meeting on “Okanogan County is open for business” campaign

September:

- Workforce Development Council-Okanogan Committee Mtg.
- NCW EDD
- BrandQuery Marketing Roll Out Presentation
- NCW WDC full board meeting
- Commissioner Campbell Update
- Continue to meet with Private Businesses to assist in Business Retention and Expansion

We have continued to work on the Economic Impacts from the Carlton Complex Fire and assist as we can. We had the opportunity to work with the Department of Commerce to apply for funding through the Governors Strategic Reserve Funds to assist the local business communities affected by the fire. We requested \$150,000.00 to do a “Okanogan County is open for business” campaign to assist us in reaching out to the tourists from the I-5 corridor and British Columbia to get them to travel to Okanogan County to recreate. Working with several of the communities, chambers and businesses we were successful in being awarded the funding. The Economic Alliance then had to do a RFQ, select an applicant utilizing a committee made up of community leaders, chambers and businesses, have a community input meeting and implement a contract. This funding was Emergency funding meant to be fast tracked, and the media campaign launched as soon as possible, as we have many businesses who are at risk of shutting their doors if they do not get people in their stores as soon as possible.

We have also been working with a few businesses who are interested in applying for a SBA Disaster loan if the SBA declares our area a natural disaster. The SBA is still gathering information and waiting till FEMA is done with their assessment, and to see if the governor’s appeal is successful for the Individual Assistance. We will continue to assist in any way possible, to assist this process along.