

**Joint Economic Development Organization Board Minutes
March 27, 2019**

City Council Chambers, 214 SE 8th Street, Topeka, Kansas, Wednesday, March 27, 2019.

The Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO) Board Members met at 6:00 p.m. with the following voting Board Members present: Deputy Mayor Sandra Clear, Councilmembers Karen Hiller (proxy for Councilmember Emerson) and Michael Lesser and Shawnee County Commissioners Bill Riphahn, Kevin Cook and Bob Archer -6. City of Topeka Mayor Michelle De La Isla presided -1.

Nonvoting Board Members Present: Councilmembers Mays and Coen. Absent: Councilmembers Ortiz, Padilla and Jensen.

APPROVAL of Incentive Request for Project Blueberry was presented.

Barbara Stapleton, GO Topeka Business Retention and Talent Initiatives Vice President, gave a brief overview of the incentive funding request (\$66,000) for Project Blueberry, an existing local company looking to expand in the community. She reported the incentive was part of a capital investment which includes plant equipment additions and improvement expenditures of \$30 million. She noted the incentive proposal would be performance-based, to be paid out as earned, and details of the agreement would be outlined in a formal contract with the company.

Deputy Mayor Clear expressed concern with the lack of information about the company and details of the incentive package. She requested more information to make an informed decision.

Mayor De La Isla stated the confidentiality of the proposal has been established by the company until there was an agreement in place due to potential competition.

Councilmember Mays spoke in support of the incentive request and stated he believes \$66,000 was a good return on investment for a \$30 million project.

Commissioner Cook stated he concurs with Deputy Mayor Clear and believes non-disclosure of information places constraints on public transparency which the JEDO Board has worked hard to overcome. He asked how incentive packages are put together as well as the cost analysis. He spoke in support of the incentive request and noted it was a good return on investment for a \$30 million project.

Barbara Stapleton reported companies can request non-disclosure as there are many factors involved in expansion projects. She stated incentive guidelines are followed and based on many factors within a community; however, they are not shared publicly because other communities could use those same factors to create more competition. She noted she could share the guidelines with the JEDO Board if requested.

Commissioner Archer expressed the importance of a transparent process due to the large amount (\$5 million) of public funds allocated to GO Topeka every year with the assurance that transactions will be

credible and responsible; however, he understands why the company would not want their plans to be public at this time. He spoke in support of the good work GO Topeka continues to deliver.

Councilmember Lesser asked how GO Topeka performs their due diligence in regards to existing local companies while balancing incoming new businesses.

Barbara Stapleton reported it requires a balance of economic development tools and how those tools are used when targeting industries in terms of population, education and training. She noted GO Topeka meets regularly with local companies to offer their support and help them to grow.

Councilmember Hiller stated she appreciates the discussion and spoke in support of the incentive request. She commented on the responsibilities of an elected official and how those duties relate to the confidentiality of economic development projects.

Commissioner Riphahn asked how many jobs would be created from the project.

Barbara Stapleton reported Project Blueberry was a capital investment project; therefore, the creation of new jobs would not be part of the incentive package.

Mayor De La Isla announced she received written communication in the form of a text message from Councilmember Emerson designating Councilmember Hiller to serve as proxy in his absence.

Councilmember Lesser moved to approve the Incentive Request for Project Blueberry. The motion seconded by Commissioner Archer carried unanimously. (7-0-0)

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

No further business appearing the meeting was adjourned 6:17 p.m.