

**Joint Economic Development Organization Board Minutes
December 22, 2020**

Zoom Meeting
Topeka, Kansas
Tuesday, December 22, 2020

The Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO) Board members met at 6:00 p.m. with the following voting Board members present: Shawnee County Commissioners Bill Riphahn, Kevin Cook and Aaron Mays; Deputy City Mayor Tony Emerson, City Councilmember Michael Lesser. Shawnee County Commissioner Kevin Cook presided as JEDO Chair.

The following nonvoting JEDO Board members were present: City Councilmembers Spencer Duncan, Neil Dobler, Karen Hiller, Hannah Naeger and Sylvia Ortiz.

The following JEDO Board members were absent: City of Topeka Mayor Michelle De La Isla, Councilmembers Christina Valdivia-Alcala and Michael Padilla.

Others present who presented and/or spoke before the Board: Molly Howey, Senior Vice President of Economic Development for GO Topeka; Matt Pivarnik, President and CEO of Greater Topeka Partnership; James Crowl, Shawnee County Counselor; Glenda Washington, Chief Equity & Opportunity Officer for GO Topeka; Barbara Stapleton, VP Business Retention & Talent Initiatives for GO Topeka; Brett Trout, City of Topeka Manager

James Crowl, Shawnee County Counselor, started the meeting by giving a quick update and reminder of the rules of the Kansas Open Meeting Act and Kansas Open Records Act (hereinafter “KOMA/KORA”), as requested by the Chair, Commissioner Cook. He stated that since we are a public body we are bound by KOMA/KORA. He acknowledged that when we are setting up special meetings it does make the process a little different than normal, but if we do have emails going out before the meeting, the Attorney General has issued opinions that those email communications about the meeting can be in violation of KOMA. So just as a reminder, we need to be careful with email communications between board members.

APPROVAL of Establishing and funding a relief program for locally owned businesses that have been negatively affected by public health orders was presented.

Commissioner Aaron Mays explained that he called this meeting because of the small businesses in our community that are struggling right now as a result of COVID-19. He felt as though it didn't appear that Congress would take any kind of action, anytime soon. He thinks it is important for JEDO to see if there is a way to help the small business. He felt that while some businesses are getting help, some are falling through the cracks, and some businesses are being affected a lot more than others. He stated that he feels like it would be a good gesture on our part to provide additional help for those businesses. He reported that he would like to have a discussion to come up with a big picture of what the board would like to see. He suggested up to \$1M with grants up to \$10K for each business.

Commissioner Cook, Chair asked Molley Howey, Senior Vice President of Economic Development for GO Topeka, to put together a presentation on what Programs have been initiated on a Federal, State and Local level.

Molley Howey, Senior Vice President of Economic Development for GO Topeka, presented a slide show of different COVID-19 Relief Programs from the Federal, State and Local levels, which was previously shared with the JEDO Board and can be found on the YouTube video of the meeting. Some of the highlights include:

Federal:

1. Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL)
2. Paycheck Protection Program
3. Employee Retention Tax Credit

State:

1. Federal CARES Act
2. PPE Procurement Grants
3. Small Business Working Capital Grants
4. Other Sparks Taskforce Grants
5. Business Continuity Grant Program

Local:

1. HOST – Private
2. HOST – Public
3. GTP Small Business Relief Fund

Commissioner Cook, Chair, inquired about what were some of the ways we have developed new initiatives in the past.

Ms. Howey explained that sometimes they bring a final product that is ready to be acted on, but at this point their staff would be willing to have discussions with members of the board and other community members to come up with the details of the program. She suggested coming up with a Taskforce for this initiative.

Commissioner Mays explained that he wanted to see is a program that is designed for locally owned businesses as well as smaller businesses. That way an impact of a grant would make more of a difference. He would also like to see that money be available to as many as possible, as soon as possible. He pointed out that the fact that we spent all the HOST funds in a short amount of time shows that the need it there. He inquired if the GTP Staff knows at what point those funds were depleted.

Glenda Washington, Chief Equity & Opportunity Officer for GO Topeka, reported that the HOST funds were just depleted earlier this month when they wrapped up that program. She explained that she knew they had to use those funds by the end of the year.

Commissioner Mays asked if there are resources available to the small business owners in assisting them with all the different grants and finding the ones they are eligible for?

Ms. Washington reported that GO Topeka does assist the businesses in getting funding and grants, as well as partnering with the Small Businesses Administration.

Commissioner Cook, Chair, inquired about using the Cash Carryforward Account that was previously approved in the Budget by the JEDO Board. He asked if we could use those funds for a new initiative and if they know what those funds are. Also, what was the amount for the EMBD carryforward funds.

Ms. Howey reported that we had about \$700,000 in carryforward funds that are unencumbered that we would be able to use if approved by the board. She also reported that the number for the EMBD carryforward is \$789,000, in which they are in discussions on how to use those funds.

Commissioner Cook asked Commissioner Lesser if he wanted to add some input for this discussion.

Councilmember Lesser thanked Ms. Howey and Curtis Sneden, Senior VP of Govt. Affairs and President of Topeka Chamber, for putting together the presentation of COVID-19 funding as it was very informative and helpful. He stated that his thoughts are that he wants to support small business in Topeka, however, he does not want to approve anything until we have a concrete plan laid out on the details. He also thinks we need to have a good understanding of what is in the second stimulus plan, in particular the live venues and theaters. He also had concerns about giving money to entities who don't necessarily really need it.

Commissioner Cook wanted to clarify then that we would possibly have over a million dollars for this incentive once it was developed.

Ms. Howey stated that by her rough calculation, it may be around \$1.5M of unencumbered funds.

Councilmember Hiller stated that everyone has been very helpful and she hopes that they will continue to have access to information on the programs so that when she goes out and tries to help the people in her district that would be helpful. She inquired about the numbers on some of the programs that were dispersed in Shawnee County, and what we did to put out information on where help could be, not only what the programs were but who could help them. Also, we should make sure to find out what businesses have need, and have not been helped yet, versus those that have already gotten assistance. She inquired about what our gap is and just more information would be helpful.

Commissioner Cook inquired if we are wanting to look at a formation of a Taskforce, to look to see what the gaps may be and what the other resources might be.

Commission Mays stated that he believes a Taskforce might be the best decision for this meeting. He feels like we need to make an effort to make a difference for the target demographic. He thinks the appropriate course of action would be forming some sort of taskforce. He inquired about what a timeline for that might look like and if the end of the year coming up makes a difference with the JEDO Budget. His recommendation is to form a taskforce today, possibly three members.

Commissioner Cook inquired about the budget.

Ms. Howey explained that it is not a rare occurrence that we draw from those funds. The board just needs to be a formal request by the board to encumber those dollars. It doesn't really matter when it's done. She also reported that there is the standard carryforward fund with almost \$800,000 and the separate EMBD carryforward fund of \$789,000 that would have separate criteria in which they would have to see if it would meet that criteria in order to draw from that.

Commissioner Cook stated that as far as the timeline for the taskforce goes, JEDO's next board meeting isn't until February 10, 2021, but the chair would have the ability to call another meeting sooner if need be. He asked what the other board member's thoughts were.

Councilmember Lesser wanted to point out is that one of the inconsistencies he has seen in past stimulus programs, is the requirement that 60% of the expenses must be in payroll. Also, he would like to ask is that we incorporate a couple of workshops that GTP can put on in regards to the different programs that are available. He would also like there to be a question/answer session at the end of the program where some basic questions can be answered. He stated that he knows that's what a lot of people struggle with is how to get it, how to apply for it and so on.

Commissioner May reported that it sounds like something that Glenda was doing for the CARES Act funds. He said he thought that we were trying to make sure that the money was going to businesses that were going to be successful.

Ms. Washington explained that they do it often. They are always educating the businesses about the programs and they want to continue to do that. So they will set something up like that for this incentive.

Brett Trout, City of Topeka Manager, gave an overview of the funding the City of Topeka received by CBDG grant in which they designated a \$20,000 grant to businesses that are low to moderate income, as well as another grant they will be receiving from HUD.

Councilmember Ortiz asked if those funds will have federal regulations on them or if they would at least have the same regulations that was on the first round of funding.

Mr. Trout stated that he was not sure about what those regulations are but they will surely be the same as the last round of funding.

Commissioner Cook suggests that we break it into the two pieces, the first being the allocation of the \$706,821 cash carryforward funds, and is there a motion by the board.

Commissioner Mays inquired if what they were doing is earmarking the funds but not necessarily spending the money.

Commissioner Cook responded that yes, it is just allocating the funds for some purpose, but does not mean we have to spend that money.

Commissioner Mays said he would like to have more of a discussion by the board members on what their thoughts are.

Councilmember Hiller asked for clarification on the money we set aside for JEDO before and where those funds are allocated.

Ms. Howey clarified that the \$1M they set aside from the HOST program came from a variety of sources. Some being from carryforward and some from small business incentives.

Ms. Washington explained those numbers come from the combination of the incentive money and the carryforward money. She stated that we are out of the incentive money as well as the money JEDO approved.

Ms. Hiller wanted to clarify if the money from the incentive funding was for new business or existing businesses.

Ms. Washington reported that it was for new and existing businesses.

Councilmember Duncan stated that he is supportive of this program in General, he also agrees with Commissioner Mays in that we need to come up with a program more focused on smaller businesses. He would like to see those parameters made, and also dedicate some of those funds to minority owned businesses.

Commissioner Riphahn stated that he would like to see the funds go to the businesses that were not able to get other funding due to the restrictions that were in place. He feels these businesses hire a lot of people in our community. He stated that he would be in favor of earmarking the \$700,000 for the program.

Councilmember Dobler reported that he is fully supportive of the proposal. He feels one of the details needs to be an upper limit on the funding, and how the people would prove how they have been negatively effected.

Councilmember Naeger reported that she feels like this a great idea to help out our business that are struggling, especially considering that these are businesses that hire out of our community and do not qualify for other programs.

Councilmember Emerson reported that he is also supportive of the idea and feels like as much as JEDO wants to bring new businesses here, sometimes it's just as important to help our existing businesses stay here. He would also be supported in earmarking the \$700,000 and would like the details to be worked out.

Matt Pivarnik, President and CEO of Greater Topeka Partnership, stated that he trusts the board on their decision.

Commissioner Mays moved to make two separate motions:

- Motion 1: Allocate Cash Carry Forward Funds, up to \$700,000 for economic recovery of small businesses.
- Motion 2: Establish a *JEDO Local Business Recovery Taskforce*

Commissioner Cook wanted to point out before the vote that Mayor De La Isla was not able to attend but did allocate her vote by proxy to Councilmember Naeger, and Councilmember Paddilla was not able to make it, but allocated his vote by proxy to Councilmember Lesser.

Councilmember Lesser offered an amendment to the motion to include the approval of the JEDO Board.

Commissioner Mays Excepted that amendment.

Commissioner Cook then clarified that the amended motion would read:

- Motion 1: Allocate Cash Carry Forward Funds, up to \$700,000 for economic recovery of small businesses, subject to approval of the JEDO Board.

PUBLIC COMMENT was provided by the following:

Lynn Boddington spoke on the Transportation Taskforce. She was curious about the progress on Workforce Transportation so far. Her questions were previously submitted to the board members.

Commissioner Mays moved to approve Motion 1. The motion seconded by Commissioner Riphahn carried unanimously. (7-0)

Roll-call vote was taken as a matter of record.

Commissioner Mays addressed the details of the second motion of forming a Taskforce. He suggested some of the parameters the taskforce would decide may include:

- Address the types of businesses that are eligible.
- Address the size of businesses that are eligible.
- What will the “proof of hardship” requirements be.
- Establish an upper limit of amount rewarded.

Commissioner Mays stated that he would volunteer to be on the taskforce committee, he suggested a 3-member taskforce to include:

1. Chair – Mayor De La Isla
2. City – Councilman Mike Lesser (nominated by Councilmember Emerson)
3. County – Commissioner Aaron Mays

Commissioner Mays then moved for the approval of Motion 2: Establish a *JEDO Local Business Recovery Taskforce*

Councilmember Ortiz wanted to reiterate to please help those businesses that have fallen through the cracks.

Councilmember Hiller stated that it is important to establish who is aware of the program and what the needs are. Also, she inquired if the GTP staff would be the ones helping with this Taskforce.

Molly Howey, Senior Vice President of Economic Development for GO Topeka, reported that they do keep a database of all their programs. She is not sure if they have the data from the State and Federal level.

Glenda said she would work with the State to see if they could get that information but she knows she can not get it on the Federal level.

Councilmember Ortiz inquired if we could come up with a name for the Taskforce so people will know what they are talking about and what to ask for.

Commissioner Cook suggested the name of the Taskforce as the JEDO Local Business Recovery Taskforce.

Commissioner Mays moved to approve Motion 2. The motion seconded by Councilmember Lesser carried unanimously. (7-0)

Molly Howey, Senior Vice President of Economic Development for GO Topeka, reported an update on the Workforce Transportation Taskforce. She said there are three agreements being reviewed by companies. There has been one company that said they will not continue, and two more companies scheduled by the end of the year to have discussions with.

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.