

**Joint Economic Development Organization Board Minutes  
February 10, 2021**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was conducted virtually via the Zoom meeting application. No in-person public comment was allowed. Zoom (virtual) meeting access was provided to those individuals signed up to speak to a specific item. Public comment related to an item on the agenda was submitted in writing to the Office of the City Clerk, 215 SE 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 166, Topeka, Kansas, or via email at [cclerk@topeka.org](mailto:cclerk@topeka.org) to be attached to the minutes.

The Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO) Board Members met at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom meeting application with the following voting Board Members present: Deputy Mayor Michael Padilla and Councilmembers Hannah Naeger and Michael Lesser; and Shawnee County Commissioners Bill Riphahn, Kevin Cook and Aaron Mays -6. City of Topeka Mayor Michelle De La Isla was absent -1.

Nonvoting Board Members Present: Councilmembers Karen Hiller, Sylvia Ortiz, Tony Emerson and Spencer Duncan. Absent: Councilmembers Valdivia-Alcala and Dobler.

Deputy Mayor Padilla announced Mayor De La Isla was ill and unable to attend the meeting. He announced JEDO Operating Rules state the JEDO Board may elect an alternate from the voting members of the same governing body as the Chairperson. He offered to serve as Chair unless Councilmembers Lesser or Naeger would like to volunteer.

Upon consensus of Councilmembers Naeger and Lesser, Deputy Mayor Padilla presided.

Molly Howey, President GO Topeka, recognized GO Topeka Board members Dr. Robert Kenagy, 2021 GO Topeka Board Chair; Doug Wolff, Chair-Elect and Board members Marsha Pope and Dan Fultz.

Dr. Robert Kenagy and Doug Wolff expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the Board and stated they look forward to working with JEDO members.

**PRESENTATION on GO Topeka's 2020 Year End Report was provided by the following individuals:**

- Barbara Stapleton, Vice President of Business Retention Talent Initiatives provided an update on the Business Retention and Talent efforts
- Katrin Bridges, Senior Vice President of Innovation provided an update on the Plug and Play Program and Topeka Innovation Campus
- Freddy Mawyin, Senior Economic Advisor provided an update on the financial impact of the Innovation Campus

Deputy Mayor Padilla asked if Reser's Fine Foods has expressed interest in participating in the South Topeka (SOTO) Ride-to-Work Transportation Incentive.

Barbara Stapleton reported they are currently negotiating a contract with Reser's Fine Foods Inc.

**AN ECONOMIC BRIEF** was presented by Glenda Washington, Senior Vice President of Entrepreneurial and Minority Business Development. She reported GO Topeka contributed \$1.2 million in 2020 for business support and Shawnee County contributed \$300,000 in grant funding.

Deputy Mayor Padilla asked what type of assistance GTP would provide small businesses.

Glenda Washington stated GO Topeka connects individuals starting a small business with mentors (experts in the field) to provide guidance.

**APPROVAL of Minutes from the meeting of December 9, 2020 and December 22, 2020, was presented.**

Commissioner Mays moved to approve the December 9, 2020 and December 22, 2020, meeting minutes. The motion seconded by Naeger carried unanimously on roll call vote. (6-0-0)

**APPROVAL of the Choose Topeka Relocation Incentive Request was presented.**

Councilmember Naeger moved to approve a continuation of the incentive program, by offering the next round of funding for both the employer matching and remote worker options with the same amount of allocated funds (\$300,000) and an allowance of up to 40% (\$120,000) to be used for the remote worker option. The motion seconded by Councilmember Lesser carried unanimously on roll call vote. (6-0-0)

**UPDATE on the JEDO Local Business Recovery Taskforce.**

Deputy Mayor Padilla reported the Taskforce met on February 5, 2021, resulting in a productive discussion as it relates to potential funding guidelines for small business grants. He referenced the JEDO COVID-19 Business Relief Grant document distributed by Commissioner Mays at the Taskforce meeting listing potential items to consider as they develop the grant funding guidelines. He noted the Taskforce wants to target support for small businesses that do not qualify to receive funding assistance from the other various grant programs.

Commissioner Mays stated the Taskforce discussed the following:

- Who should be eligible for grant funding assistance
- They prefer locally owned small businesses of Shawnee County residents, with fewer than 50 full-time employees and a minimum of two full-time W-2 employees.

- Target industries would include food and beverage, lodging, events, sports, entertainment and travel
- Startup businesses would be eligible for grant funding assistance
- Grant amounts would range from \$3,000 - \$25,000
- Details of the application process based on eligibility requirements. It was suggested applications be reviewed by the GTP Small Business Incentive Committee.
- The importance of ancillary items such as business continuity education provided by GTP as it relates to performing payroll duties, cost efficiencies, etc.
- The importance of providing guidance to small business owners on how to apply for government and private funding with assistance from Glenda Washington
- It was the consensus of Taskforce members they would need to meet at least two more times before finalizing recommendations

Councilmember Lesser stated he concurs with the items highlighted by Commissioner Mays and suggested the guideline criteria require the applicant to disclose if they have received any previous funding assistance.

Councilmember Ortiz asked if businesses such as barbershops, pawnshops, carpet cleaning and mechanics will be included as part of the targeted industries.

Commissioner Mays stated those types of businesses were not considered as part of the initial recommendation; however, they can be added as targeted industries. He noted all businesses would be required to show proof of hardship from income statements or an explanation of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their business.

Councilmember Ortiz requested that all four types of businesses be included as targeted industries. She expressed the importance of assisting as many small businesses as possible.

Commissioner Mays stated he wants to make sure requirements are relatively broad so they can help those small businesses that have not received funding through other grant programs.

Deputy Mayor Padilla suggested they create a category for “service businesses” to include those types of business such as carpet cleaners, barbershops, pawnshops, and mechanics, etc. He thanked Councilmember Ortiz for providing input to help ensure the Taskforce considers all service industries.

Councilmember Hiller stated JEDO has invested significant funding support for entrepreneurs, which are service industry and specialty workers that many times contract with other small businesses for support duties, following a sole proprietorship business model. She stated she understands the grant guideline parameters mentioned; however, it was her hope, the Taskforce would also consider sole proprietorships in the grant approval process. She asked if Glenda Washington and Corrie Wright were included in the conversations.

Deputy Mayor Padilla reported Ms. Washington participated in the February 5, 2021, Taskforce meeting discussion; and they will include Ms. Washington and Ms. Wright in all future meeting discussions.

Councilmember Lesser stated the criteria list continues to be a work in progress with the intent to tailor a program that provides the most impact in the community.

**PUBLIC COMMENT was provided by the following individuals:**

Lazone Grays expressed concern with the incentives being reactionary to the COVID-19 pandemic instead of providing a long-term solution for minority and women owned businesses development as well as small businesses. He asked the Taskforce to develop stronger platforms for these types of businesses to help them endure hardship while ensuring diversity with City and County awarded service contracts.

Deborah Vance, El Shaddai Ministries and Topeka Jump member expressed the importance of the SOTO and NETO Ride-to-Work programs and the need for working class people to have the service available to them.

No further business appearing the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.