

Joint Economic Development Organization Board Minutes
February 26, 2025

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; City of Topeka Deputy Mayor Brett Kell, Councilmember David Banks and Councilmember Spencer Duncan - 6. Mayor Micheal Padilla presided - 1.

JEDO Non-Voting Board members present: Councilmember Karen Hiller and Councilmember Michelle Hoferer - 2. Absent: Councilmembers Syliva Ortiz, Christina Valdivia-Alcala, Marcus Miller and Neil Dobler - 4.

Public comment for the meeting was available via Zoom or in-person. Individuals were required to contact the City Clerk's Office at 785-368-3940 or via email at cclerk@topeka.org by no later than 4:00 p.m. on February 26, 2025, after which the City Clerk's Office provided the Zoom link information and protocols prior to the meeting start time. Written public comment was also considered to the extent it was personally submitted at the meeting or to the City Clerk's Office located at 215 SE 7th Street, Room 166, Topeka, Kansas, 66603 or via email at cclerk@topeka.org on or before February 26, 2025.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by meeting participants.

APPROVAL of an amendment to the JEDO Operational Rules related to virtual meetings, was presented.

Amanda Stanley, City Attorney, provided an overview of the amendments as it relates to virtual meeting attendance to accommodate inclement weather events and emergencies. The proposed amendments are underlined below:

- Line 13 to state “JEDO voting members must be physically present at the meeting at the time a vote is called unless the meeting is being conducted partially or fully virtually.”
- Lines 23-25 to state, “In the event of inclement weather conditions or an emergency, the Chairperson may make a determination to conduct the meeting partially or fully virtually.”

Deputy Mayor Kell moved to approve the amendment to the JEDO Operational Rules as stated by the City Attorney. The motion seconded by Commissioner Mays carried unanimously on voice vote. (7-0-0)

APPROVAL of December 11, 2024, JEDO Board Meeting Minutes, was presented.

Commissioner Cook moved to approve the minutes. The motion seconded by Councilmember

Duncan carried unanimously on voice vote. (7-0-0)

APPROVAL of plan to spend the \$575,000 in the budget for redevelopment incentives, was presented.

Isreal Sanchez, GO Topeka Director of Equity & Business Development, reported the budget allocation of \$1 million includes a carry-forward amount, allowing for a more substantial investment in their community development and rehabilitation efforts to maximize the impact across all targeted areas supporting Entrepreneurs, Youth Employment Programs, and Building Rehabilitation.

Councilmember Duncan stated he wanted a more focused purpose of the one-time Building Rehabilitation funding opportunity and proposed to create a Site Prep Development Fund to help those that need assistance with site preparation to include but not limited to blight and/or environmental studies. He stated they have no projects in mind and anyone can apply, however, they would like to focus on small to mid-size organizations. He reported that the City already has pre-qualifiers in place through other programs they administer, and it was his intent to utilize similar parameters to make sure a project was viable to move forward while being reviewed by GO Topeka to make the determination if the project fits what the money should be used for.

Commissioner Cook clarified this was not a City of Topeka program and will be administered 100% by GO Topeka as a joint City-County program. He asked if the Entrepreneurs and Youth Employment Programs were included in the proposal.

Councilmember Duncan reported GO Topeka would finalize the criteria and manage the program as they currently do through GO Topeka and JEDO. He confirmed the dollars for the Entrepreneurs and Youth Employment Programs were not included as part of the proposal.

Councilmember Duncan moved to reallocate the Building Rehabilitation funding in the amount of \$575,000 to create a Site Prep Development Fund to be developed by GO Topeka. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Kell.

Councilmember Hiller stated she wanted to make certain the terminology was clear because discussions included not just site preparation or studies but also structures in Low-to-Moderate Income (LMI) areas. Examples discussed included demolition of large areas for commercial use and smaller properties for affordable housing in neighborhoods, as well as the redevelopment of commercial space and neighborhood development for businesses. She stated she concurs with Councilmember Duncan and spoke in support of creating a check list specific to each type of project or one that will work for all projects approved by the JEDO Board.

Commissioner Cook asked the Board to have a realistic approach to the new program. He asked for confirmation if the program would be available to the entire area encompassed by Shawnee County as well as any type of business such as in-fill housing. He questioned if the funds will carry-over if not used and will the program be available to all businesses. He stated he would prefer to see more parameters and/or qualifications developed on how the program will be administered.

Councilmember Duncan stated the program would be available to the entire area Shawnee County encompasses and GO Topeka has a better understanding and perspective of the needs of the smaller rural areas compared to the Topeka-Shawnee County area. Ultimately, this was a one-time fund, and it would be a policy decision of the JEDO Board on how the funds would be used. He stated he could support the suggestions made by Commissioner Cook if they could at least conceptually agree to earmark the funds for this specific purpose until guidelines are established.

Councilmember Banks expressed his confusion with the qualifying number that would be considered a small business.

Molly Howey, GO Topeka Senior Vice President of Economic Development, reported it was not their intent to cater to only small businesses for this program. She stated to receive small business incentives from GO Topeka the company must have less than 100 employees; however, the Small Business Administration considers 500 employees or less to be a small business.

Commissioner Cook expressed the importance of making sure the program was available to all areas of Shawnee County and that the Board has a clear understanding of qualifications and how the program will be administered.

Commissioner Mays made a substitute motion to approve the funding in the amount of \$575,000 to create a Site Prep Development fund with the caveat that no funds are disbursed until the JEDO Board approves the parameters and/or qualifications of the program. The motion seconded by Councilmember Duncan carried unanimously on voice vote. (7-0-0)

PRESENTATION on the 2024 Growth Organization of (GO) Topeka 4th Quarter Report, was presented.

Neil Spencer, GO Topeka Board of Directors Chairman and Owner of Earnest Spencer Metals, expressed his appreciation for the programs and incentives approved by the JEDO Board. He stated he looks forward to working with Greater Topeka Partnership team members.

Molly Howey, Senior Vice President of Economic Development GO Topeka, referenced the 2024 GO Topeka 4th Quarter Report included in the agenda packet and stated they have created a dashboard outlining year-to-date as of December 31, 2024, matrix numbers. Program updates were provided by the following individuals:

- Ashley Lehman, Vice President of Business Development GO Topeka
- Molly Howey spoke on behalf of Stephanie Moran, Senior Vice President of Innovation GO Topeka
- Stephen Norwood, Director of Entrepreneurship & Small Business GO Topeka
- Trina Goss, Director of Business & Talent Initiatives GO Topeka

Councilmember Banks inquired about why people are leaving the city of Topeka.

Councilmember Hiller inquired if they have researched the factors surrounding those that travel to the city of Topeka for work and how GO Topeka promotes it positively instead of negatively.

Trina Goss stated they do not think of those that commute to the area as a negative factor because it is likely if they are commuting to Topeka, they are spending money here and generating revenue.

Molly Howey reported they have the data and will share the Labor Shed Analysis with the Board.

Brenda Younger, City Clerk, announced JEDO Board meetings would be held on May 14, 2025, September 10, 2025, and December 10, 2025.

PUBLIC COMMENT was provided by the following Individual:

Henry McClure urged the Board to refuse to sign the lease agreement for the former AT&T building located at 719 S. Kansas Avenue with AIM Strategies, Inc., as he believes it was not a fair deal. He expressed concern with how tax dollars are being spent as it relates to tax incentive improvement districts.

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.