

**Joint Economic Development Organization Board Minutes**  
**September 10, 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 Kevin Cook and Aaron Mays -2; Deputy Mayor Brett Kell, City of Topeka Councilmembers David Banks and Karen Hiller (proxy for Spencer Duncan) -3. Mayor Micheal Padilla presided -1. Absent: Councilmember Spencer Duncan and Commissioner Bill Riphahn -2.

JEDO Non-Voting Board members present: Councilmembers Sylvia Ortiz -1. Absent: Councilmembers Christina Valdivia-Alcala, Marcus Miller, Spencer Duncan 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](mailto:cclerk@topeka.org) by no later than 4:00 p.m. on September 10, 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](mailto:cclerk@topeka.org) on or before September 10, 2025.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by meeting participants.

**APPROVAL of May 14, 2025, JEDO Board Meeting Minutes, was presented.**

Commissioner Cook moved to approve the minutes. The motion seconded by Councilmember Banks carried unanimously on roll call vote. (6-0-0)

**APPROVAL of Incentive Funding Proposal for Reser's Fine Foods, Inc., (Project B) in the amount of \$1,704,000, was presented.**

Ashley Lehman, Vice President of Business Development, reported GO Topeka has been working with Reser's Fine Foods a local primary employer in the food manufacturing industry to assist in an expansion. The GO Topeka Board of Directors approved incentives based on the guidelines set forth by the Board.

Jeff Vader, Reser's Fine Foods, Inc., provided a brief overview of the history of the company and the proposed project to help the company footprint grow. He thanked GO Topeka and the JEDO Board for their support.

Councilmember Ortiz thanked Reser's Fine Foods, Inc., for their good partnership with the community.

Deputy Mayor Kell moved to approve the Incentive Agreement for Reser's Fine Foods, Inc., (Project B) in the amount of \$1,704,000. The motion seconded by Commissioner Mays carried unanimously on roll call vote. (6-0-0)

Councilmember Hoferer entered the room.

**APPROVAL of Incentive Funding Proposal for Security Benefit (Project Whisper) in the amount of \$605,000, was presented.**

Ashley Lehman, Vice President of Business Development, reported GO Topeka has been working with Security Benefit a local financial services company to assist in their growth in Topeka. The GO Topeka Board of Directors approved the incentives based on the guidelines set forth by the Board.

Douglas Wolff, Chief Executive Officer at Security Benefit, thanked GO Topeka and the JEDO Board for their support. He provided a brief history of the company and stated he looks forward to the partnership and the opportunity to grow jobs in the community.

Commissioner Cook moved to approve the Incentive Funding Proposal for Security Benefit (Project Whisper) in the amount of \$605,000. The motion seconded by Councilmember Hiller carried unanimously on roll call vote. (6-0-0)

**A PRESENTATION on the 2025 Growth Organization of (GO) Topeka 2nd Quarter Report, was presented.**

Stephanie Moran, Interim GO Topeka Senior Vice President of Economic Development and Director of Entrepreneurship & Small Business, referenced the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report included in the agenda packet and highlighted the Q2 2025 Dashboard. She announced GO Topeka has been reaccredited by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). She highlighted the budget allocation of \$1 million which includes a carryforward amount to fund Youth Employment Programs, Supporting Entrepreneurs, and Site Redevelopment, and the Awards & Program Support of Entrepreneur Grants, Youth Workforce & Entrepreneur and Redevelopment Grants.

Commissioner Cook inquired about the grant process and the recipients of the Redevelopment Grants.

Councilmember Hiller asked what processes are taking place to make certain grantees are required to have an affirmative program to encourage new employees to live in the Topeka-Shawnee County area.

Stephanie Moran stated the Jayhawk Theater and SENT, Inc., Net Zero Housing Program received the Redevelopment Grant funding which is reviewed by a committee on a monthly basis.

Ashley Lehman, Vice President of Business Development, stated companies are including housing information in on-boarding packets during the hiring process along with other information to

promote living in the Topeka-Shawnee County area.

Deputy Mayor Kell encouraged GO Topeka to continue to work with the underserved community to promote growth in the housing market.

Ashley Lehman, Vice President of Business Development, provided an update on active projects and programs.

Rhett Flood, Executive Director of Forge Young Talent, provided an update on the TopCity Interns program.

Stephanie Norwood, Director of Entrepreneurship & Small Business, provided an update on projects, programs and approved incentives.

Brenda Younger, City Clerk, announced the next JEDO Board meeting would be held on December 10, 2025.

PUBLIC COMMENT, was provided by the following individual:

Henry McClure expressed his disappointment with the JEDO Board as it relates to discouraging economic development for the Topeka Shawnee County area. He stated he believes the LINK program will fail.

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.