



Athens Economic Development Corporation

Board of Directors

Monthly Meeting Minutes

July 20, 2021

The Board of Directors of the Athens Economic Development Corporation (hereinafter referred to as AEDC) held their monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 20, 2021 in the Derek D. Daniels Room of the Athens Partnership Center located at 201 W Corsicana Street, Athens, Texas.

Directors' present: Will Traxson, John Trent, Randy Jones, Danny Tidmore, Donna Meredith and Cliff Bomer

Staff Present Joanie Ahlers, Executive Director and Valerie Franklin, Office Manager

Ex-Officio: Mayor Toni Clay

Guests: Councilmen Aaron Smith and Mark Carroll, Councilwoman Sytannya Freeman, Mandie Quigg, Finance Director, Deborah Deas, JoAnn Johnson, Kara Davis, Kim Walker, Larry West, Christina West, Todd McFarland and Mary Henderson

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 A.M. by President Will Traxson for all agenda items. A quorum was present.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None.

Public Communication

Ms. Deborah Deas gave the board an update on the project going on at the East Texas Arboretum. They have had delays due to the rain but the leaks have been fixed and the mold has been removed. She thanked the AEDC for the support.

Consider discussion and possible action regarding the approval of minutes from AEDC June 15, 2021 Board meeting.

Donna Meredith made the motion to approve the June 15, 2021 minutes. The motion was seconded by Danny Tidmore. The motion passed unanimously.

Consider discussion and possible action regarding the results from Community Development/Business Assistance Grant – Joanie Ahlers

Director Ahlers explained there was more grant requests than funding. She walked through the committee's recommendations.

Building Athens Together requested \$10,000 and they have \$24,000 in matching funds. Their project is to construct a memorial wall in honor of the attendees and staff of the Bishop Heights/Fisher/Blackshear schools during segregation. The wall will be placed at O.D. Baggett Park. The committee recommended the funding of \$10,000.

Henderson County Performing Arts requested \$15,000 and they have \$2,500 in matching funds plus labor. They will be installing city water and sewer. The committee recommended funding of \$15,000 to complete their project.

Fisher High Alumni Association requested \$20,000 with no matching funds. Their project was to replace the roof, gutters and awning on the building left on the Fisher school property. With no matching funds their application didn't score high enough. They received no award, but they will work on fund raising and reapply later.

Athens Thrift Store requested \$10,000 with \$15,000 in matching funds to pave their parking lot. The grant committee recommends \$10,000.

President Will Traxson asked if there were concerns with Henderson County Performing Arts qualifying under our criteria because of past issues. Director Ahlers stated no. We checked with our attorney and they qualify under cultural and educational events.

Randy Jones stated he hoped the Fisher High Alumni Association reapplies.

John Trent made a motion that the Community Development Grants that were recommended by the committee be approved. It was seconded by Danny Tidmore. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director Ahlers moved to the Business Assistance Grants starting with Biomerics. They applied for \$12,500 with a total project cost of \$175,000. The committee recommended not to fund this project. It is not on a major throughfare and they are already receiving AEDC funding.

Johnny Ballow Homes requested \$12,500 with a total project cost of \$44,000 to rehab their office space, paint, install metal siding, roof and parking lot. The committee recommended \$1,984.

Eagle King Auto parts requested \$12,500 to concrete and pave their parking lot with a project cost of \$38,000. Because they have wrecker services, they can't just asphalt the lot. The grant committee recommended \$10,000.

Always Styling requested \$1,980 with the total project cost of \$2,640 to paint a mural on the side of the building. The grant committee recommended not to fund this project because of lack of funds, it is not on a major throughfare and it would not add value to the building.

Athens Christian Preparatory requested \$12,500 with a total project cost of \$22,000 to install a pitched roof after a flat roof on a building that is leaking and inhabitable. The committee recommended funding of \$10,000.

Mimi's Creative Kids Learning Center is a daycare and they requested \$12,500 with a total project cost of \$24,000 to install gutters, fencing, fix flooring and painting. The committee recommended \$10,000.

Cliff Bomer made a motion to approve the Business Assistance Grants and John Trent seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Cliff Bomer asked Executive Director Ahlers to go over how the Business Assistance Grants were evaluated. She explained these grants were for any business within city limits but priority is given to businesses in high visibility areas such as 175, 19 Highway 31, Prairieville Street. They must prove they are not in arrears with any of their bills, three years of financial records and profit and loss statements and it is a reimbursement grant.

Consider discussion and possible action regarding the approval of June 2021 Financials – Mandie Quigg

Finance Director Quigg explained through the month of June our budgeting is 82.64% with 75% of the year completed. The expenditures are 22.92 %. AEDC received \$148,103 which is a decrease of about 2.94% from June 2020, however year-to-year date, sales tax collections are 83.50% with 3 months to go. We are still in good shape.

A motion was made by Randy Jones to except the June 2021 financials and Danny Tidmore seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Consider discussion and possible action regarding Certificate of Deposit First State Bank – Joanie Ahlers

Executive Director Joanie Ahlers stated this CD must be renewed every six months with 1st State Bank. It is the cash collateral to offset the TI loan for Biomerics. There was discussion about six months versus one year. A motion was made by Cliff Bomer and seconded by Randy Jones to approve the renewal of the CD. The motion carried unanimously.

Consider discussion and possible action regarding AEDC Budget – Joanie Ahlers

Ms. Ahlers requested the Board consider a startup grant program. We have about a ½ dozen inquiries about startup grants per year. It is high risk, but AEDC would start a micro-grant program. No home-based businesses, must have a formal drafted business plan and provide market analysis data. She opened it up for board discussion.

John Trent asked Director Ahlers to share what other EDCs are doing. She spoke with 3; one only does as incentives, the second does not do startup grants at all and the other never returned her phone call.

President Traxson talked about a similar program the chamber did several years ago. Like a shark tank kind of situation. It is important to require them to do counseling through the Small Business Development Center. There was discussion concerning a mentorship program and amounts of the grants.

Finance Director Mandie Quigg discussed other aspects of the budget. The building fund had a million dollars in it last month. It has been split \$650,000 in building and \$350,000 for drainage improvements at the Athens Industrial Park.

Randy Jones made a motion to approve the budget as presented. The motion was seconded by Danny Tidmore. The motion carried unanimously.

Director's Update

The leakage study has been completed. There are multiple reports. The contract calls for one more item which is a community profile "one pager" for our use with prospects. She asked the board members to highlight things they feel should go on the "one pager". There was discussion about the coding and qualification.

Fieldstone Solar/Nexus will be moving forward to a purchase and sales agreement. The goal will be to bring it back for your review and consideration at our August meeting. They want to purchase the land on the Old Tyler Hwy where the apartments are going in.

Our website project is still moving forward. The Athens photography shot list have been posted. The Executive Director asked for suggestions for photo ops in and around our community as well as any potential models that you would be willing to be in some photographs. There will be drone shots of Athens Industrial Park area.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:03 a.m. and the board entered executive session.

Executive Session:

Pursuant to the Texas Government Code:#1808

Section 551.087 – Deliberation Regarding Economic Development Negotiations: Biomerics

The board re-entered into open session at 11:19 A.M.

Consider discussion and possible action concerning items discussed under Agenda #10

Danny Tidmore made a motion to approve a \$72k capital expenditure incentive. It was seconded by Donna Meredith and the motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:22a.m.

Training – Betty Russo – Office of Governor Greg Abbott, Economic Development and Tourism
(Printout of slides presented attached with minutes)

Randy Jones, Secretary

Will Traxson, President