



WCEDC Mission Statement: *To Improve Wood County's Quality of Life by Promoting Economic Development*

WCEDC BOARD MINUTES
WOOD COUNTY VOTING ANNEX
200 W. Bermuda St.
Quitman, TX 75783

Minutes of July 27, 2022 Board Meeting

Attendees: Tom Keenan (Chair), Jim Berry, Stephen Eggleston, Gwen Winters, Adam Ehlert, and Lee Smith.
Quorum not Present.

Members not present: Craig Lindholm, Pam Swanner, Thomas Callan, Allene Doggett, Steven Steele, and Mike Simmons.

Staff Present: Christophe Trahan, WCEDC Executive Director; Drew Deatherage, Executive Assistant

Others Present: Jim Bailey, Larry Tucker with Wood County Monitor.

Call to Order

Chair Keenan called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. There was no quorum present.

Citizen Comment: There were no citizen comments made.

Consider/Approve of June 22, 2022 Minutes: The approval of the minutes for the June 22, 2022 meeting will be submitted at the August 24, 2022 WCEDC Board Meeting.

Executive Director Report:

Mr. Trahan presented the board a status report he submitted to the Commissioners Court on Tuesday July 26, 2022. The report contained information and progress with several WCEDC projects including the Center for Memory Health & Education, Hotel Occupancy Tax Grant Program, Tourism Marketing for Wood County, Master Planning Initiative, Workforce Development in Wood County, Broadband Expansion, and an update on the Wood County Airport, in addition to the economic impact from the Bassmaster Elite in May.

Mr. Trahan presented the Hotel Occupancy Tax summary for the month of June. Mr. Trahan noted there was a 16% contraction in HOT revenue for the month of June 2022 compared to June 2021, however stating the overall HOT revenue for the year-to-date has been up 8.8%. Mr. Trahan stated he's talked with business owners around Lake Fork, who've said they've experienced slower business. Mr. Trahan suggested venues in major metropolitan areas that are reopening post-COVID-19 could affect HOT revenue. Mr. Ehlert suggested the current recession and inflation contributing to higher gas prices have affected tourism.

Mr. Trahan highlighted Mr. Eggleston being invited to be a panelist at the end of June by the Office of the Governor's Small Business Series to give a presentation at Kilgore College.

Mr. Trahan noted that the WCEDC is continuing to collect applications for the hotel occupancy tax grant program. The application deadline is at the end of business on August 1st. This program helps fund tourist projects and events around Wood County that attract visitors from outside the county.

Administration:

- Financial Reports: Mr. Trahan presented the financial summary for the month. Mr. Trahan noted the allocated \$50,000 from the UCC funds paid to the Wood County Healthcare Foundation for development of the Center for Memory Care & Education.



Programs:

- County-wide Workforce Stakeholders Meeting: Mr. Trahan gave the board a progress report of the County-wide Workforce Stakeholders Meeting. This meeting will take place on August 2nd at the Mineola Civic Center, with representatives from all of the city ISDs, elected officials, major business owners and human resources managers, members of the Jarvis Workforce Council, and representatives from Workforce Solutions of East Texas, the Texas Workforce Commission, and the East Texas Council of Governments participating. The purpose of this meeting is to connect local businesses and community leaders with regional workforce representatives and discuss how the community can utilize state-funded programs to address labor needs such as recruiting, skills gaps, and industry-specific training needs. Mr. Trahan noted the importance of connecting businesses with Workforce, so they could gather information on state and federally funded programs such as on-the-job training, work experience internships, and skills training, so that businesses can begin accessing workforce dollars that are going unspent in the county.
- Master Planning Initiative: Mr. Trahan gave an update on the ongoing Master Planning Initiative within Wood County. Mr. Trahan and Mr. Steele drafted a memorandum detailing the necessary components of the Master Planning Initiative, that will be shared with municipalities. They presented this memorandum to representatives from the cities of Mineola, Quitman, and Hawkins with the intention to share it with the remaining municipalities to seek their input on these components within the Master Planning Initiative.

Chairman's Report:

- By-laws update for the Executive Committee: Mr. Keenan gave a rundown of the existing by-laws and proposed changes to the Executive Committee structure. Mr. Keenan acknowledged with the appointment of the two newest WCEDC Board members, the Executive Committee would be allowed to have six members on the committee. Mr. Keenan proposed the sixth chair will be a rotating position, meaning the board member in that slot would serve for a term of six months. Mr. Keenan also noted the proposal for scheduled meetings for the Executive Committee, stating the Executive Committee will be meeting regularly on the third Wednesday of each month. The proposed changes to the by-laws will be voted on at the next board meeting.
- Conflict of Interest Policy: Mr. Keenan outlined the proposed conflict of interest policy for the Board. This policy will ensure the WCEDC Board and staff will remain in good faith with vendors and third parties who do business with the WCEDC, and encourages good will and trust between the WCEDC and the community. Mr. Keenan highlighted the ethics portion, non-disclosure agreement, and grievance section of the proposed policy. This proposed conflict of interest policy will be voted on at the next board meeting.

Featured Committee Reports – Additional Reports as Needed

- Economic Development: Mr. Trahan presented the Economic Development Committee's report on behalf of Mr. Lindholm. He shared an overview of the ongoing Memory Care project for Wood County in addition to its progress. In the document shared with the Board, Mr. Trahan noted the breakdown of the project, the potential economic impact it could have on Wood County, and quotes from leaders within the University of Texas system each expressing support for this project.
- Health and Human Services: Ms. Winters presented the Board with an update from the Health and Human Services Committee. Ms. Winters handed out a sample brochure of the HHS Committee's health survey that will be circulated to all communities, healthcare facilities, and through the media. She mentioned their goal is to have around 2,000 surveys completed, proportionate to their statistics to the total number of Wood County residents. She mentioned the HHS Committee has approved the brochures, with feedback from the WCEDC board and public are welcome. Mr. Ehlert suggested the brochures could be circulated to each city ISD during enrollment periods, to encourage parents to take the survey and circulate it to relatives, neighbors, and friends.



- **Marketing:** Mr. Eggleston presented the board with an update from the Marketing Committee. Mr. Eggleston mentioned that he and new social media manager Amanda Shirley met with representatives from the city of Mineola, city of Quitman, and Bevell Music to discuss the promotion of their respective communities (Mineola, Quitman, Yantis) on social media. Mr. Eggleston also presented an analysis of the LoveWoodCounty tourism website by Google. He stated that over 8,000 new users visited the site between May 1, 2022, and July 25, 2022. Mr. Trahan made note of ad campaigns being run through the Travel Texas EDA Tourism Grant Cooperative Advertising and Marketing Program, a free advertisement campaign run through the state of Texas with specific targeted advertising on travel websites like Expedia directly linking users with LoveWoodCounty contributed to its growth. In addition to these findings, Mr. Eggleston noted that a majority of visitor traffic on the website originated from the Dallas area. He also discussed additional stories being written by Brynna Williamson, including a recent article on Jarvis Christian University. Mr. Eggleston also mentioned that he's asked Army Bass Anglers and Lake Hub to put together advertisement packages for each of the lakes. Mr. Eggleston emphasized having Army Bass Anglers present at the next board meeting to give a summary presentation of their advertisement packages. Mr. Eggleston also pointed out that Mr. Trahan is in the process of placing an order to purchase additional promotional items to hand out at events, and Ms. Winters suggested purchasing some "kid-friendly" promotional items to promote Wood County.

Adjournment

Mr. Keenan called the meeting adjourned at 1:10 pm.

Approved by WCEDC Board of Directors

Tom Keenan; WCEDC Board Chair

Approval Date: August 24, 2022