



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 December 15, 2021 Board Meeting, at 12:05p.m.

Attendees: Tom Keenan (Chair), Jim Berry, Gwen Winters, Lee Smith, Mike Simmons, Thomas Callan, Craig Lindholm, Allene Doggett, Steve Eggleston, and Steven Steele. Quorum Present.

Members not present: Greg Hollen

Staff Present: Christophe Trahan; WCEDC Executive Director

Others Present: Phil Major with Wood County Monitor, and Adam Ehlert, Holly Lake Ranch Director of Operations.

Call to Order

Chair Keenan called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. and established a quorum.

Citizen Comment: None.

Consider/Approve of November 17, 2021 Minutes: Mr. Smith made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. 2nd by Allene Doggett; Motion carried.

Executive Director Report:

Mr. Trahan updated the board on a previous business retention site visit that had produced a positive result for the business visited. XTO Energy in Hawkins had indicated during the site visit conducted in October 2021 that they had fallen out of communication with key safety officials in the city of Hawkins and Wood County. WCEDC Staff was able to successfully assist in coordinating a community liaison meeting with XTO that brought together members of Hawkins' Fire and Police Departments, the Wood County Sheriff's Department and Emergency Services Department, and members of XTO's internal safety team. Mr. Trahan also presented the board with Sales & Use Tax and Hotel Occupancy Tax Figures for the month of December. Finally, Mr. Trahan shared with the board an internally generated demographics report featuring information about Wood County including population data, economic outcomes, labor data, and other information pertinent for courting site selectors and determining master planning metrics.

Administration:

- Financial Report: The Wood County Auditor's Office was unable to supply WCEDC staff with the necessary documentation in order to generate the monthly financial report in time for the December board meeting.
- Invoice Report: An invoice was submitted for board approval for the local match portion of the East Texas Council of Governments' Regional Broadband Initiative. Mr. Smith made a motion to pay the invoice in increments of \$1,167 over three years as allowed by the program. 2nd by Mr. Lindholm; Motion carried.

Programs:

- Letter of Support for Jarvis Christian College Workforce Initiative: The board was presented with a letter of support for Jarvis Christian College's application for an Economic Adjustment Assistance grant to create a workforce training center on their campus. Mr. Callan made a motion to approve the letter as written. 2nd by Mr. Smith; Motion carried.



- Business Retention Site Visit Update: Mr. Trahan briefed the board on two business retention site visits conducted in the month of December.

On December 8th, WCEDC staff visited Alba/Golden ISD along with WCEDC Board Member Steven Steele and Alba EDC President Wanda Gaby. The ISD reported 2% growth over the last 12 months and discussed a pressing workforce need regarding a deficit of school bus drivers as a result of high mechanical requirements for commercial driver's licenses. The Governmental Affairs committee will be elevating the need for lighter mechanical requirements with lawmakers and WCEDC staff will be researching training opportunities that might mitigate the problem in the short-term.

On December 10th, WCEDC staff visited the Ozarka Wood County Bottling Plant in Hawkins along with WCEDC Board Member Jim Berry. The WCEDC team was introduced to Ozarka's leadership team at the Hawkins facility and given a tour of the plant. Ozarka's leadership indicated a successful transition from its acquisition by Blue Triton and indicated almost all needs in workforce and facilities to be met. A deficit of qualified CDL drivers was indicated.

Finally, Mr. Trahan shared with the board the targets for Q1 2022 site visits which are Sanderson Farms, U.S. Harness, Yantis ISD, Stitchin' Heaven, ETAS Metal Systems, Wood Memorial Nursing Home, & Hawkins ISD.

Chairman's Report

Chair Keenan shared with the board that the East Texas Food Bank will be hosting regular food drives every third Wednesday of the month at Bud Moody Stadium in Quitman and are needing volunteers. Mr. Keenan expressed interest in the board possibly assisting with food distribution prior to the regular monthly meeting every month.

Mr. Keenan also reported that the Sabine River Authority would be lowering the water level of Lake Fork by a total of 6 feet by the end of January 2022 in order to make needed repairs to the dam.

Finally, the Executive Committee has been meeting and working on developing a county-wide strategic plan looking forward to 2045 as a 25 year goal while considering incremental goals at 5 and 10 years. The Executive Committee will be meeting with Tom Mullins, President of T.G. Mullins Consulting during the first part of January to discuss best steps toward developing that plan while generating involvement and buy-in from civic, government, and business leaders.

Featured Committee Reports

- Health & Human Services Committee: Ms. Winters reported that the Health & Human Services committee has drafted a health needs survey that they will be circulating to members of the board as a preliminary to opening the survey county-wide. The committee will then determine indicators from the results of the survey to measure how Wood County's health outcomes can be improved.
- Public Safety: Mr. Callan had no written report, but relayed to the board that he has been researching crime statistics for Wood County. The statistics collected nation-wide by the FBI have not been updated since 2016 and as such are insufficient. Initial reports that Mr. Callan was able to acquire from the Wood County Sheriff's Department reported 1 homicide in 2020 and none for 2021. Violent crimes totaled 658 in 2020 but was not broken down into more specific categories. Violent crimes for 2021 were similarly totaled at 196. Drug crimes for 2020 numbered 21 and in 2021 numbered 145. These figures only represent data for areas of the county serviced by the Sheriff's department and not the cities with police departments of their own.



- Marketing Committee: Mr. Eggleston reported the receipt of promotional items including notebooks, T-shirts, Polo shirts, and windbreakers. Items still awaiting delivery include tote bags, pop-up tents, pop-up banner stands, vinyl banners, pop-up backdrops, and a table cover. Finally Mr. Eggleston reported that the promotional booklet for Wood County should be ready for print by February. The marketing committee is working closely with local writer Brynna Williamson to continue to develop stories for the lovewoodcounty.com as well as the written content for the promotional booklet.

Adjournment

Mr. Tom Callen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:03 p.m. 2nd by Mr. Steven Steele, Motion carried.

Approved by WCEDC Board of Directors

Tom Keenan; WCEDC Board Chair

Approval Date: January 19, 2022