

WHARTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

**Minutes - Regular Meeting
November 13, 2023 12:00 P.M**

President Freddie Pekar called the Meeting to order at 12:00 P.M.

Board Members Participating: Freddie Pekar, Michael Roberson, Larry Pittman, and Andrew Armour

Board Members Not Participating: Alice Heard-Roberts, Michael Wootton, and Russell Machann

Advisory Members Participating: County Judge Phillip Spenrath, City Manager Joseph Pace, Mayor Tim Barker, Ron Sanders, Marilyn Sebesta

Advisory Members Not Participating: Abby King, Betty McCrohan, Michael O'Guin, Kent Hill, Joe Freundberger, and County Tax Assessor Cindy Hernandez

WEDC Attorney Participating: Lauralee Collins

Visitors Participating: Gwyn Teves, Joan Andel, Paula Favors, Russell Baird, Brani Jimenez, Danny Bacot and Mary Lou Gaona

Staff Member Present: Joshua Owens and Louisa Jimenez

Public Comments: President Freddie Pekar asked if there were any public comments. There were no public comments.

Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on October 9, 2023. Director Michael Roberson made the motion to approve all minutes as presented. Director Andrew Armour seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Recognize appointed Wharton EDC Directors. Executive Director Josh Owens welcomed and congratulated Larry Pittman on his appointment to the board and congratulated Director Michael Roberson, Director Andrew Armour, and Director Russell Machann on their reappointment. All voted in favor.

Resolution 2023-08 Authorizing Wharton EDC to enter into an agreement with Wharton Feed & Supply Store for retail development. Director Andrew Armour made the motion to specifically authorize Resolution 2023-08 as presented. Director Larry Pittman seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

108 W. Elm proposal from Russell Baird. Mr. Baird addressed the board with his proposal to buy the vacant lot at 108 W. Elm Street. Mr. Baird is offering to purchase the property at the estimated appraisal value of \$52,000. The vacant lot will be used for parking at 135 W. Burlson and other purposes. Executive Josh Owens thanked Mr. Baird for his presentation. No action taken.

Update on Wharton retail by Retail Strategies. Retail Development Coordinator Madison Neal addressed the board via Zoom to provide an update on Retail Recruitment for Wharton. Madison provided information on the property catalog & prospect list, ongoing & completed projects list, not yet & need franchisee list and the no current interest list. Madison reported he is preparing for the next conference, ICSC Red River, at the end of January 2024. No action taken.

Report from Executive Director and discussion of:

A. Monthly Sales Tax Report. Mr. Owens reported Sales Tax to be up 13% from the budgeted figure. There was a rise in sales tax in September and a decline in October. Mr. Owens stated there has been some variability in amount of sales tax paid month to month and would like to see consistent upward trends.

B. Required PFIA 2256.023 Report. Mr. Owens provided the Board with copies of the required PFIA showing the distribution of assets. Mr. Owens reported that Wharton EDC is in the process of transitioning funds from checking accounts to TexPool and TexPrime accounts. As the CD's mature, the funds will be shifted to the TexPool and TexPrime accounts.

C. Balance Sheet/Commitments. Mr. Owens provided the Board with copies of the current Balance Sheet stating WEDC's total assets were \$2,551,188 and the total liabilities were \$394,025.25, net equity being \$2,157,162.75. WEDC's 2023-2024 commitments are \$394,025.25. Mr. Owens reviewed all commitments as of November 13, 2023.

Mr. Owens reported the following:

OakBend Medical Center-Mr. Owens was able to speak to Mr. Freudenberger. Mr. Freudenberger reported that OakBend is on track with the project and anticipates completion date to be ahead of schedule, in terms of the performance agreement.

Wharton EDC website-Internet traffic has increased in the last month. The aggressive approach in updating and maintaining listings has been good. Mr. Owens received positive feedback on the Wharton EDC website. The Wharton EDC newsletter is in the works and is expected to be launched at the beginning of 2024. The purpose of the newsletter is to draw traffic back to the website.

Levee Groundbreaking-The ceremony will be Wednesday, November 29th beginning at 10:30a.m. Mr. Owens encouraged all board members to attend.

ICSC at Red River-Mr. Owens stated the event will be January 31-February 2nd. Mr. Owens extended an invitation to all board members.

Meeting with Laredo Economic Development-Mr. Owens and El Campo CDC Executive Director Carolyn Gibson visited Laredo and were able to meet with the Laredo EDC Executive Director, IBC Bank, and members of the I-69 alliance.

Sites Selectors Guild-Mr. Owens attended the conference in October.

D. Statement of Revenues and Expenditures. Mr. Owens provided the Board with copies of the statement of Revenues and Expenses as of October 31, 2023.

Director Michael Roberson made the motion to approve the Executive Director's report as presented. Director Andrew Armour seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Executive Session: According to Texas Government Code (Chapter 551, Open Meetings), the Board may conduct a closed executive session for the following reasons: Consultation with attorney §551.071, deliberation regarding real property §551.072, deliberation regarding prospective gift §551.073, personnel matters §551.074, deliberation regarding security devices §551.076, deliberation regarding economic development negotiations §551.087. Final action, decision, or vote, if any with regard to any matter considered in Executive Session shall be made in Open Meeting.

The Board went into Executive Session at 12:40 P.M.

A. §551.087 - Deliberation regarding Economic Development negotiations.

1. **Negotiation on Sites.** No action taken.
2. **Business Retention and Expansion.** No action taken.
3. **Retail Strategies.** No action taken.

B. §551.072 - Deliberation regarding Real Property.

1. **108 W. Elm.** No action taken.

The Board returned to Open Session at 1:24 P.M.

A. §551.087 - Deliberation regarding Economic Development negotiations.

1. **Negotiation on Sites.** No action taken.
2. **Business Retention and Expansion.** No action taken.
3. **Retail Strategies-**On a motion made by Director Andrew Armour and seconded by Director Larry Pittman the following resolution was unanimously approved: Resolved that Wharton EDC move forward with the one-year contract with Retail Strategies. All voted in favor.

B. §551.072 - Deliberation regarding Real Property.

1. **108 W. Burleson-**No action taken.

With no further business to discuss, President Freddie Pekar thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting at 1:38 P.M.

By: 
Freddie Pekar, President

11.13.2023

Attest: 
Andrew Armour, Secretary