

**WHARTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
**Minutes - Regular Meeting**  
**January 22, 2024**

President Freddie Pekar called the Meeting to order at 12:02 P.M.

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

Board Members Not Participating: Alice Heard-Roberts

Advisory Members Participating: Mayor Tim Barker, City Manager Joe Pace, Ron Sanders,  
and Marilyn Sebesta

Advisory Members Not Participating: Cindy Hernandez, Dr. Michael O'Guin, Betty McCrohan,  
County Judge Phillip Spenrath, Joe Freudenberger, Abby King and  
Kent Hill

Visitors Participating: Joan Andel, Gwyn Teves, Paula Favors, Mark Castillo and  
Isabelle Ouimette

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 November 13, 2023-** Director Russell Machann made the motion to approve all minutes as presented. Director Michael Roberson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

**Funding request made by Brahman Country Beef.** Executive Director Joshua Owens stated a Wharton EDC Business Grant Application was submitted with the request for planned improvement to the store front, replacing front glass doors to open outward. Mr. Owens stated the reimbursement amount to be 50% of the total cost of the project located at 138 S. Houston St. No action was taken.

**Utility Extension request for 7359 US Hwy 59.** City of Wharton Director of Planning & Development, Gwyn Teves, addressed the board with the cost estimate to extend utilities to the Wharton EDC Industrial site. Mrs. Teves stated she received a preliminary construction cost estimate back in October 2023 for water and sewer. An estimate of \$606,400 was provided for the construction to occur. Mrs. Teves is working with Quiddity Engineering to get an updated estimate for construction costs and an estimate for engineering costs for the design bid process and construction oversight. Mrs. Teves reported that the construction cost estimate increased to \$784,800, which has been the trend on other construction projects. The board thanked Mrs. Teves for the presentation. No action was taken.

**Proposal for 7359 US Hwy 59 development.** No action was taken.

**Proposal for 108 W. Elm Street.** Executive Director Joshua Owens stated that the owner of 135 W. Burleson, Russell Baird, does not have access to the building through easement or parking. Mr. Owens proposed that a small portion of 108 W. Elm Street to be transferred to Mr. Baird as part of the package for restoring the property at 135 W. Burleson so that he is able to provide adequate parking for the office tenants. No action was taken.

**2024 Wharton County Job Fair update.** Wharton EDC Coordinator, Louisa Jimenez, addressed the board to provide an update on the 2024 job fair. Mrs. Jimenez stated the 2024 job fair will be Tuesday, February 13, 2024, from 9 am-12 pm at the Wharton Civic Center. As of Monday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, there are approximately 30 vendors registered. Mrs. Jimenez received three confirmations from the county school districts (Wharton ISD, El Campo ISD, and Louise ISD). There will be approximately 280 students attending. Mrs. Jimenez informed that employers who would like to participate by being a vendor may register on the Wharton EDC website. The last day for employers to register is Thursday, February 8, 2024. No action was taken.

**Report from Executive Director and discussion of:**

**A. Monthly Sales Tax Report.** Mr. Owens reported Sales Tax to be up 17% above the budgeted amount for January. Mr. Owens is encouraged by the steady upward trend of sales tax receipts.

**B. Required PFIA 2256.023 Report.** Mr. Owens provided the Board with copies of the required PFIA showing the distribution of assets. Mr. Owens stated most Wharton EDC investments have been transferred to TexPool and TexPool Prime, as each is delivering the best rates.

**C. Balance Sheet/Commitments.** Mr. Owens provided the Board with copies of the current Balance Sheet stating WEDC's total assets were \$2,624,329 and the total liabilities were \$363,590, with net equity being \$2,260,739. WEDC's 2023-2024 commitments are \$363,590.

**D. Statement of Revenues and Expenditures.** Mr. Owens provided the Board with copies of the statement of Revenues and Expenses as of December 31, 2023. Mr. Owens reported all accounts are within budget.

**E. Web Site Data Analytics.** Mr. Owens reported there has been an increase in users visiting the Wharton EDC website. There was an audience extension campaign posted in Trade Development magazine for all developers looking for land, warehousing, distribution, and logistics.

**F. Other events.** Mr. Owens attended the Site Selectors Winter Summit in Florida. Mr. Owens and City Manager, Joseph Pace, will attend the ICSC Red River conference from January 31 to February 2. The Wharton EDC and El Campo CDC have partnered in the county-wide economic development monthly newsletter, expected to be distributed at the end of January. Mr. Owens is working with WCJC and a potential developer for the property located off Hwy 60, Wharton, Texas. The educational task force is going well. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board teamed with WISD to coach the students on professionalism in the workplace and prepare them for the upcoming job fair.

Director Andrew Armour made the motion to approve the Executive Director's report as presented. Director Larry Pittman 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 12:31 P.M.**

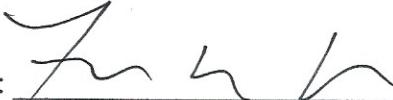
- A. §551.087 - Deliberation regarding Economic Development negotiations.**
- 1. Business Contracts.** No action taken.
  - 2. Business Retention and Expansion.** No action taken.
- B. §551.072 - Deliberation regarding Real Property.**
- 1. 138 S. Houston Street.** No action taken.
  - 2. 108 W. Elm.** No action taken.
  - 3. 7359 US 59.** No action taken.

**The Board returned to Open Session at 1:14 P.M.**


- A. §551.087 - Deliberation regarding Economic Development negotiations.**
- 1. Business Contracts.** No action taken.
  - 2. Business Retention and Expansion.** No action taken.
- B. §551.072 - Deliberation regarding Real Property.**
- 1. 138 S. Houston Street.** On a motion made by Director Russell Machann and seconded by Director Michael Roberson the following resolution was unanimously approved: Resolved that the funding request made by Brahman Country Beef be approved for \$3,091.69 towards the storefront upgrade as the Board finds that it will enhance the property located in Wharton. All voted in favor.
  - 2. 108 W. Elm.** On a motion made by Director Michael Wootton and seconded by Andrew Armour the following resolution was unanimously approved: Resolved that an option be given to Mr. Russell Baird for the land from the rear corners of the 115 W. Burleson Street property extending to Elm St. for the purpose of creating a parking facility for 135 W. Burleson Street's future development. The option will be assumable upon receipt of a certificate of occupancy for 135 W. Burleson Street as per the performance agreement. All voted in favor of the resolution.
  - 3. 7359 US 59.** No action taken

With no further business to discuss, President Freddie Pekar thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting at 1:22 P.M.

**WHARTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

By:   
Freddie Pekar, President

01.22.2024

Attest:   
Andrew Armour, Secretary