

WHARTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Minutes - Regular Meeting
February 19, 2024

President Freddie Pekar called the Meeting to order at 12:04 P.M.

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

Board Members Not Participating: Alice Heard-Roberts

Advisory Members Participating: City Manager Joseph Pace, Mayor Tim Barker, and Marilyn Sebesta

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

WEDC Attorney Participating: Ashley Tegeler-Kleiman

Visitors Participating: Joan Andel, Paula Favors, Gwyn Teves, David Schroeder, Jawed Momin Faheem Qazi, Jawed Ali, and Faran Momin

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 January 22, 2024. Director Russell Machann made the motion to approve all minutes as presented. Director Michael Wootton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Waterline extension for 1620 N. Richmond. City of Wharton Director of Planning & Development, Gwyneth Teves addressed the board with information regarding a waterline extension to 1620 N. Richmond. The request is to extend the waterline which would allow sufficient water for the property. Mrs. Teves is working with Quiddity Engineering for bid options to prevent construction delays and keep costs down. No action was taken.

1301 Infrastructure Extension Bid. Executive Director Josh Owens addressed the board with a Quiddity Engineering proposal for engineering services in connection with FM 1301 water and gravity sanitary sewer extensions. Mr. Owens reports that there are extensive costs associated with the project. Mr. Owens' recommendation is to start the engineering process for FM 1301 in order to determine the actual cost of the project. This proactive approach will provide a distinct advantage over future price fluctuations and ensure that any potential cost escalation can be mitigated. No action was taken.

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

Presentation by Stephanie Konvicka of Hesed House. Mrs. Konvicka addressed the board with a request to convert the \$50,000 challenge grant for a parking lot construction offered in August 2023 to a \$50,000 nonmatching grant for an engineering survey and ADA parking pad for Workforce development. No action was taken.

2024 Wharton County Job Fair Update. Wharton EDC Coordinator, Louisa Jimenez, addressed the board with a presentation on the 2024 Job Fair. Mrs. Jimenez provided the following: a comparison of Wharton County ISD's student participation in seminars, information on student passports, targeted industries, total of job seekers, employer, and ISD feedback. Mrs. Jimenez reported the following: 61 vendors in attendance, 176 job seekers, and 122 students. The board thanked Mrs. Jimenez for all her hard work towards the Job Fair and congratulated her on the success of the event. No action was taken.

Report from Executive Director and discussion of:

A. Monthly Sales Tax Report. Mr. Owens provided the Board with copies of the Monthly Sales Tax Report and said the February sales tax was up 17 points over the budgeted amount. In comparing the last two years of sales tax, Wharton EDC has seen an increase of 40%.

B. Required PFIA 2256.023 Report. Mr. Owens provided the Board with copies of the required PFIA 2256.023 as attached. Mr. Owens reported that all excess funds from all checking accounts have been transferred to the TexPool accounts. As the CD's mature, the funds will be transferred to the TexPool accounts. Mr. Owens stated TexPool offers 1-2 points above what other financial institutions offer.

C. Balance and Commitments Sheet. Mr. Owens provided the Board with copies of the current Balance and Commitments Sheet stating WEDC's total assets were \$2,653,026 and the total liabilities were \$511,261, net equity being \$2,141,764 WEDC's 2023-2024 commitments were \$511,261.

D. Statement of Revenues and Expenditures. Mr. Owens provided the Board with copies of the Statement of Revenues and Expenses as of January 31, 2024, and said the budget was well on track.

Website-Mr. Owens reported traffic to the Wharton EDC website has doubled in traffic in comparison to last month. Mr. Owens credits the increase to the audience extension campaign, Wharton EDC and El Campo CDC newsletter, attending conferences, and the Job Fair.

Planning goals- Mr. Owens reported attending ICSC Dallas with City Manager Joseph Pace. Mr. Owens reported receiving inquiries on a site and completing two Requests for Information (RFI's).

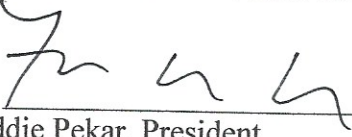
Retail-Mr. Owens continues to work on developing potential sites and connecting the sites to potential retailers. Mr. Owens stated he has received real interest from ICSC and will be meeting with the interested parties.

Workforce Development-Mr. Owens stated the Job Fair was a huge contributor to the workforce development. Mr. Owens and El Campo CDC Executive Director, Carolyn Gibson, attended the Next Move Group Conference and both are reviewing the National Credential for Career Readiness for Wharton County. Mr. Owens and Mrs. Gibson will be showcasing the potential for individuals in Wharton County to transition into manufacturing and distribution careers. Mr. Owens would like to see the efforts boost economic development and create more job opportunities.

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

Minutes of the Regular Meeting held February 19, 2024.

WHARTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD

By: 

Freddie Pekar, President
02.19.2024

Attest: 
Andrew Armour, Secretary