



# Russell County Economic Development and Convention & Visitors Bureau Advisory Board Meeting



*Thursday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026 @ 7:30am @ RCED&CVB Office*

## Meeting Minutes

### Attendance:

Jon Birky, Dustin Madden, Duke Strobel, Malinda Walker (online), Karla Berry, Lacie Austin, Jamie Malone, Kayla Schneider (online), Jeannine Byers-Long, Alex Lofland, Aaron Talbott (online), Jessica Somers, Lisa Sandberg, Ryleigh Wagner, and Mike Parsons.

### Call Meeting to Order:

Chair Jon Birky called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

### Review and Approval of Agenda:

Jamie made a motion to approve the agenda, Karla seconded; motion carried unanimously.

### Review and Approval of Minutes:

Dustin made a motion to approve the minutes, Duke seconded; motion carried unanimously.

### Financial Review:

Mike gave a general overview; CVB fund #150 has spent 10% of the budget for the year, YTD \$9,283.89, with a remaining balance of \$82,816.11. ED fund #155 has spent 23% of the budget for the year, YTD \$58,815.02, with a remaining balance of \$191,184.98.

### Public Comment:

Jessica announced that Russell Main Street and Kac'Rae McAlonan were awarded the Rural Champions Grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce, with the focus on downtown redevelopment and upper-level housing. She also shared that Wicked Fest is on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

### Board Reports or Announcements:

Malinda shared that Buzzard Fest is being held on Saturday in Luray from 1-4. Kayla said they are working on finalizing the design for downtown revitalization and are hoping to plan a meeting with business owners to review. Lacie stated that around 100 people went to Lucas for April-Fools-A-Palooza.

### Staff Reports or Announcement:

- **Billboard Update:** Ryleigh announced the winners of the 2026 Billboard Grant Program. The Community Billboard winners are Angie Muller and Blake Noller. The business winners are Dorrance Bankery, Suzanne's Place, Dream Theater, and Russell Specialty Books & Gifts.
- **KEDA RFP:** Ryleigh is preparing a proposal to host the 2028 Fall Conference in Russell County.

- **Recent Promotion Impacts:** Ryleigh gave a general overview of social media analytics, noting steady growth and strong engagement across platforms.
- **USDA Grant Updates:** A county-wide shared website and event site is under development to help integrate partners' efforts into one place. Succession planning will also be included in this project, including future community meetings and active downtown partnerships.
- **Business Retention & Expansion Efforts:** Coordinating with Commerce for spring BRE visits with major employers, focusing on identifying their needs and connecting them with appropriate state resources. Board members are invited to join upcoming site visits.
- **Childcare Updates:** Discussed ongoing concerns related to recent tax assessment changes impacting mixed-use childcare properties.
- **Kansas Works Bus:** The visit was postponed due to mechanical problems. The bus is going to be used at some specific events and days, and this is going to be coordinated by KansasWorks.
- **Grant Writing Workshop:** Our office is partnering with K-State Research and Extension to host a workshop in Russell County. It was noted that this may be one of the last in-person workshops with Nancy Daniels.
- **Tri-County Old 40:** A project involving Russell, Ellsworth, and Ellis Counties is being explored. Initial contact has been made with the Kansas Infrastructure Hub.
- **Business Recruitment Efforts:** Mike gave an update on the SLP Partnership, stating that plans for attending the upcoming trade shows are in progress.

#### **Unfinished Business:**

- None.

#### **New Business:**

- **Farmers Market-** Ryleigh has coordinated with Kathy McAdoo regarding this year's Farmers Market, and Ryleigh will once again assist with vendor registrations.
- **CVB Funding Request - Waudbys-** They are requesting \$750.00. After board discussion, Jamie made a motion to approve the funding request for \$500.00; Aaron seconded; motion failed with 3 yes and 4 no votes.

#### **Executive Session (Time – Start and Finish):**

Dustin made a motion to recess into executive session to include ED & CVB staff to discuss information relating to potential new businesses pursuant to the discussion of data relating to financial affairs or trade secrets of corporations, partnerships, trusts, and individual proprietorships exception, K.S.A. 75-4319(b)(4). The open meeting will resume in the board chambers at 8:35 a.m. Jeannine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **Adjournment:**

At 8:35 a.m., Dustin made the motion to adjourn, Jon seconded; motion carried.

Next Advisory Board Meeting: May 21<sup>st</sup> @ 7:30 am @ Eco Devo & CVB Office