



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



Thursday, May 21st, 2026 @ 7:30am @ RCED&CVB Office

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Jon Birky, Dustin Madden, Duke Strobel, Malinda Walker (online), Karla Berry, Lacie Austin (online), Jamie Malone (online), Jeannine Byers-Long, Alex Lofland, Lisa Moubry, Ryleigh Wagner, and Mike Parsons.

Call Meeting to Order:

Chair Jon Birky called the meeting to order at 7:29 a.m.

Review and Approval of Agenda:

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

Review and Approval of Minutes:

Jeannine made a motion to approve the minutes, Jon seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Financial Review:

Mike gave a general overview; CVB fund #150 has spent 21% of the budget for the year, YTD \$19,103.39, with a remaining balance of \$72,996.61. ED fund #155 has spent 41% of the budget for the year, YTD \$104,186.50, with a remaining balance of \$145,813.15. Mike also noted that \$20,000 of the grant has been reimbursed. Once we get the schematics for the buildings on Main Street, we will get reimbursed for the remaining \$27,500.

Public Comment:

Lisa Moubry shared that the Russell Area Chamber of Commerce is gearing up for Freedom Fest events on July 3rd and 4th. This year will also have The Dynamite Dash, a 5k, a block party, and a movie on Main Street.

Board Reports or Announcements:

None.

Staff Reports or Announcements:

- **Table Activity Sheet/Coloring Book:** Ryleigh presented samples of a Russell County-themed coloring book and activity sheet, incorporating the One Stop Shop QR Code. Suggestions and Feedback were welcome.
- **KS Newmar Sunflowers:** Ryleigh shared that a group of 20 individuals will be visiting Russell in August and staying at Triple J. They are requesting assistance with arranging activities, tours, and things to do during their visit from August 20th to 22nd.
- **National Register Workshop:** The Kansas Historic Preservation Office will host a free public workshop on June 10 from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the former Ruppenthal Middle School, covering historic preservation, local history, and the National Register process.

- **SLP Business Meetings:** Our partners have now completed two trade shows, and virtual meetings have been scheduled for the week of June 8-12. Mike and Ryleigh plan to travel to Dallas, Texas, in August for in-person meetings.
- **Workforce Incentive Program Update:** Eligibility requirements are significantly limiting use, particularly geographic hiring restrictions. Further review with partners will be needed to determine whether any feasible path forward exists.
- **USDA Grant Update:** Our new website has launched and is approximately halfway completed. The updated website is more mobile-friendly, which is expected to help support community-wide events and program promotion efforts.
- **NWKSTC Host:** Ryleigh will be hosting a meeting in July; she is currently exploring possible venues.
- **State Business Awards:** Nominations are currently open, and we are actively seeking candidates for all award categories.
- **Housing Projects Update:** Housing planning efforts remain active, with discussions focusing on development opportunities, funding sources, and overall project structure.
- **NRP Renewal Issues:** NRP renewal negotiations have yet to be settled. Only six townships attended the meeting, with no voting taking place. Seven additional public hearings and township meetings are being scheduled.
- **Childcare Updates:** Ryleigh stated that Representative Troy Waymaster attended their last meeting regarding the current property tax issue and expressed support for addressing the issue at the state level. One application was submitted regarding the 10 Jay Street property; however, it was unsuccessful, and the application process is expected to reopen.

Unfinished Business:

- **Lovegrass Music Festival-** Discussion was had regarding previous funding received by Lovegrass through the RCACF. The board agreed that a list of past RCACF-funded projects should be reviewed prior to deciding.
- **Fire Sprinkler Grant Program-** Mike presented the board with an initial draft and shared that the office is exploring potential funding opportunities for a limited number of projects.

New Business:

- **Freedom Fest Fireworks-** They are requesting \$500. After board discussion, Jon made a motion to approve the funding request for \$500.00; Duke seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **Waldo Fireworks-** They are requesting \$900. After board discussion, Duke made a motion to approve the funding request for \$900.00; Jon seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **Wilson/Dorrance Toy Run-** They are requesting \$500. After board discussion, Dustin made a motion to deny the funding request for \$500.00; Karla seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **Market Square-** Our office is working with Brady Ruggels on a possible sponsorship.

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 9:15 a.m. Jeannine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment:

At 9:15 a.m. Dustin made the motion to adjourn, Duke seconded; motion carried.

Next Advisory Board Meeting: June 18th @ 7:30 am @ Eco Devo & CVB Office