



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



Thursday, August 13th, 2026 @ 7:30am @ RCED&CVB Office

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Jon Birky, Dustin Madden, Duke Strobel, Malinda Walker, Karla Berry, Jamie Malone (online), Alex Lofland, Jeannine Byers-Long, Kayla Schneider, Mandy Funk, Kac'Rae McAlonan, Lisa Moubry, Lisa Sandberg, Ryleigh Wagner, and Mike Parsons.

Call Meeting to Order:

Chair Jon Birky called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Review and Approval of Agenda:

Mike noted that he would like to add ROAR Art Show to the agenda. Jeannine made a motion to approve the agenda, Jon 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 43% of the budget for the year, YTD \$39,106.12, with a remaining balance of \$52,993.88. ED fund #155 has spent 49% of the budget for the year, YTD \$124,829.28, with a remaining balance of \$125,170.72. Mike stated the ED balance increased due to a USDA grant reimbursement of \$27,500, and a higher utility bill is expected next month. June expenses included community support for the Waldo After Harvest Festival and Russell Celebrations fireworks, while major ED expenses included salaries and utilities.

Public Comment:

Lisa Moubry thanked the board for their donation towards the fireworks and announced that Prairiesta planning has begun. Mandy Funk announced she is the newly appointed Director at Russell Main Street. Kac'Rae shared that she is wrapping up the housing assessment and applied for a grant to support expansion into economic development and tourism.

Board Reports or Announcements:

None.

Staff Reports or Announcements:

- **Childcare Updates – Beacon Program:** Ryleigh shared that Child Care Aware will be hosting a forum on September 1 at Chet's Place to gather feedback and discuss the social challenges surrounding childcare. She also reviewed Grow Hays' new BEACON Program, which offers affordable evening childcare, meals, and study space for parents pursuing education or training. The board agreed to follow up with Grow Hays before considering a similar local program.
- **Conference Recruitment:** Ryleigh plans to submit an RFP to host the 2028 Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference.

- **Promotional Item Update:** Mike shared that the office is exploring options for the next round of promotional items and welcomed suggestions from the board.
- **FAM Tour:** Planning is in progress for the upcoming FAM tour as part of the office's recruitment partnership with SLP. Updates will be shared as details develop.
- **Chicago IMTS:** Mike will be attending a manufacturing trade show with the opportunity to meet in person with potential clients.
- **Holiday Collective:** Ryleigh shared that planning for this year's Holiday Collective has started and things are moving along well. The tentative date for the event is November 14.
- **Bus Tour Update:** The Kansas Newmar bus tour group, made up of approximately 20 visitors, will be in Russell August 20–22. The group will tour museums, murals, and shop at local businesses while experiencing what Russell has to offer.
- **AI Workshop:** The office is exploring the possibility of hosting an AI workshop for local businesses in partnership with regional organizations. A proposed budget will be presented at a later date.
- **Vehicle Update:** The office vehicle required unexpected repairs totaling approximately \$1,300.
- **Market Analysis / Development Plan:** We have received the first draft of the market analysis and development plan and have submitted the first round of edits. Mike will share the draft with the board for additional review and suggestions.

Unfinished Business:

None.

New Business:

- **CVB FR – Paradise Fall festival \$1,500** - They are requesting \$1,500.00. After board discussion, Dustin made a motion to approve the funding request for \$1,200.00; Duke seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **CVB FR – Luray Craftique \$500.00** - They are requesting \$500.00. After board discussion, Duke made a motion to approve the funding request for \$500.00; Jon seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **CVB FR – BB&BBQ \$1,155.00** - They are requesting \$1,155.00. After board discussion, Jon made a motion to approve the funding request for \$3,500.00; Jeannine seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **CVB FR – Flatland Car Show \$500.00** - They are requesting \$500.00. After board discussion, Duke made a motion to approve the funding request for \$500.00; Jon seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **CVB FR – Scouts Shoot \$1,000.00** - They are requesting \$1,000.00. After board discussion, Jon made a motion to approve the funding request for \$250.00; Duke seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **RCHS Billboard** – The board discussed whether to still help fund a billboard for The Russell County Historical Society. The first half is \$1,213.50. After board discussion, Duke made a motion to pay for the billboard; Malinda seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- **ROAR Art Show** - After board discussion, Jon made a motion to approve a sponsorship in the of \$500.00; Dustin seconded; motion carried unanimously.

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 9:00 a.m. Duke seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment:

At 9:00 a.m., Dustin made the motion to adjourn, Jeannine seconded; motion carried.