Meeting: GO Topeka Board of Directors

Place: Partnership Board Room

Time: 7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Date: June 7, 2019

Board: Scott Anderson, Steve Anderson, Bob Archer, Linda Briden, Tony Emerson, Andrea Engstrom, Dan Foltz, Eric Johnson, Kurt Kuta, Treena Mason, Gianfranco Pezzino, Martha Piland, Madan Rattan, Angel Romero, Marvin Spees, Matt Strathman, Brent Trout, Jacob Wamego, Daina Williams, Doug Wolff

Staff: Barbara Stapleton, Curtis Sneden, Diann Faflick, Katrin Holzhaus, Karen Christilles, Lindsay Lebahn, Molly Howey, Rhiannon Friedman, Vince Fry, Natalie Zeller, Freddy Mawyin, Rebecca Atnip

Guest: John Keddy, Security Benefit

Kurt Kuta called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Consent Agenda Items

1. Minutes from April 5, 2019
2. Financials
3. Vision and Missions Statements

The consent items listed above were provided in the meeting packet prior to the board meeting. The motion was made and seconded to approve the consent agenda items. The motion carried.

GO Topeka Audit. Scott Gales was not present at the meeting. In his place, Kuta reported the audit was reviewed by the audit committee and the Executive Committee approved the audit before it went before JEDO in May. Although bringing this to the board now is out of sequence, it has gone through the necessary steps. Kuta said this was a clean, unqualified audit, meaning there were no significant findings. The management letter did not include any items that required follow-up observations that could be improved, such as dual-control items. Kuta noted this was the first audit under the partnership. He said the financials look a lot different than what we have seen before, and going forward, the financials will mirror this format, specifically being accrual based, rather than cash based.

A motion was made and seconded for the board to acknowledge the audits were complete and reviewed by the board. The motion carried.

GO Topeka Bylaw Amendment. Curtis Sneden presented a Resolution to Amend the GO Topeka Bylaws. This amendment would provide a position to a representative of GO Topeka’s Entrepreneurial and Minority Business Development Council (EMBD). This position would be designated as a Director by Virtue of Position Held owing to the unique and valuable perspective such a representative would bring to the Board’s discussions. In addition, this representative would also serve on the GO Topeka Executive Committee. Once approved, the individual will be identified and introduced to the Board.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the resolution to amend the GO Topeka Bylaws. The motion carried.

Air Service Update. Doug Wolff said the MTAA is actively engaged with a major carrier. He said Eric Johnson met with the carrier at their headquarters. The meeting went well, and the carrier is very interested in working with Topeka and the Dallas hub. They are now talking about three flights a day, rather than two. This would be effective the summer of 2020 at the earliest.

Wolff noted Topeka has some success before with getting additional funding through small community air service development grant. An application is being submitted for these funds, which could potentially add an extra $750,000 to the revenue guarantee.

Wolff said they have not received the business support they need from area businesses. Molly will be sending out the template to help board members by email to create a letter of support. These letters were critical in the past for securing the grant funds. The deadline for the letters will be the end of June.

Plug and Play (PNP). John Keddy, Security Benefit, presented an overview of PNP. Keddy said he has had a successful relationship with PNP for over three years. PNP’s focus is on organizations and individuals who are in the early stages of development. PNP has a global reach with an extensive network of companies looking for a US footprint. They do not have an animal health vertical and realize this is a gap they need to fill.

Opening up this area could be an excellent opportunity for Topeka and would put Topeka on the map of the Animal Health Corridor. It would also give Topeka an opportunity to lead the region in innovation, attract qualified talent and gain access to Silicon-Valley-based venture capital.

Katrin Holzhaus said their first meeting with PNP was in October 2018. A letter of intent was signed three weeks ago that opens a 90-day feasibility window for both sides to evaluate feasibility for PNP to setup a regional headquarters in Topeka.

Call to action: Holzhaus asked board members to please help welcome PNP during their visit to Topeka June 24 - 26. Holzhaus said the initial meetings will be with key people in Topeka. The second trip would have a more networking event and community involvement. Howey added there has been a lot of support from local government.

Holzhaus also invited the board to join the Summer Summit June 11-13 in person or participate virtually to get an idea of what is to come. Finally, she asked the board members “To be champions of innovation in your organizations and the community.”

Washburn Tech East Barbara Stapleton shared the information about the grand opening for Washburn Tech East. To date, with the classes offered at the temporary space at Antioch Family Life Center, 190 students are enrolled, with 67 GED students and 32 ESL students. Stapleton invited the board to the grand opening on the June 21st, which will be the first opportunity to see the completed building.

Talent Attraction Incentives Strategy. Stapleton provided an initial draft of a strategy for attracting talent to Topeka. Kuta said this was the result of some outside discussions and a local business owner who suggested a pilot project. Examples presented were from Vermont and Tulsa. Although these programs were used to attract remote workers, the basic concept is to provide incentives to attract new talent to the workforce, specifically young professionals.

Howey added this idea started at one of the retreats and with further discussions with one of our businesses. This is the first discussion we are having about this and we want to open this up for conversation and for ideas. This in not currently budgeted and we would also need to cap the amount we would spend.

Stapleton said this would be funded by employers then they could submit for reimbursement after a year, similar to pay for performance dollars. This would be up to the employers on whether and how it was used and how much they would give an employee.

Kuta said this goes back to MO 2022 discussions and GO Topeka in how to attract new talent to Topeka. If we moved forward with something like this, it would need to be presented to JEDO and formally adopted. This would be a positive way to encourage candidates to come to Topeka rather than forcing them to move here.

Feedback, questions and suggestions are welcome as this concept is further developed. More communication will follow about next steps.

Mars Update. Molly Howey shared highlights from the last JEDO meeting. Mars brought a proposal before JEDO to reallocate their property tax funding. The original contract said their property tax funds must be used for sustainability improvements at Kanza Fire or a fire station and fire assets to serve the area. Mars started conversations with city leadership and the decision was that there is not a need for a fire station in the immediate future. Mars would like to reinvest the money into the community in a way that is mutually beneficial to Mars and the community. The first step was to see if the contract could be amended. The proposal was brought before JEDO to amend the language of the original contract to allow then to access the funds. The JEDO board thought they needed more information and did not want to approve the amendment to the agreement at that time. Howey said it looks like Mars will come back to JEDO at a later date. The city is doing some fire station assessments at this time as well.

Brent Trout, City Manager, said they are close to identifying the location of the next fire station. They are looking at property now. This will be Station 13, which is actually relocation of Station 11. Station 14 is the next one to be located in the south part of town but there are not enough calls to justify the cost of $6M to build and $1.2 – $1.3M annually to operate. Trout said arrangements are in place with the National Guard for situations that require additional fire response, such as County Stampede. Trout noted that Mars didn’t take out the possibility of money for a new fire station. They would still have money to cover any fire-suppression needs. This was additional money they have above and beyond that could be invested in the community.

Commissioner Bob Archer cautioned that these are still public funds and are still subject to the KORA act. Mars cannot allocate these funds to spend however they want to. This could result in a complaint from the Attorney General about how the funds are spent.

Projects Update. The projects update was presented by Rhiannon Friedman and Molly Howey.

* Project Baseball is a Financial Services Company, with projected a 200-250 new jobs. They are looking for 50,000 sq. ft. of Class A office space.
* Project Petal is an International Metal Fabrication Company looking for a new US location, with a projected 455 new jobs. Howey said this project has been fairly active, and they have been able to put some existing space before this company.
* Project Emerald is a Meat Processing Company, with a projected 80 initial new jobs. They are looking to invest $50M into a state-of-the-art production plant.
* Project Lightening is still in the works and decision is anticipated in August. Howey said Topeka is still the preferred site of the two they are considering.

Management Report was presented by Molly Howey

* Retreats are completed for the year. Based on feedback, we are moving forward with the strategic plan and will bringing that to you at the end of the year.
* The GO Topeka nominating committee has been working hard on filling eight spots for next year.
* The incentive discussion continues to evolve. We are looking at how to refresh incentives to attract more of the companies Katrin will be working with and leads generated through PNP.
* Howey, Marsha Pope and a few other community members are involved in Community Philanthropy Innovators Network (CPIN). We are the first cohort in Kansas working with Aspen Institute.

Kuta reminded the board that the next meeting is August 2. There is no Executive Committee meeting in July.

Kuta said they will be assessing the meeting times for the Go Topeka board next year. Board members will receive a survey with options for meeting times. He said Fridays are challenging to get people to attend. It is not only the work during the meeting, but also the networking that can happen after the meetings.

Meeting adjourned.

Minutes taken by Rebecca Atnip