

**Joint Economic Development Organization Board Minutes
February 9, 2022**

In-Person and Via Zoom
City Council Chambers
214 SE 8th Street, 2nd Floor
Topeka, Kansas
Wednesday, February 9, 2022

The Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO) Board members met at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom meeting and in-person with the following voting Board members present: Shawnee County Commissioners Aaron Mays, Kevin Cook and Bill Riphahn; City of Topeka Mayor Michael Padilla, Deputy City Mayor Spencer Duncan and City Councilmember Neil Dobler. The following members participated remotely: City Councilmember Hannah Naeger. Shawnee County Commissioner Aaron Mays presided as JEDO Chair.

The following nonvoting JEDO Board members were present: City Councilmember Tony Emerson. The following members participated remotely: City Councilmember Sylvia Ortiz.

The following JEDO Board members were absent: City Councilmembers Karen Hiller, Christina Valdivia-Alcala, Brett Kell and Michael Lesser.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was conducted in-person as well as virtually via Zoom meeting. Zoom access was provided to those individuals signed up for public comment.

APPROVAL of December 8, 2021 JEDO Board Meeting Minutes was presented:

Commissioner Cook moved to approve the Minutes of December 8, 2021. The motion seconded by Councilmember Dobler carried unanimously. (7-0)

A PRESENTATION on 2021 GO Topeka Fourth Quarter Report was presented:

Molly Howey, GO Topeka President of Economic Development, announced that GO Topeka had a ribbon cutting and grand opening for Honest Mill and Honest Kitchen, also known as Project Central. It will offer 50 new jobs and 10 million in capital investments. She stated how exciting it is to watch them grow here in the animal health corridor as a top of the line pet food manufacturer. She stated they have had some opportunities to work with the City for partnerships to apply for state funding for projects that are important for infrastructure such as finishing out central crossing and some other projects. She also explained how they have been making great strides in the aviation industry. Lastly, she introduced the President of Security benefit, Doug Wolf as the Chair of the Go Topeka Board of Directors this year.

Doug Wolf, Chair of GO Topeka Board of Directors spoke. He explained how he's been a part of Go Topeka for a while and is pleased to get to know the members of JEDO.

Ashley Lehman, GO Topeka Business Development Manager, presented. She shared the Activity Report and there are currently 24 active projects. She shared the No Submission report which tracks the types of projects that they have to pass on because they have criteria that Topeka and Shawnee County does not meet. This includes things such as site or building requirements, acreage and square footage.

Councilmember Emerson asked Ms. Lehman for the numbers on the No Submission percentages.

Ms. Lehman explained the total is 15 from around March of 2020 until now. That would be 9 for site or building requirements, 3 for acreage and 3 for square footage.

Trina Goss, GO Topeka Director of Business and Talent Initiatives, presented. She gave an overview of things that have been going on as it relates to workforce and talent development and retention. She stated they hosted an informational session regarding a new community resource tool called Workforce Inventory Website. The purpose is to connect job seekers with opportunities to find employment as well as tools for the process of finding a job. This will be hosted on the GO Topeka Website. Ms. Goss stated that she wanted to thank Councilmember Hiller for helping with the project. She then reported on the TopCity Teachers Program. This is a free class given twice a year for teachers and student teachers to educate them on the community and ultimately to retain their talent in Topeka. They will also host a panel with seasoned teachers and educators on how to best interact with parents.

Rhett Flood, Executive Director of Forge Young Talent presented. He explained that Forge's role is to focus on the attraction and retention of young talent in our community. He introduced two members of Forge that will present tonight.

Richard Kelly, Chair, Key Staffing & Premier Employment Solutions, presented. Forge Strategic Focus for 2022 is reviewing and updating strategy plans, refreshing and revamping the branding and messaging, and having new passion, new energy and new ideas.

Mayor Padilla asked about the recruitment with their membership, are there any professions that you still need to fill?

Mr. Kelly replied that they are still trying to work on those metrics in figuring out who they need to target to better expand their demographic.

Fatima Luthi, Chair-Elect, Envista Credit Union, presented. She explained that the DEI Committee (diversity, equity and inclusion) focuses on ensuring that young talent have voices that are included, heard and respected throughout the organization.

Glenda Washington, Chief Equity & Opportunity Officer for GO Topeka and the VP for Minority and Women Owned Businesses, gave an update on some things she has been working on. She reported on the DEI Summit. She said it all came together and they are planning on doing it again this fall. They had 18 *Seat at The Table* Meetings. She explained how she has been working with the City on the *Supplier Diversity Initiative*. Next, she talked about the *Holiday Pop-Up Shop* in which over 200 individuals attended and participated to support some of Topeka's minority owned

businesses. Ms. Washington explained that they have hired a consultant to help with the outreach to the Hispanic Businesses. They are looking at the needs for those businesses. Lastly, she announced that they will be holding a women's forum with a speaker out of Kansas City.

Lyndsay Lebahn, Program Manager at Plug and Play Topeka, presented. She explained how they just had their Selection Day. They start off with 100 companies and then have 20 that compete in a shark tank style pitch. The main focus areas were Packaging, AI, Sustainable Protein, Automation, 3D Food Printing, Gamified Nutrition and Telehealth. All reflect direct challenges that our businesses are facing. She went over the timeline and the graduation will be May 6th.

Laurie Pieper, VP of Small Business for GO Topeka, presented. She explained how they have retained some of some Small Business Incentives such as Marketing, Equipment, Construction & Renovation and Architect & Design. They also have added some new incentives to attract new kinds of businesses. She went over the new application process that includes the online application, cover letter and new requirements for new businesses. She also went over the new review process which includes a review committee charter, front-end review and evaluation based on program & specific incentive objectives. She then went over the review schedule which included the application close date, then materials to the review committee, then the committee review, the applicant notifications, then approved expenditure window, then reimbursement requests, the final review, and finally the checks are cut. She stating they are working on innovation by continuing to work on marketing the Innovation Center, working on a university engagement strategy and coordinating with Plug and Play to put together a webinar series. Ms. Pieper explained that for entrepreneurship they are working on a small business, entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem survey. They are also working on putting together a year-round mentorship program as well as giving small business awards on May 10, 2022.

PUBLIC COMMENT was provided by the following:

Danielle Twenlow spoke on equitable data use. She went over how equality is providing the same thing to everyone but equity is recognizing that not all people have equal resources or needs. She did an overview of some statistics for Topeka. She concluded by stating that she is urging the board today as they move forward in making project decisions and money investments to ask yourselves, how are all racial ethnic groups affected by these decisions? She believes that by building equity in our community, it will be a place that people want to move to and stay.

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.