

Carter County Joint Economic and Community Development Board (JECDB)
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2023

A. Call to Order

The Carter County Joint Economic and Community Development Board (the “JECDB” or “Board”) was called to order at the Carter County Court Room around 6:05 pm by Chair Aaron Frazier.

B. Roll Call

Chair Fraizer welcomed all board members and guest present at the meeting and asked for a Roll Call of Board Members present.

Board Members Present:

Mayor Patty Woodby – Carter County Mayor
Mayor Curt Alexander – Elizabethton City Mayor
Secretary David LeVeau – Northeast Community Credit Union (Financial Sector member)
Ginger Holdren – County Commission
Aaron Frazier – County Commission
Bill Carter – Elizabethton City Council
Wes Frazier - Elizabethton City Council
Daniel Estes – Elizabethton Electric Department member (City Manager)
Brenda Loyd – Greenbelt Member

Guest Logan Engle – City of Elizabethton Assistant City Manager

All Board Members confirmed present except John Hunter (Johnson City Council), Mayor Delissa Lafleur (Watauga Mayor), Tony Garland (Carter County School System), and David Hicks (TCAT). The position for the Industrial Sector remains vacant. Chamber of Commerce designee remains vacant.

C. Adopt Agenda

The agenda and other meeting information was distributed to the Board members via email prior to the meeting. Chairman Frazier requested the adoption of the agenda as presented. Commissioner Holdren made the motion and Mr. LeVeau seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by a roll call vote.

D. Public Comment

Since only one guest outside the Board Members were present, there were no public comments.

E. Elections

Chair Frazier called the next item for the election of Officers for new terms. The Officers to elect for new terms were Board Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary.

- a. Chairperson** – Commissioner Holdren made a motion for Mayor Alexander for Chair. Being no other nominations, a roll call vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.
- b. Vice Chair** – Newly elected Chair Alexander opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chair and Commissioner Holdren was nominated for the position. Commissioner Frazier moved that the Board ceased nominations and voted by acclamation. A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with one no vote from Commissioner Holdren.
- c. Secretary** - Next Chair Alexander opened up the floor for nomination for Secretary. Commissioner Frazier nominated Mr. LeVeau for the Secretary position. Commissioner Frazier moved that the Board ceased nominations and voted by acclamation. A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

F. Old Business

City Update

Chair Alexander asked City Manager Estes to provide the City update. City Manager Estes deferred the City update to Assistant Manager Engle.

Asst. Manager Engle began with the Façade Grant. The City increased the grant to \$30k for downtown property owners to improve the facades of their businesses. There were 11 applications this year and able to fund 9 projects which will wrap up by June 2024.

Downtown improvement grant – City applied and was awarded \$300k funded by the State, the maximum award. There was a total of \$900k awarded in the NE TN region with Johnson City and Bristol also awarded \$300k. The application process each had to provide a demonstration of need in the communities.

Industrial side – Project Torque. Can't publicly say the specific industry/business at this time. However, there is an Economic Development Grant – ECD \$\$\$. IDB involved-City Board approval. The City is serving as a pass through, then funds will be distributed to the industry.

Property Evaluation Program – The county has a Technical Assistance Program that was not a grant-no funds. The state pays a third-party site selection consultant to evaluate land sites for industrial development. Carter County has had it though because of our geography. So we did a joint application with Washington County. It was submitted and awarded to both counties. A consulting company from Ohio performed the evaluation and selected 5 sites in Washington

County and 3 sites in Carter County. One and a half of our county sites were publicly owned – one is the Cherokee Industrial site property which is publicly owned, another site is the Matheson property, and the third site is the State Line Property and EED which is ½ public property. The end goal is a report that the consultants will provide to both counties in which the format is uncertain - by county or reported together.

County Update

The Carter County update was provided by Mayor Patty Woodby. The Tweetsie Trail grant approved was for \$6.3 million to extend the trail and create the biking trails in Hampton. Waiting on those funds to be received.

NE TN Recovery Center in Roan Mountain has opened for around 30 days and consists of 6 formally incarcerated males while 3 formally incarcerated females live in a home in Johnson City. The second phase of the center will include classes for the residents. There is limited security, but the residents have an incentive to remain because if they leave the facility, they lose their chance of recovery and will be sent back to jail. The FTDD handles all fiduciary responsibilities for the Recovery Center and has a \$1.8 million reoccurring grant. TCAT and NE State are developing a curriculum for the third phase to work toward job certification for these residents.

Carter County Higher Education Center is having its groundbreaking in February and there is a 3-year implementation time frame.

Three Star Grant – another feasibility study for a hotel, post COVID to see if this has changed and provide updated information to begin recruiting hotel opportunities. These studies have a short life span, so the previous study completed, pre-COVID, is no longer relevant.

G. New Business

- a. West Carter Development Corridor** – Commissioner Frazier spoke about when TVA came in to do their study, they were interested in the area between the Milligan area and South Roan Street in Johnson City. This included sites that Washington County and Johnson City were doing for the PEP Grant. Since this area may include some sites like Borla included in the PEP grant we may not need discussion at this time. The Board agreed for now.
- b. Agricultural considerations** – Not having hotels has in the county has increase created growth in Air B&Bs and rental properties. There are currently 450 Air B&Bs in Carter County. This includes cabins and homes for rent to help support tourism. Those are 450 homes that will not come up for rent or homes for sale. Can look up the number of homes on the Verbo website. Because of the lack of a hotel, the county is losing homes that could be sold on the market for residents who stay in the community that contribute and pay taxes. Unfortunately, it does

not share vacancy rates. Folks from out of state are coming and buying homes with cash, driving the prices up, while local residents cannot afford to purchase homes in the region. The supply of homes is low and the demand in our area has increased, which is also driving prices higher. We are competing for homes in our own market.

- c. **Tourism Development** – looking into another lodging feasibility study as previously mentioned. Also, the Tweetsie Trail Grant previously discussed updates.
- d. **Info on PEP Grant** – Logan Engle already covered in her presentation.

H. Board Member Open Mic – Other Business

There was no other business to discuss. The next meeting will take place on Thursday, December 21st at 5:00pm.

I. Adjourn

With no further business, Chairman Alexander adjourned the meeting around 7:00pm.

Mayor Curt Alexander, Chair of the Board

David LeVeau, Secretary