



**Development District of Central Texas**

**Board of Directors**

Central Texas Council of Governments 2180

North Main Street, Belton, Texas 76513

**Thursday, October 21, 2021—9:30am**

**Board Members Present:**

Ginger Watkins: Milam County  
Cynthia Hernandez: Bell County  
Dean Roome: Bell County  
Mark Allen: Bell County  
Charley Ayers: Bell County  
Bobby Whitson: Bell County

**Others Present:**

Uryan Nelson: CTCOG  
Helen Owens: CTCOG  
Anna Barge: CTCOG  
Dominic Elizondo: CTCOG  
Hope Geiger: CTCOG  
Michael N'Dolo: MRB Group  
Alyson Slack: MRB Group  
Tracy Verrier: MRB Group  
Betty Russo: Office of the Governor  
David Williams: City of Kempner

**MINUTES**

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- 1. Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order by Ginger Watkins, Chair of the Board, at 9:30am. A quorum was present.
- 2. Public Comments.** There were no Public Comments.
- 3. Staff Updates.**

Helen Owens gave an update about CTCOG activities, technical assistance for regional CARES ACT funding, MRB Group's progress on the CEDS draft, the completion of Leadership Central Texas 2021, the hiring of a new Economic Development Planner, plans for a Small Town Summit in 2022, and other economic updates.
- 4. Discussion and Possible Action Item:** Regarding approval of minutes from the July 8, 2021, Meeting.

Cynthia Hernandez made a motion to approve the minutes, and it was seconded by Dean Roome; the motion passed unanimously.

- 5. Discussion Item:** Regarding update on the Post-Pandemic Economic Recovery and Renewal Plan and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

Michael N'Dolo, the Executive Director of Economic Development with MRB Group, presented a power point on the CEDS project schedule, Community Toolkit, and Regional Marketing suggestions, and answered the board's questions on all relevant topics.

- 6. Discussion Item:** Regarding Regional Based Marketing Plan

Michael N'Dolo discussed key suggestions from the appendices of the CEDS for developing a Regional Based Marketing Plan, including formalizing a regional identity, creating targeted content, and reaching out to local partners.

- 7. Discussion Item:** Regarding updates on the Rural Internship Program activities

Curah Beard provided updates on Rockdale Chamber of Commerce and Vision Historic Preservation Foundation's participation in the Rural Internship Program. Rockdale Chamber of Commerce's intern worked closely with the local farmer's market, promoting it and interviewing vendors as well as sharing recipes. Vision Historic Preservation Foundation's intern researched various arts programs to incorporate in the future.

- 8. Discussion Item:** Regarding starting a Small Business Resiliency Award program.

Helen Owens updated the Board on initiating a Small Business Resiliency Award Program, finding that certificates from the Office of the Governor would for awardees would be accessible, and that the City of Austin's Award Program did not use applications but instead asked their Chamber of Commerce to nominate businesses that excelled in adapting to the economic impact of COVID-19. The topic was then open for discussion on how to nominate and award businesses, and Ginger Watkins suggested following Austin's approach by reaching out to Chambers of Commerce or local Economic Development entities for nominations and have County Judges selecting awardees. Charley Ayres suggested requiring one business Award per County. Cynthia Hernandez asked for clarification on what the Award entails, and Helen Owens specified that awardees will receive a certificate from the Office of the Governor, the DDCT will sponsor one awardee for a spot in Leadership Central Texas for 2022, as well as provide media coverage and recognition from the Executive Committee for the businesses. Ginger Watkins suggested doing a random drawing for selecting the sponsored awardee. Cynthia Hernandez asked if the Award process would impose too much on County Judges or Commissioners, and Uryan Nelson suggested he would inquire if they had any concerns in participating in the Program before moving forward. Kendra Coufal suggested starting the program on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year. Ginger Watkins suggested using photos and media from the Award Program to incorporate into the Regional Based Marketing Program.

- 9. Discussion Item:** Regarding update on regional broadband initiatives.

Anna Barge gave an update on the region's broadband initiatives, including Connected Nation's Broadband Surveys across Milam, Lampasas, and San Saba counties, CTCOG's

RFP for a regional broadband study, as well as potential avenues of funding for broadband initiatives.

**10. Discussion Item:** Regarding federal and state legislative updates pertaining to economic development.

Anna Barge gave an update on SB-8, which has been passed by the State House and Senate and sent to the Comptroller's Office. The bill will be funded through the State's ARPA appropriations and includes \$500 million for broadband infrastructure.

**11. Discussion Item:** Regarding updates on grant opportunities.

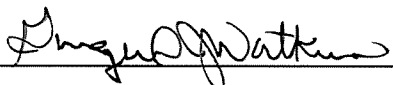
Helen Owens discussed and provided information on various funding opportunities from state and federal agencies, including an EPA Brownfields Grant.

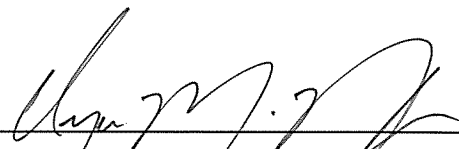
**12. Board of Directors' Comments.**

Cynthia Hernandez asked if staff was working with the State Veteran's Commission on an event or initiative, and Anna clarified that CTCOG was working with them on an event in February for teaching employers on how to engage with, market to, and hire veterans, as well as a conjoined event for veteran entrepreneurs. Cynthia Hernandez mentioned a film using Bartlett as a location and recognized the economic activity happening in the film industry in south Bell County. Ginger Watkins commended the MRB Group on their CEDS work, Curah for her work with the Rural Internship Program, and Betty Russo from the Office of the Governor for partnering with DDCT.

**13. Discuss agenda items for next meeting on Thursday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at 9:30am.**

**14. Adjourned** at 10:30 am.

  
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Ginger Watkins, DDCT Chair

  
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Uryan Nelson, Planning Director

