

Development District of Central Texas

Board of Directors

Central Texas Council of Governments 2180

North Main Street, Belton, Texas 76513

Thursday, January 6, 2022—9:30am

Board Members Present:

Ginger Watkins: Cameron
Industrial Foundation
Cynthia Hernandez: Belton
EDC
Dean Roome: Bartlett Municipal
Development District
Mark Allyn: Morgan's Point
Resort EDC
Charley Ayers: Workforce Solutions

Others Present:

Uryan Nelson: CTCOG
Anna Olvera: CTCOG
Anna Barge: CTCOG
Dominic Elizondo: CTCOG
Hope Geiger: CTCOG
James McGill: KTMPO
Col. Chad Foster: Fort Hood
Michael N'Dolo: MRB Group
Gabriel Puente: RGVision
Jim Gibson: Rockdale Municipal Development District
Ted Gonzalez: Central Texas College
Kerry Filllip: Nolanville EDC
Cheri Shepherd: Gatesville Convention and Visitor's Bureau
Jamie LaDuke: Hamilton EDC

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order by Ginger Watkins, Chair of the Board, at 9:50 AM. A quorum was present.

2. **Public Comments.** There were no Public Comments.

3. **Staff Updates.**

Dominic Elizondo gave an update about CTCOG activities, including the Leadership Central Texas and Rural Internship Programs, economic development newsletters, a new regional tourism website project, plans for a Small Town Summit in the Spring, and other economic updates from Workforce Solutions' Economic Snapshot for Q4 of 2021. Mark Allen asked about the times for the Small Town Summit, and Dominic Elizondo clarified that no time had been set

yet. Cynthia Hernandez inquired about the target audience for the Small Town Summit, and Dominic Elizondo clarified that it would be city officials, board members, and staff. Ginger Watkins asked how people not currently receiving the economic development newsletter could access it, and Dominic Elizondo explained that he could add email addresses to a distribution list, and that the newsletters are also posted on the DDCT website.

- 4. Discussion and Action Item:** Regarding approval of minutes from the October 21, 2021, Meeting.

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

- 5. Discussion and Action Item:** Regarding Approval of New Board Members

Five new members were before the Board for approval-Cheri Shepherd with the City of Gatesville Convention and Visitor's Bureau, David Williams-the Kempner City Manager, Jamie LaDuke-the executive director of Hamilton EDC, Ted Gonzalez-the Associate Deputy Chancellor of Business Services at Central Texas College, and Jim Gibson-Economic Development Director of Rockdale Municipal Development District. Cheri Shepherd, Jamie LaDuke, Ted Gonzalez, and Jim Gibson introduced themselves to the Board. Charley Ayres made a motion to approve the prospective Board members, and Cynthia Hernandez seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

- 6. Discussion and Action Item:** Regarding Approval of the Post-Pandemic Economic Recovery and Renewal Plan and 2022-2026 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs).

Dominic Elizondo provided an update on the Public Comment period and Public Hearing held for the CEDs at the end of 2021, with no additional comments on the 2022-2026 CEDs made. Mark Allyn made a motion to approve, with Charley Ayres seconding. The motion was passed unanimously.

- 7. Discussion Item:** Regarding Developing a Regionally Based Marketing Effort

Dominic Elizondo discussed the Action Plan Matrix from the 2022-2026 CEDs, which outlined two strategies as part of a goal to accelerate regional business attraction and growth: these were to create a regional brand and marketing plan, and a regionally based tourism effort. Dominic Elizondo also reviewed Michael N'Dolo's discussion at the last meeting on the CEDs' Appendix F-Regional Marketing for Business Attraction. Dominic Elizondo discussed CTCOG's contract with marketing consultant RGVision to develop a regional tourism website. Col. Foster, Garrison Commander at Fort Hood, gave a talk on unifying a brand with Central Texas and Fort Hood. Col. Foster emphasized that Fort Hood wished to support the development of a regional tourism effort. Ginger Watkins and Charley Ayres both stated their enthusiasm to be able to coordinate and work with Fort Hood at the highest level on this effort. Gabe Puente, CEO of RGVision, gave a presentation on their marketing firm, the scope of work of their contract with CTCOG, which includes developing a Central Texas tourism website, brand, and marketing effort, the phases and time frame of the project, and initial concepts. Gabe Puente also noted that RGVision had already performed comparative analysis of Central Texas with other regions such as Austin, San Antonio, and Rio Grande Valley. Col. Foster asked if it would be useful for Ft. Hood to highlight site for the tourism project independently or as part of Killeen or another municipality. Ginger Watkins suggested that this would be something worked out between Ft.

Hood and RGVision/CTCOG as the project progressed. Ginger Watkins then noted that in January the environment is not in the best state to be photographed or filmed, and asked how RGVision would work around this. Gabe Puente stated that RGVision would possibly have a photo submission folder where cities could submit photo/video they already have from different times of year. Charley Ayres asked if RGVision had ever worked with or utilized Texas Highways Magazine, with Gabe Puente responding that they had not. Charley Ayres noted that Texas Highways Magazine has a catalogue of photos by region that are publicly accessible and shareable that RGVision may be able to use. Cynthia Hernandez remarked that she was excited about the partnership with Ft. Hood and to have an opportunity to market events and the region to people moving there. Cynthia Hernandez then asked if CTCOG/RGVision was working with local community development entities on the tourism project, with Dominic Elizondo responding that they would be holding a series of stakeholder meetings over the next few months that would involve members of different community and municipal entities. Dominic Elizondo then brought up a site list document that contained potential photo/video sites for 32 cities around the Central Texas region, stating that it would be sent out to the Board for feedback on sites that should be added or removed. Cynthia Hernandez commented that sometimes in collection of photos to market a community people are left out, creating the impression of a ghost town, and that small town festivals should play a large role in what the tourism project markets. Ginger Watkins asked if it would be beneficial for the DDCT Board to find contacts in their communities in EDCs, Chambers, Tourism departments, etc. to be sent to Dominic Elizondo to be involved in the tourism project process, with him responding that it would be helpful if this was done.

8. Discussion Item: Regarding Approval of the Rural Internship Program

Dominic Elizondo gave an overview of the 2022 Rural Internship Program, with \$2000 scholarships being offered at \$500 each to Chambers of Commerce, EDCs, and Departments of Tourism for the interning of high school students, and the updated application form. Charley Ayres made a motion to approve, with Mark Allyn seconding. The motion was approved unanimously. Mark Allyn asked if the previous year's funds were fully utilized, with Dominic Elizondo stating that he believed last year \$1500 of the \$2000 were distributed to three entities. Mark Allyn remarked that the program should be marketed heavily, and noted that he would share it with his community.

9. Discussion Item: Regarding Approval of Application for 2022 Leadership Central Texas Program

Dominic Elizondo gave an overview of the 2022 Leadership Central Texas Program and updated application. Cynthia Hernandez made a motion to approve, and Mark Allyn seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

10. Discussion Item: Regarding Approval of a Small Business Resiliency Award Program

Dominic Elizondo gave an update on the previous meeting's decision on the creation of a Small Business Resiliency Award Program, which would have Chambers of Commerce around the region select a member business that has successfully demonstrated resiliency or "pivoted" during the pandemic to nominate for the award, with County Judges selecting one awardee per County. Each awardee will receive a Certificate from the Governor's Office recognizing the business, and the DDCT would randomly select one awardee to be sponsored by DDCT for Leadership Central Texas. Dominic Elizondo went over the nomination form and

what the certificate would look like. Ginger Watkins asked if the seven County Judges were on board to do the selection of awardees. Dominic Elizondo noted that Uryan Nelson would reach out to the County Judges to determine if they would be willing to take on the workload, and that it was not expected to be a large amount of work on their part. Mark Allyn made a motion to approve and Dean Roome seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Discussion Item: Regarding 2022-26 CEDS Action Matrix

Dominic Elizondo gave an overview of the 2022-26 CEDS Action Matrix, explaining that each goal was broken down into objectives with strategies to achieve each objective. He stated that he would bring up high priority strategies under these goals to obtain feedback from the Board on next steps. He brought up one strategy that recommended an Opportunity Zone investment forum be held and asked the Board for input on how this might work and who the partners might be. Cynthia Hernandez asked if the exact number of Opportunity Zones in the region were known, and Dominic Elizondo accessed the Office of the Governor's Opportunity Zone GIS Map showing Opportunity Zones in Temple, Belton, and Harker Heights. Cynthia Hernandez noted that a summit would mostly be about connecting investors with available sites within these zones. Mark Allyn asked if DDCT was looking regionally at I-14 distribution opportunities and noted that it would be beneficial to reach out to commercial developers along that route as there is a large amount of growth there. Dominic Elizondo asked for Board input on how to reach out to investors, and Ted Gonzalez noted that the aerospace industry was growing in the region and buying up land, with Charley Ayres stating that there needs to be outreach to site selectors and industrial developers. Charley Ayres and Mark Allyn brought up that Opportunity Zones need sites that developers want to develop to be viable. Charley Ayres reiterated that we should take advantage of I-14 development and how it intersects with I-35 and that staff needs an outreach plan for those developers. Jim Gibson brought up Opportunity Zone funds and suggested that staff look into examples of what kind of projects they do, with Dominic Elizondo noting that they largely do real estate and industrial investments. The next strategy was identifying and preparing additional sites for industrial and distribution facility development. Ginger Watkins noted that this strategy would largely be up to local efforts, and that in the City of Cameron's experience, they are in need of industrial real estate, as well as that in rural areas property owners hold on to their property for family or sell at high prices. Mark Allyn commented that there may be an opportunity for cities to partner with property owners that are not attached to their property and work together on developing the property. Mark Allyn noted that I-14 should pass through the Cameron area and Ginger commented that CTCOG/DDCT could tackle this strategy by assisting smaller communities in accessing resources of strategies of forming public-private partnerships. Jim Gibson commented that in rural communities this often takes the form of infrastructure improvements to make land usable. Cynthia Hernandez commented that it seemed property went to the highest bidder where there is high growth, and that this would make it difficult to have public-private partnerships with property owners. She also mentioned that it would be useful to discuss planning and zoning, so that cities can preserve land for certain uses in times of growth. Another CEDS strategy was to strengthen partnerships between institutes of higher education and high schools for apprenticeships, skilled work, post-secondary education, etc. Dominic Elizondo mentioned the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grant program through the Texas Workforce Commission, which is a \$16 million fund for public colleges and school districts for career and technical education programs that lead to future careers and certificates, as a possible source of funding for partnerships when it opens. Charley Ayres noted that there is already a regional council known as the P20 Regional Council, which brings together all of the public school districts and institutes of higher education in the region. He also mentioned that Workforce Solutions of Central Texas is the financial and management

entity for P20, and operates an Education Outreach Program, including coding and cybersecurity camps. The last strategy was to encourage a diversity of retail, services, and entertainment establishments in part by hosting a "Texas Downtowns" Summit. Charley Ayres noted that increasing foot traffic is not the issue, but rather staffing for small businesses as Workforce Solutions has had to change hours of service. Ted Gonzalez mentioned that the traditional method of how consumers access products is now largely online, and that the focus of the summit should be more on how businesses obtain more customers rather than increasing foot traffic. Jim Gibson brought up a webinar he attended pre-COVID, which stated that the key to developing downtowns and increasing foot traffic is to have a certain number of event days each year-in the webinar this amount was 250, though he was unsure of the scale of the City that would hold this many events. Col. Foster mentioned that Ft. Hood was rebalancing their approach to services and destination making, looking at adding a large fitness center in an area with other destination type services to increase foot traffic.

12. Discussion Item: Regarding Updates on Regional Broadband Initiatives

Anna Barge discussed various broadband opportunities and initiatives for the region, including the Connected Nation Broadband reports for Milam, San Saba, and Lampasas, and CTCOG's hiring of Foresite Group as a regional broadband consultant.

13. Discussion Item: Regarding Federal and State Legislative Updates Pertaining to Economic Development

Anna Barge discussed the programs funded by the recently signed Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act (IIJA).

14. Discussion Item: Regarding Updates on Grant Opportunities

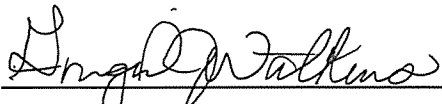
Dominic Elizondo provided an update on State and Federal grant opportunities, including the TxCDBG Planning and Capacity Fund, the Texas Workforce Commission's JET program, and the USDA ReConnect program.

15. Board of Directors' Comments.

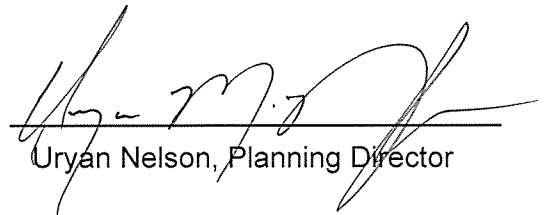
There were no comments from the Board.

16. Discuss agenda items for next meeting on Thursday, Apr 7th, 2021, at 9:30 AM.

17. Adjourned at 11:15 AM



Ginger Watkins, DDCT Chair



Uryan Nelson, Planning Director