

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES

September 2, 2021

The Economic Development Advisory Board of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, Oklahoma, met in a meeting at the Municipal Building Conference Room at 201 West Gray on the 2nd day of September, 2021, at 8:45 a.m. Notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Hossein Farzaneh  
Ms. Chris Purcell  
Ms. Mayumi Windler  
Mr. Chuck Thompson, Chairman

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Matthew Allen  
Mr. Ben Graves  
Dr. Alexander Holmes

OTHERS PRESENT:

Ms. Brenda Hall, City Clerk  
Mr. Lawrence McKinney, Norman  
Economic Development Coalition  
(NEDC), Ex-Officio Member  
Ms. Heather Poole, Assistant City  
Attorney  
Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager  
Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney

\*\*\*\*\*

**Item 1. Welcome and introductions.**

Chairman Thompson welcomed everyone and introduced Mr. Lawrence McKinney with the Norman Economic Development Coalition (NEDC). Mr. McKinney said he has been involved in some listening sessions to get an idea of Norman's strengths and weaknesses and what the public wants for their City. He said Economic Development Administration (EDA) has \$3 billion set aside for use within five programs, which will be available in March and is expected to be quite competitive. He said \$500 million has been set aside for entrepreneurship programs under the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program. There is also \$1 billion anticipated for Oklahoma's Build Back Better Program. He said an application partnership between NEDC, City of Norman, and University of Oklahoma (OU) would get strong consideration.

**Item 2. Approval of the August 6, 2020, and August 13, 2020, meeting minutes.**

Member Purcell moved that the minutes be approved and the filing thereof be directed, which motion was duly seconded by Member Windler;

Items submitted for the record

1. Norman Economic Development Board minutes of August 6, 2020, and August 13, 2020

and the question being upon approval of the minutes and upon the subsequent directive, a vote was taken with the following result:

YEAS: Members Farzanah, Purcell, Windler,  
and Chairman Thompson

NAYES: None

Chairman Thompson declared the motion carried and the minutes approved and the filing thereof was directed.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Item 3. Discussion and possible action related to the development of economic development programs directed at small business recovery and entrepreneurial start-up businesses to be funded by American Rescue Plan Act funds.**

Mr. McKinney said the entrepreneur ecosystem in Norman to help small businesses is somewhat disjointed. He said approximately 10,000 square feet of space is needed for incubator programs and NEDC is looking for a large co-working space in Downtown Norman. He said NEDC has an incubator start-up known as 405 Innovator currently operating in an office on Main Street, but the space is not large enough. He said there is also an accelerator program, which is similar to an incubator program, but is much more stringent because it is accelerating growth in small business.

Mr. McKinney said OU has a Venture Capital Firm that is starting to raise approximately \$25 million, but that is focused on OU innovations, not community innovations. He said if community funds could be found to vet some small businesses within the community, that would be ideal.

Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager, said the conversation about investment of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in the world of innovation and entrepreneur activity would be nice and if allowed would permit NEDC or the City of Norman to match funds on some of these activities. He said ARPA funds must be programmed by 2024, and spent by 2026. He said City Council just approved \$1 million for entrepreneurial activity through grants and venture capital is risk capital for opportunities versus investing in incubator space that generates the entrepreneurial spirit for generations. He said Council is very interested in hearing the Economic Development Advisory Board's (EDAB's) thoughts and recommendations use of this money.

Item 3, continued:

Mr. Chuck Thompson, EDAB Chairman, said EDAB has made recommendations for a grant program for small businesses in the past and those funds were disbursed in late 2020. He said at that time, Councilmembers did not fully understand the difference between a donation, contribution, and investment as well as the work that goes into determining whether or not something is a good investment. He said Council understands EDAB's collective ability to look at an opportunity and determine if it will be a workable endeavor. He said Mr. McKinney is talking about taking money and investing it into a co-working space, incubator, etc., to help entrepreneurs grow businesses, which would have a higher likelihood of success.

Mr. McKinney said the score on a funding application would potentially be higher if matching funds were available.

Mr. Thompson said another potential opportunity for economic development is a Center of Excellence for Women and Minorities as an incubator. He said women were displaced more during the pandemic than men so that could be a focus for an incubator.

Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney, said most of the information in the ARPA rules regarding economic development and responding to employers and issues related to jobs is under the negative economic impact category. She said the rules state the funds have to be used in ways designed to address harm from an economic climate resulting from or exasperated by the public health emergency and whether the use of funds would be used to address this harm.

Mr. Thompson said some really bright small business ideas have evolved from the pandemic and he would like to reward those ideas. He asked members for their input if Council designated \$1 million towards economic development efforts for incubators and/or entrepreneurial activities.

Member Windler suggested the closed Homeland Grocery Store on Main Street be used as an incubator space.

Mr. McKinney said the old post office location could be a potential location and Ms. Walker said Norman Public Schools owns the building and has plans for the building so she is doubtful it would be available.

Chairman Thompson said there seems to be consensus to recommend investing \$1 million towards a co-working and incubator space.

Member Farzaneh said co-working space is important and there are lots of examples in Oklahoma City, e.g., Star Space 46; great places to have shared administrative support, copiers, etc., He suggested including language to address COVID issues and how to address that in a co-working space, such as sanitizing, social distancing, etc.

Ms. Walker said Staff will draft language to bring back to EDAB for review.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Item 4. Miscellaneous Discussion.**

None

\*\*\*\*\*

**Item 5. Adjourn.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.