

Economic Development Commission Notes
Thursday Nov. 2, 2023
1011 North Coronado Drive (City Hall)
City Manager's Conf Room (1st floor)
8:30 – 9:45 AM

1. Review past meeting notes/due-outs

a. Nothing significant to report. Those present include: Chairperson Dr. Gary Packard, Vice Chair Wallace Ricks, Council member Hannah Rainey, Michelle Hagele, and Marvin Kouza, and ex officio member Melany Edwards-Barton. Staff present were Tony Boone and Dianna Cameron.

2. Council Member Updates

a. Nothing to report, no council members present.

3. Staff Report

a. General updates were provided by Tourism and Economic Development Director Tony Boone. There are some projects in the works with some hope to announce them soon. Potential projects are in progress at the municipal airport, such as a projected feasibility study and commissioners expressed eagerness to assist in those efforts with their networks and resources. Staff reported a slowdown in the number of business courtesy inspections and new business openings. Staff is waiting for the dust to settle and further information as to the implications of Castle and Cook's withdrawal from Tribute.

4. Routine Tasks

a. Plans – nothing to report.

b. Strategic plan/General plan – The commissioners discussed the six objectives for the economic development element of the Vista 2030 General plan. Suggestions for potential changes included the addition of a strategy to quell negativity surrounding the border, citing that the negative press has detrimental effects to tourism, population growth, economic progress, and business development. They collectively feel that there should be a stronger initiative to combat this problem. Other suggestions included consolidation of some of the strategies to eliminate redundancy, support for targeted educational ecosystem, zoning to encourage business development and redevelopment, incentives, the incorporation of water challenges and strategies, and a broader focus on non-military objectives. The commission chair created a worksheet designed to solicit feedback around the objectives and strategies in a format that answers the questions posed to them regarding the plan at the previous meeting. Commission chair has requested that the commissioners provide their comments, suggestions, and notes to him via email by the end of next week (Nov. 10, 2023) for consolidation into one document for recommendation and approval. If the commissioners provide the information and the consolidated recommendations are approved via email, the commission will forgo the Dec. meeting and plan to reconvene in May.

c. Business recognition – nothing to report

5. Ad hoc Tasks – nothing to report

6. Commission Initiatives

a. Commission Charter – Commission charter was updated per the discussion at the previous meeting and the commission approved the acceptance of the charter as written. (Please provide a copy of the charter as approved to attach to the notes)

7. Sector Updates

a. Melany – Reported on the success of Bring a Vet to Lunch event, as well as a meeting with White House staffers, representatives of the Governor’s office, law enforcement agencies and Cochise County officials. During the meeting Melany was able to advocate for immigration reform from the perspective of Cochise County businesses and tried to stress that the border issues are not as dire as they often appear in mainstream media. The SVA Chamber has also opened nominations for their board as well as registration for the Christmas parade.

b. Wallace – Reported that government contracts are changing hands, but there is no impact or loss of jobs.

c. Hannah – Reported on a successful meeting with Ft. Huachuca clinic to include some collaborative recruitment and industry talent management.

d. Michelle – Reported that they are still seeing activity in the commercial market with both large and small properties. She stated that she estimates that 90% of commercial sales are either cash purchases or owner carry and do not involve a lender. She also provided copies of the residential market report and stated that interest there is still stable.

e. Marvin – Reported seeing more military members staying at the Knights Inn recently which is an indication that other more expensive hotels may be at capacity. He stated that Oct. was a great month for occupancy with the events in Sierra Vista and surrounding Cochise County. They are also serving many guests who are staying while they await closing of home sale, indicating that we are continuing to draw tourists as well as new residents to the area. He stated that guests have been requesting means of transportation to and from Tucson airport, as well as reporting difficulty in obtaining rental cars at our local agency.

f. Gary – Reported the UofA CAST is working with Cochise College to create a stronger educational ecosystem within our community. He is also waiting for more updates and information regarding their current property and potential plans for the space in the future. Progress continues on the west end property, and he is hopeful that it will be ready for occupancy in approximately 18 months.

8. Updates/Comments from the Public – none

9. Confirm Next Meeting – The next meeting is scheduled for Monday Dec. 4th @ 9:00 but is subject to cancellation pending email collection and approval of the general plan recommendations prior to that date.

10. Meeting adjourned at 9:45am