

MEETING MINUTES
Office of Economic Development
Economic Development Advisory Board
57 E. 1st Street, Mesa, AZ 85201
Lower Level Council Chambers

Date: March 7, 2023 Time: 7:30 A.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Rich Adams (Chair)
Brian Campbell
Michelle Genereux
Christopher Nickerson
Dominic Perry
Laura Snow

EX-OFFICIO

Mayor Giles (Excused)
Chris Brady (Excused)
Sally Harrison
James Kasselmann
Natascha Ovando-Karadsheh
Jennifer Zonneveld (Vice Chair)

STAFF PRESENT

William Jabjiniak
Chris Molnar
Jaye O'Donnell
Maribeth Smith
Lucy Hambright

MEMBERS ABSENT

Steven Henderson (Excused)
Kathleen "KJ" Jolivette (Excused)

GUESTS

Vice Mayor Francisco Heredia
Bryan Smith

1. Chair's Call to Order

Chair Adams called the March 7, 2023, meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Board to order at 7:32 a.m.

2. Items from Citizens Present - None

3. Approval of Minutes from January 3, 2023, Meeting

Chair Adams called for a motion to approve minutes. A motion was made to approve the January 3, 2023, minutes by Christopher Nickerson, seconded by Brian Campbell.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – Adams, Campbell, Genereux, Nickerson, Perry, Snow

NAYS – None

Chair Adams declared the motion carried by unanimous vote.

4. Hear from Vice Mayor Francisco Heredia regarding economic development in District 3

Chair Adams welcomed Vice Mayor Heredia to the Board meeting.

Vice Mayor Francisco Heredia represents District 3, which covers West Mesa, generally west of Country Club to the Tempe border and just south of Guadalupe north to the 202. The district encompasses Riverview, Cubs Stadium, and Westwood High School. He stated it's been a pleasure serving the City of Mesa, working on behalf of Mesa residents, from workforce development to infill projects, to business development, to a quality-of-life items. Vice Mayor shared that he grew up in the Southwestern tip of Arizona, outside of Yuma, Arizona, in the small town of Somerton. His parents immigrated to this country

from Mexico, working as farmworkers, and then settled here. His mom worked as a public-school cafeteria supervisor for 30 years and his dad was a construction employee for 30 plus years. His parents gave him the support he needed to do what he wanted in this country and accomplish his goals. Vice Mayor studied at Arizona State University, earned a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's in public administration. His desire was to become a city manager, but life takes you different directions. He met his wife during college, and once married, experienced other fields and started working in a nexus of community and politics. He worked in that space for 15 years in Arizona, California, Texas, Colorado, and Florida.

In 2017, there was a vacancy for a Mesa city council position, and he was lucky to be one of 40-50 plus applicants that applied and was ultimately elected to become the city councilmember for District 3. During his four and a half years on the council his priorities have been strong, thriving neighborhoods, infill development/placemaking, and building Mesa's workforce and supporting small business. Strong neighborhoods are built by investing in public safety, parks, retention basins, libraries, and streets. West Mesa is an older part of town with very little vacant land. So, we must take advantage of infill potential and build density in a strategic way. Opportunities for placemaking, like the Asian District, which is on Dobson from Main to Broadway and further down to Southern is an important opportunity to attract additional employment, citizens, and tourists. He shared that this year there are approximately 1,500 units in the development stages in West Mesa, from Riverview down south to Fiesta Mall, and approximately 1,500 more units to come. There are also thousands of square feet of new and redeveloped infill retail in this area. Finally, building workforce capacity and supporting small business is paramount. Other than a few large employers like Dexcom, a lot of West Mesa's employers are small businesses. The Economic Development Department has done a good job of creating spaces for small business owners to get involved, get trained and receive support. Although the pandemic hurt a lot of our small businesses, it also provided an opportunity for the city to invest in our small business community in a way that we haven't before. Investing in workforce development and initiatives like the Mesa Promise program, which supports students in achieving a post-secondary education, is important. Additionally, strategically partnering with academic institutions that are building programs around current industry builds capacity for the future. Many companies relocate to Arizona because of available workforce, but if our current and future workforce isn't fully trained, educated, we miss the boat. So, the city must be a direct partner in this space.

Chair Adams appreciated Vice Mayor's remarks about his background and reflected on his remarks at the dedication of the Martin Luther King street signage. He felt Vice Mayor's remarks that morning were poignant and to the point, and Chair Adams expressed his admiration of them.

Brian Campbell stated that the Vice Mayor's background and leadership has been critical, especially in some of the issues he identified in his opening remarks. He commented that workforce has been an issue since he was chair and asked how the Board can help with his vision.

Vice Mayor Heredia stated that it's complicated since it involves working with various partners in the community to be able to maximize resources and maximize efforts. It's not going to happen in silos. So, the importance of collaboration and partnerships will be key in how we share data and information with each other. On the business front, he felt connecting businesses to those partners who have a pipeline of potential people that can work in these businesses is key. He felt more collaboration between business and education was needed. We're still lacking some cohesive, comprehensive connection piece.

Mr. Campbell agreed that the challenges of matching education with changes in the workplace, is difficult, expensive and a long-term problem. He also mentioned a recent issue in the press about the Arizona Attorney General's Office launching an anti-trust investigation of a proposed merger of large supermarket chains in town and the potential for 100 locations to close statewide. This may cause a short-term

challenge, but a long-term opportunity to continue placemaking in Mesa. He asked Vice Mayor to share his thoughts on his placemaking approach and how we can help achieve that.

Vice Mayor shared that Mesa has been known as a bedroom community, but over the last 15, 20 years that has changed. His perspective on placemaking is to develop areas where citizens can dine, shop, and work locally. Spending their tax dollars in Mesa. Regarding the grocery stores, it is something we will need to keep an eye on because we could be looking at areas, especially in west and downtown Mesa, that could become large food deserts if grocery stores close. In addition, shopping centers could struggle with the closure of an anchor grocery store. The Asian District grew organically over the last 12 to 15 years, since the recession, where we have over 80 plus Asian businesses, mostly restaurants. The city has been investing in the area, designating it as the first Asian District in the State of Arizona, and probably one of the better Asian districts in the Southwest. The city will continue working with our business community to amplify those efforts. It is a unique area that offers opportunity for small business to grow and prosper as well as large employers, like Dexcom and Waymo, to benefit from the workforce and area amenities. Fiesta Mall will be another opportunity for placemaking in west Mesa. With different centers like Fiesta, the Asian District, and Riverview, how do we make that connection and add more employment opportunities?

Ms. Ovando-Karadsheh commented that the Latino community in Mesa is almost 30% of our population and has been the backbone of growth in Mesa but doesn't have its own district or community. How can we as a Board and city better serve the Latino community?

Vice Mayor Heredia stated that a large part of Mesa small businesses are Latino owned, from restaurants to service. The opportunity the city had with the Asian District was because it was so naturally concentrated. The Latino community is more spread out within the city, although possibly the bulk of the population is concentrated west of Gilbert Road. The city's support of small businesses automatically supports Latino entrepreneurs. Vice Mayor commented he is a two-time small business owner in West Mesa, leasing some space near the Asian District. Housing has been an important topic and a complex issue for us. How do we look at housing in the future and today, building opportunities for first time buyers, renters, and a mix of different housing across our city. When looking for ways to really engage Latinos in city processes, he felt that sometimes we forget quality of life items, like our parks and initiatives such as the Mesa Promise Program. Vice Mayor mentioned that during the first two years of the Mesa Promise Program we hoped to target students that sometimes get lost in the system. Those students with a GPA of 3.0 to 2.5, largely students of color, that may not have considered an opportunity to further their education beyond high school. He felt that investing in programs that help citizens, like our Latino community, obtain employment or advance their education are important aspects of a healthy community.

Jim Kasselmann thanked Vice Mayor Heredia for his support of Dexcom's expansion efforts over the years. He also reflected on the Mesa Promise program efforts and compared Dexcom's access to skilled workers five years ago to what is available today, commenting that advances have been made. Mr. Kasselmann thanked the city and specifically, Vice Mayor Heredia, for the leadership role he has taken.

Vice Mayor Heredia appreciated the comments. It's always good to hear that initiatives are making a difference to businesses within your district and the city.

Christopher Nickerson mentioned a conversation he had with Vice Mayor Heredia last summer at a workforce development meeting where the opportunities for nursing students, medical students, and in particular, students that are graduating from EVIT were discussed. He felt EVIT was an underrepresented resource in our community and asked how we can we assist in expanding EVIT into more programs and get the word out to students that might not choose higher education or students that may not know what is available to them.

Vice Mayor agreed that EVIT is a great education model for hands-on learning giving students a direct track to employment opportunities. They offer classes that assimilate working at a doctor's office or a welding shop. The city partners with EVIT most recently donating a fire truck to them. EVIT is an important asset that we should leverage more. Partnerships with industry to build programming is essential. EVIT partners with a community health center housed on campus. He felt there were additional opportunities to partner with Banner and MCC, as well. Offering students certificate programming and certifications will be an important aspect of how the next cohort of workforce develops. West Mesa includes various institutions such as Alverno and Carrington Colleges to assist with the shortages in the nursing field.

Mr. Jabjiniak commented that Dexcom has provided excellent employment opportunities in West Mesa, currently employing 2,000 people with only 250 of those positions in Southeast Mesa. Having that employment base there means so much to the residents in the area, but it also helps with the attraction side. Following the success of the Asian district, Jaye O'Donnell and city staff have focused efforts this past year on the Broadway corridor. Possibly there is an opportunity to involve the Latino community in that area. A strong partnership was formed between the city and the Asian Chamber during the city's branding process.

Chair Adams reiterated that Vice Mayor used the term amplify when speaking about how the city worked with the Asian District and commented that, from his perspective, it makes a huge difference. Some communities sit back and watch while organic things like that happen, but Mesa stepped in at just the right level as an amplifier. He offered the chorus of strong voices within the Board who are positioned and willing to assist in amplifying the ideas you put forth this morning. Chair Adams also felt that the honorary street signs for late Arizona native and civil rights leader Cesar Chavez was a great start at placemaking on Broadway Road between Mesa and Stapley Drives and thanked Vice Mayor for his support of that initiative.

Laura Snow shared that Banner is partnering with Taiwan Semiconductor in North Phoenix, working quickly and intentionally to educate their employees who are relocating from Taiwan about American healthcare. Banner has been very successful in becoming their healthcare partner of choice. As we are aware that there will be other businesses within that supply chain that will be relocating to the area, are we leveraging the Asian District to potentially attract some of those supply chain companies? Additionally, since Banner has already begun a great model of partnering with those young families, she felt it was a great opportunity for the health system to partner with the city to provide some reassurances about the availability of healthcare and to be that great healthcare partner. She inquired if the city was having those conversations.

Mr. Jabjiniak replied that there is a tremendous opportunity there, but we haven't spoken in depth around healthcare. We are talking about the Asian District and the City's educational opportunities as those are important amenities. Although healthcare is one aspect that we haven't yet embraced deeply he would love to have that deeper conversation.

Ms. Snow commented that they've learned that the way people access healthcare in Taiwan is very different from healthcare here. Banner is working on service features that allow for easy translation. Imagine walking into an emergency department, not understanding how to access healthcare and not being able to communicate appropriately with a provider. That would be a really jarring experience from the patient's perspective. Banner has done a ton of work over the last couple of months to adapt their communication materials, communication tools, and staff to ensure that they are culturally aware of the differences. Banner has made a major investment in that area and would love to partner with the city in furthering its development.

Ms. Ovando-Karadsheh suggested opening a clinic in the Asian District that serves those languages. Although it would be challenging, it would be an additional draw to the area.

Chair Adams thanked Vice Mayor Heredia for speaking with the Board and invited him to remain for the rest of the meeting.

5. Hear an update on the Office of Economic Development Workforce Strategy and Initiatives

Chair Adams introduced Bryan Smith, project manager with the Office of Economic Development.

Mr. Smith commented that it had been approximately a year since he last spoke about developing this workforce strategy and was happy to report that, in partnership with the Education Workforce Office, we are now ready to deploy the programming. He thanked Vice Mayor Heredia for his focus on workforce development which flows into this discussion in terms of facilitating connections between our workforce development system and our employers.

The full strategic document, referred to as Respond, Support, Adapt, was included in the board members' packets. Bryan complimented Kim Lofgreen for bringing the document together quickly and making it available to the Board. He shared the goals of the workforce development strategy. First strategic goal is to provide equitable access to resources and support for both Mesa jobseekers and employers, which is about helping individuals and businesses navigate our workforce ecosystem and effectively utilize the resources available to them. The second goal is identifying and mitigating the skills gap in hiring, which is about providing market intelligence for both jobseekers and employers to improve communication in the hiring process. Third strategic goal and final is, expanding job opportunities for workers and retention of employees for businesses, which is about improving quality of jobs and quality of life for our workers in the City of Mesa and decreasing costs due to turnover for employers and helping our Mesa employers stay employers of choice for our workforce, both on a regional level and on a statewide and national level.

Tactics for the strategic goals are undertaken on two service lines. One services to businesses, led by the Office of Economic Development and services to the community, jobseekers, and students, primarily led by Sarah Tolar's team at the Education Workforce Office and the Workforce Center at Mesa. These tactics are deployed on three relative time scales. Responsive, this is the immediate triage of needs for both individuals in the workforce and employers, hiring in placement, stabilizing, and upskilling, supportive. These tactics take place over the course of six months to multiple years. This is about actualizing potential, both for individuals and employers, providing technical assistance and improving individual's ability to upskill and access education. Then adaptive, which are on a continuous long-term timescale improving the resilience of our community and our capacity to continue growing. Examples of adaptive tactics includes convening employers and providing market intelligence and improving access to education and employment for students and jobseekers. The first tactic that we've had an opportunity to deploy is a resource website, JobConnectMesa.com. Again, compliments to our marketing team, Kim Lofgreen and Rebecca Perks for creating this website. This is about improving navigation of workforce services in our city for both employers and jobseekers, and it's specifically focused on services that are physically located in the city. For jobseekers and individuals in need of social services, human services, basic needs, connecting to those nonprofit organizations, as well as some resources for finding jobs, career navigation, helping them get into education programs, and gain employment. We're partnering with the Education Workforce Office and the Education Workforce Roundtable to facilitate quarterly communication between our teams, convening members of these groups to share trends and provide an overview of economic development projects on aggregate, types of jobs that will need to be filled at a sector level, skills that will be required as new employment locates in the city, so educators can in turn respond with augmentation to their programs or additional marketing of their programs, and connecting to employers to broaden the talent pipeline. An opportunity that's been identified and we hope to pursue in the near future is improvement of JobConnectMesa.com in partnership with Pipeline Arizona. The existing infrastructure of Pipeline Arizona is a platform for job posting and career navigation and

exploration developed by Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC) and the Partnership for Economic Innovation. They have developed multiple interfaces with specific audiences including Maricopa County Community College District and the Arizona Department of Education. They provide at no cost to our school districts, My Future AZ platform, which provides development of education and career action plans for students in Arizona school systems. We would like to be the first city to integrate all of these interfaces and bring these different use cases together in a measurable and scalable way to connect employers to educators and better inform employers on the incumbent student populations career paths in the short and medium-term. If done right, we may be able to develop longitudinal data set on what the outcomes of our students are as they are exposed to career navigation, get into post-secondary programs, and enter the workforce.

Mr. Jabjiniak inquired whether the board members, as mayor employers, utilize Pipeline AZ today and if not, were they aware of Pipeline AZ.

Mr. Kasselmann plans to provide this information to Dexcom's talent acquisition team and didn't believe they were currently utilizing this resource.

Ms. Snow and Ms. Genereux agreed with Mr. Kasselmann's comments.

Mr. Jabjiniak appreciated the informal survey and commented that we will develop a marketing plan to get this message out.

Laura Snow commented that a quick scroll of JobConnectMesa.com listed resources for jobseekers, and felt the addition of information about safe and affordable childcare would be helpful. Affordable childcare is a huge barrier for half the population because that aspect falls disproportionately on women in our community and there is a massive shortage of safe, affordable, quality childcare. While it's not a primary issue to workforce reentry, it certainly is a secondary issue with a huge impact on our workforce.

Chair Adams commented that aggregating all these resources into a one location is important in addition to getting the word out to everyone who may benefit.

Mr. Campbell felt this was a great opportunity to marry Pipeline AZ with our institutional employers that would benefit from it in Mesa.

Bryan Smith thanked the board members for their support of the program. Understanding how we can effectively market and deploy the program with all our stakeholders from businesses to educational institutions will be an important focus. Currently, approximately 3,000 individuals using Mesa zip codes are utilizing Pipeline today. 500 of those are business accounts and 700 are students that utilize My Future ARIZONA. We feel this resource is underutilized and see great opportunities to continue its growth. He appreciated Ms. Snow's comment about childcare and would investigate available resources.

The program was shared with Council a few months ago, we've launched the online Workforce Resources Directory and JobConnectMesa.com, and opened the Workforce Center at Mesa in partnership with ARIZONA@WORK, and A New Leaf. There are plans to continue or restart the Workforce Speaker Series which started this process off, providing technical assistance and expert information to employers. Next steps during the second half of this year are to develop a partnership with Pipeline, JobConnectMesa.com version 2.0, and continue connecting employers to our education partners and improving our coordination and referrals to our workforce partners on the supply side.

Chair Adams commended Bryan Smith on the great presentation and looks forward to hearing progress reports as this program develops.

Laura Snow inquired if there is a comprehensive list of all of Mesa based education partners.

Bryan Smith replied that JobConnectMesa.com includes links to career and technical education sites as well as Benedictine, Maricopa County Community Colleges, and ASU.

Chair Adams again thanked Mr. Smith for sharing this information. In addition, he stated that Mayor, Mr. Brady, Mr. Henderson, and Ms. Jolivette were excused from the March 7, 2023, meeting.

6. Director's Report

Mr. Jabjiniak provided an update on the most recent announcements including two 250,000 SF buildings by SkyBridge and Phelan Pecos industrial groundbreaking and reiterated that inventory wins projects. Benchmark Electronics and CCS held recent grand openings. Benchmark Electronics expanded into Mesa, keeping their Tempe location.

Our office will host a Business 2 Baseball event at Sloan Park for brokers and developers on Thursday, March 9. In addition, there were six or seven follow-ups and expansion discussions from our Business 2 Baseball event at Hohokam Stadium on February 28 which was focused on the existing business community and developing those relationships. Finally, we are hosting council and City leadership at our office on March 21 and holding an open house on March 29 from 11am – 2pm. An open house invitation will be forwarded soon with details. Bill commented that Jaye O'Donnell, Chris Molnar and Maribeth Smith did a fantastic job leading the effort on the office move thanked them for their input on the finishes for our new office.

Jim Kasselmann recognized and thanked the City Manager, Chris Brady, for extending an invitation to the Board to last week's baseball game. Those that were able to attend enjoyed the opportunity to mix and mingle with the councilmembers that were present. Two of whom acquainted themselves well with opening pitches, Councilmembers Duff and Spilsbury.

Chair Adams thanked Mr. Kasselmann for expressing the Board's appreciation to Mr. Brady.

Ms. Ovando-Karadsheh inquired about holding future Economic Development Advisory Board meetings in the Office of Economic Development's new space.

Mr. Jabjiniak stated he will investigate the logistics and requirements for holding a public meeting in our new space.

7. Other Business

Chair Adams again thanked Vice Mayor Heredia for joining the Board meeting and offered a standing invitation for him to join anytime.

The next board meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 4, 2023.

8. Adjournment

Chair Adams adjourned the March 7, 2023, Economic Development Advisory Board meeting at 8:38 a.m.

Submitted By:



William J. Jabjiniak
Economic Development Department Director