



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

January 8, 2024

The Economic Development Advisory Board of the City of Mesa met in the board room at 120 North Center Street, on January 8, 2024, at 7:30 a.m.

BOARDMEMBERS PRESENT

Rich Adams
Brian Campbell
Michelle Genereux – Vice Chairperson
Bill Honsaker
Amanda Kay
Laura Snow *

BOARDMEMBERS ABSENT

Kathleen “KJ” Jolivette (Excused)

STAFF PRESENT

Jaye O’Donnell
Maria Laughner
Maribeth Smith
Jack Vincent

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Sonny Cave
Ed Carr
Sally Harrison
Natascha Ovando-Karadsheh
Jennifer Zonneveld – Chairperson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Mayor Giles (Excused)
Chris Brady (Excused)

GUESTS

Sarah Tolar
Bryan Smith

(*Participated in the meeting through the use of video conference equipment)

1. Chair’s Call to Order.

Board Chair Jennifer Zonneveld called the January 8, 2023, meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Board to order at 7:30 a.m.

2. Items from Citizens Present.

There were no items from citizens present.

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

It was moved by Board Member Brian Campbell, seconded by Board Member Rich Adams, that the minutes from the December 11, 2023, Economic Development Advisory Board meeting be approved.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – Adams-Campbell-Genereux-Honsaker-Kay-Snow

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Jolivette

Carried unanimously.

4. Hear a presentation on City of Mesa Office of Education & Workforce program updates and discuss.

City of Mesa Education and Workforce Administrator Sarah Tolar discussed the role of the city in supporting education and workforce development. She explained that the Education and Workforce Office's four main areas of focus are to understand where support is needed, identify education gaps, create connections in workforce development, and ensure access to basic needs. Ms. Tolar also highlighted the Mesa Education and Workforce Development Round Table, a forum created by Mayor Giles in 2021 to bring together key stakeholders in education and workforce development. The Round Table's priorities are early learning through high school, post-secondary, and workforce development. Ms. Tolar also emphasized the importance of early learning, particularly third grade reading, as a predictor of academic success and graduation rates. The Round Table has taken on early literacy as a focus due to concerns about the impact of the pandemic on education.

Ms. Tolar discussed the community-wide initiative aimed at identifying literacy service gaps and ensuring support for all levels of education. She highlighted the development of a business engagement tool kit and the partnership between Bezos Academy and Mesa Public Schools, which will provide funding for pre-school. Ms. Tolar also emphasized the importance of educational attainment and the role of the Mesa College Promise Program in reducing financial barriers for students. She stressed the need to create awareness about FAFSA completion and the value of educational attainment.

The Workforce Center at Mesa formed from a partnership between Maricopa County, A New Leaf, and the City of Mesa and offers support to residents seeking job opportunities and internships, as well as businesses looking for employees. The center, located on Broadway Road near Hobson, organizes hiring events, workshops, and provides resume assistance. Additionally, the center plans to offer technology classes and apprenticeship opportunities in conjunction with Maricopa County.

Board member Adams mentioned that a 2024 survey by his organization showed that employers were concerned about the readiness of future job seekers and inquired about the United Way 12 Books program. Ms. Tolar replied that the program has been renamed AZURA Literacy and is an initiative to improve literacy among Title I elementary students and provide a free mentoring reading program.

In response to a question from Board member Campbell, Ms. Tolar shared that Read on Arizona, a statewide organization, is looking at successful literacy strategies from other states and incorporating them into their own initiatives.

City of Mesa Economic Development Director Jaye O'Donnell discussed an AARP Foundation program aimed at improving reading proficiency among children in K-3rd grade. The program, which involves adult volunteers aged 50 plus, has proven to be successful in other communities, resulting in at least a half-grade increase in reading skills. Ms. Tolar shared that the program is set to launch in six Mesa Public Schools next Tuesday, marking the first time it's being introduced in the city. She emphasized the importance of community involvement in the program's success, noting an overwhelmingly positive response from volunteers.

5. Hear a presentation on Pipeline AZ updates and discuss.

Economic Development Project Manager Brian Smith discussed the development of a collaborative platform with the Education & Workforce Office. The platform, called Job Connect Mesa, aims to increase equitable access to career exploration across the community. It will provide a single technology infrastructure for businesses, job seekers, and those re-entering the workforce. The project is a partnership with Pipeline AZ, a nonprofit organization spun out of Greater Phoenix Economic Council initiatives. The platform is integrated with many nonprofit and education partners, including the Arizona Department of Education's Career Action Plan platform. The goal is to connect all stakeholders in one site and facilitate workforce growth through access to education and training resources.

Mr. Smith discussed the comprehensive nature of the career navigation program, which aims to assist students and job seekers in various stages of their careers, including those seeking entry-level positions in areas such as warehousing, retail, and hospitality. The team is also working on establishing a working group for testing and marketing, with an estimated launch date in early April. The platform will feature industry-specific landing pages, a job feed, resource pages, and enhanced case management. Training guides and outcome tracking will also be developed to ensure smooth usage and to measure the effectiveness of the platform. In the long term, the platform aims to document the career journeys of individuals, providing insights into the distribution of opportunities across different demographics and entry points into the workforce.

Mr. Smith invited all employer partners in Mesa to join and provide feedback on features and continuous improvement opportunities for the system and expressed a desire for assistance in marketing the platform and ensuring its effective use once it goes live in early to mid-April.

Board member Amanda Kay expressed her appreciation for assistance during OptumRx's recruitment process and inquired about how to ensure the right candidate pool uses the site. Mr. Smith responded that part of job seeker recruitment will be through targeted social media buys and coordinated efforts with local agencies, family groups, and potentially church groups. Board member Campbell suggested engaging local trade unions in the process.

Chair Zonneveld thanked Ms. Tolar and Mr. Smith for their time and presentation.

6. Economic Development Director updates.

Director Jaye O'Donnell shared updates regarding business development activities, including plans to attend several events and conferences such as the Consumer Electronics Show and Business 2 Baseball event. She also mentioned upcoming industry events, the Mayor's State of the City on February 13, and the City Council's Strategic Planning Session on February 15. Ms. O'Donnell commented that the General Plan draft is open for public comment through the end of March and thanked the Economic Development Advisory Board Subcommittee for their input.

Board member Adams specifically thanked Board member Bill Honsaker for his in-depth input on the General Plan Land Use Map.

Board member Sonny Cave inquired how the city approaches the Consumer Electronics Show. Ms. O'Donnell replied that our office collaborates with GPEC and schedules meetings with attendees in advance in addition to walking the floor for opportunities. The potential of collaborating with local companies and neighboring communities to engage attendees was also discussed.

7. Introduction of new business to be discussed at a future meeting.

Board member Campbell requested an update on Visit Mesa once things are resolved.

Director O'Donnell suggested a Mesa Business Builder update in anticipation of The Studios opening in April.

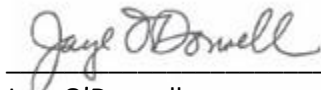
8. Other Business.

The next Economic Development Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2024.

9. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Economic Development Advisory Board meeting adjourned at 8:34 a.m.

Submitted by:



Jaye O'Donnell
Economic Development Director