

North Central Texas Economic Development District (EDD)
Board Meeting Minutes – June 1, 2020 | 11:00 am
Audio/Video Conference Call (Zoom Virtual Meeting)

1.) Welcome and Introductions

Lucille Johnson opened the Audio/Video Conference Call by welcoming everyone and calling the Board roll.

2.) Introduction of New Board Member

NCTEDD Chair Marty Wieder and Lucille introduced a new board member, Michael Grace. Marty explained that Michael reached out to him about the Board. He said that Michael is with Dallas County and serves as the Director of unincorporated service areas. He asked Michael to say a few words. Michael explained that he was happy to be with the group and is looking forward to digging in and finding out more. Marty explained that Michael was approved by the NCTCOG Executive Board at its May Board meeting.

3.) Approval of October 7, 2019 Minutes

Marty asked for approval of the Minutes. He told the Board that a revised minutes was sent to everyone, which added the word "District" that had been omitted on the bottom of page two of the minutes. Jeff Sandford made a motion to accept the corrected minutes and Chris Dyser seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously by those present, except for Michael Grace, who abstained.

4.) Brief on the EDA CARES Act Funding

Marty introduced Chris Rys, Senior Economic Development Specialist with the Economic Development Administration (EDA). He briefed the board on the newly available funding of \$1.5 million approved by Congress through the CARES ACT to prevent, prepare for and respond to the Coronavirus. He briefed the Board on the fact that new funds are different than the usual EDA funds because they are available to everyone, are flexible, have different selection criterion and a different matching amount than usual EDA funds. He also said the funds will be highly competitive.

He explained that normally the criteria for funding is based on economic distress, which is determined by per capita income and unemployment. But because these funds are related to the negative economic impacts caused by the coronavirus shutdown, all areas of the country have been designated as "Special Need" which eliminates the need to determine a distress criterion. Mr. Rys explained that every qualified entity (counties, cities, universities, Indian Tribes) is eligible to seek EDA CARES Act funding for appropriate projects funded through the EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance Program. He also explained that with EDA CARES ACT funding, the matching funds will usually start at 80%/20% whereas funding for EDA funds outside of the EDA CARES Act program, usually start with a 50%/50% match.

Chris said his role is to help lead the federal Economic Development agenda to create jobs and bring private investment into the market. So, with this project, he will work with people as much as possible and will be honest about the chance of a proposed project meeting the criteria for potential EDA CARES Act funding. Mr. Rys further explained that projects selected for funding will be very competitive and there is probably going to be a lot more demand for funding than there is available funding. He said the Funding Notice is available now at the EDA website and to feel free to reach out to Lucille, or him, or his boss, Jessica Falk, the Area Director, for additional information.

Lucille emphasized that applicants should ensure that CARES ACT funding applications point to a need related to the Coronavirus but reminded the board that regular EDA funds are still available, too.

5.) District Update

Marty asked Lucille to brief the Board on her activities on behalf of the NCTEDD and she briefed the Board on the following activities regarding the NCTEDD.

a. **NCTEDD Non-Competitive Funding Application**

Lucille told the Board that NCTEDD was invited to submit a non-competitive application for supplemental funds, up to a maximum of \$400,000. She explained that invited Economic Development Districts had 30 days to get the application submitted and after that time, the funding would become competitive. Lucille explained to the Board

that, if successful, the funds would be used over a 24-month period to help entities and non-profits in the Region identify potential projects, assist applicants as needed to get their application completed and submitted. She reported that she had requested and received NCTCOG Executive Board approval to submit the supplemental funding application at the Board's May 28 meeting and explained that the application had been submitted.

b. EDA CARES Act Funding Notices Out to Region

Lucille explained that as soon as the funding was announced, she sent the message of funding out and asked others to help get the word out. She said that once a project is approved for funding by EDA, applicants will have three years to complete their projects. She also said that EDA is required to have the obligate the CARES Act funds by the end of September 2021, and all funds that were not obligated by then would be returned to the U. S. Treasury.

c. Project Discussions with Cities

Lucille explained that as soon as the EDA CARES ACT funding was announced, approximately 17-20 cities immediately called for more information, and said that she has been constantly busy providing information on the EDA CARES Act funding program and helping potential applicants identify potential projects. Lucille explained that she will be available to review any applications prior to their submission should applicants want her to do so.

d. City of Corsicana Opportunity Zone Project Opportunity Zones Discussion

Lucille told the Board that she has been working with John Boswell, Director of Economic Development for the City of Corsicana and Navarro County, on an EDA project located in an Opportunity Zone. She told the Board that this is a project to install a rail spur in one of the City's Industrial Parks. Lucille asked Mr. Boswell to discuss his project. He briefly explained that this project is part of a larger project to install needed infrastructure to this Industrial Park and that the rail spur was needed by interested businesses wanting to locate in the Park but needing rail access for their business. He further explained that he'd worked on the application and submitted it in January.

Lucille explained that the application was reviewed by EDA in March and that EDA has provided the City with a "Merits Further Review" letter, which means that they plan to fund the project, once it clears all of the Federal funding requirements. She also told the Board that the NCTEDD would be doing the administrative management of the project once the funding announcement is made.

Lucille then explained to the Board that she had participated on a panel to discuss Opportunity Zones. She told the Board that the panel discussion was held in January at Navarro College and had been hosted by NCTEDD Board Member, Leslie Leerskov, who is the Executive Director for the SBDC in Navarro County. Lucille asked Ms. Leerskov to speak to the Opportunity Zone workshop. Leslie explained that Navarro County SBDC, in conjunction with the SBA, hosted the first of several planned panel discussions to speak about Opportunity Zones. She explained that the panel consisted of people from the Department of HUD, EDA, and the NCTEDD to discuss Opportunity Zones and how they work. Lucille added that there was to be another Opportunity Zone panel discussion in Dublin, TX in April, but it was cancelled with the Coronavirus shutdown. Lucille also informed the Board that there are 65 Opportunity Zones located in this region.

e. Project United Revisited

Lucille also briefed the Board on the status of the Project United. She reminded the Board that Project United is a non-profit organization that has been in existence since 2005. In 2008 Project United received a donated three-story and basement building from AT&T that had been an AT&T Telephone Call Center. The building needed to be remediated. Project United received a Brownfields grant from EPA to remediate the building. Lucille explained that they have been working on a project funding idea through EDA to put in infrastructure and training components to make the second floor of the building into a kitchen accelerator to train people to become entrepreneurs. They were unsuccessful in receiving an EDA grant a few years ago and now want to revisit funding opportunities for the facility, which is located in the Dallas Community called Pleasant Grove. Lucille explained that she met with them in February at the site to walk the building and make suggestions on next steps for a project.

f. NCTEDD Peer Review

Lucille explained that in December of 2019, she participated in a peer review of the District where she was paired with another District in Louisiana. She noted that peer reviews normally take place approximately every three to five years. Although it was not quite time for our District, she was asked to do so anyway. She reported that the District received very high regard for the activities they have carried out.

g. SMU Meeting

Lucille reported that she was invited by Dr. Quick to meet with SMU in February regarding their project and asked him to brief the Board. Dr. Quick said that SMU was initiating a \$2 million seed grant project for interdisciplinary research regarding infrastructure deserts. The goal was to identify these deserts, which are beneficial for community resilience. He explained that Lucille had come out to visit with Dr. Barbara Minsker, Chair of Civil Engineering and him to discuss the project and possible EDA funding. He told the Board that the \$2 million seed funding that was planned for the project is no longer available. As a result of the pandemic, the seed funds have been moved to help cover the Coronavirus damage to the University therefore postponing this project.

h. Board Member Orientation

Lucille explained that she had visited with NCTEDD Board member, Chris Dyser, in February at his city in Balch Springs to conduct his new Board member orientation and to discuss Opportunity Zones and potential EDA projects with Chris and the City Manager. Lucille informed the board that she plans to conduct new Board member orientations with NCTEDD Board members Michael Grace and Jeff Sandford.

i. Board Vacancies

Marty and Lucille reminded the board that there are a number of vacant positions on the board and reviewed the six counties that have vacancies, the three vacancies for the Principal Economic Interest category and one vacancy in the Private Sector category.

6.) District Assistance for EDA CARES Act Funding Applications

Lucille discussed the types of assistance she could offer CARES ACT applicants. She also explained that when someone applies for a grant, they are given a workspace at grants.gov and that if permission is given to her she can go online and provide an application review and give suggestions regarding the application, prior to the application submission to EDA. She also said that the NCTEDD would also be happy to provide a letter of review and/or support for an application, if needed or wanted.

Craig Hulse told the board that applicants must be patient because the grant application process really takes time and lots of coordination with many different departments in a city or county. He talked about the amount of time required to prepare the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Report for construction projects and told the Board that the report could take several weeks to prepare. John Boswell, who has written an EDA construction grant, mentioned that it took nearly eight weeks to fully prepare his grant, including the NEPA report. He offered his assistance if anyone had any questions as they prepared their NEPA reports for construction applications.

7.) New Business

There was no new business

8.) Next Meeting Dates

Lucille discussed the next meeting dates and the fact that virtual meetings might be easier, and the board might be able to meet more often. She said the board is only required to have two meetings a year but asked if the members wanted to have more frequent meetings to deal with new information and grant funding. Others agreed that every other month would be a good idea, especially in wake of the negative impacts being experienced throughout the region resulting from the coronavirus shutdown. Marty asked if they would like to meet in mid-July and the members agreed. Lucille told the Board that she would schedule the next meeting for July and would get meeting information out to everyone in the next week.

9) Adjournment

There being no other business, Marty thanked all the members for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 11:55 AM.

Attendance

Board Members

John Boswell
Kassandra Carroll, Secretary/Treasurer
Karen Dickson
Chris Dyser
Michael Grace
Mickey Hillock
Craig Hulse
Jennette Killingsworth-Espinoza
Leslie Leerskov
Judy McDonald
Lisa McMillian
Marty Nelson
Bruce Payne
James Quick
Jeff Sandford

David Schleg
Fred Schmidt, Vice Chair
Kevin Shatley
Shane Shepard
Erica Sullivan
Marty Wieder, Chair

NCTCOG Staff

Lucille Johnson
Stephanie Cecil

Other Attendees

Kristen Pegues, City of Weatherford
Pam Mundo, Mundo and Associates (Engineering, Planning and Economic Development Consulting Firm)

I hereby certify that these minutes were approved by the North Central Texas Economic Development Board on July 13, 2020.



Kassandra Carroll, CECD
Secretary-Treasurer, North Central Texas Economic Development District Board
Economic Development Coordinator, City of Waxahachie