

**Ellensburg Business Development Authority dba CenterFuse
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES**

Regular meeting held synchronously in-person and virtually.

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

4:00-5:30 PM

Members in Attendance: Dawn Alford, Vice Chair; Grant Clark, Treasurer; Del Bankston, Secretary; John Perrie, Board Member; Bob Rapp, Board Member; Jennifer Lubanski, Board Member; and Jared Vallejo, Board Member.

Members not in Attendance: Garrett Poshusta, Chair and James Jankowski, Board Member

Others present: Rich Elliot, Ellensburg City Mayor and Liaison; Kelle Vandenberg, City of Ellensburg; Charlie Smith, Board Chair of the Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce; and Kristine Miller, CenterFuse Executive Director.

1. Opening (5 minutes)

The Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 3:58 PM

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion to amend the agenda to include voucher approval under executive update made by Del Bankston, second by Grant Clark. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

Motion to approve the agenda made by Del Bankston, second by Grant Clark. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the February 14, 2024, regular meeting minutes made by Grant Clark, second by Jennifer Lubanski. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

4. Public Comment

None

2. Executive Update

2.1 February 2024 Voucher Approval (Added to Agenda by Amendment)

Grant Clark reviewed financials. Motion to approve the February 2024 voucher by Grant Clark, second by Jared Vallejo. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

Brief discussion of some larger expenses in February. Brief discussion regarding rent issues with a tenant making efforts to catch up.

2.2 Highlights Since Last Meeting

Executive Director Miller briefly mentioned her recent attendance at WEDA Winter Conference in Olympia and provided an update on clients with whom she is currently working to find sites for business to start/grow and to connect with resources.

2.3 Board Questions/Feedback

Jennifer Lubanski noted that she appreciated the detailed and helpful update on current clients.

3. Review of Task Force Meeting

3.1 Presentation on Outcomes of Meeting on March 12

Executive Director Kristine Miller provided insights into the decision matrices and documents utilized in evaluating potential new structures for CenterFuse. She highlighted that the options of becoming a 501c3/501c6 and seeking a Public Development Authority (PDA) role were not currently viable options, leading to the consideration of a partnership or merger with the Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce as the most feasible option.

Miller also shared an update on the collaboration with the City of Ellensburg Economic Development task force, emphasizing the strategic focus on how economic development organizations in Kittitas County can best work together for future structuring of CenterFuse. The impacts of the TIPS Kittitas County Strategic Plan were discussed, noting the changing macroeconomic environment and how Central Washington University, following a resolution signed by the Conference of Governments, would assist in implementing and defining roles within the Kittitas County Economic Development Strategic Plan.

3.2 Discussion of Implications for CenterFuse

The discussion explored the potential impact of these developments on CenterFuse. John Perrie raised concerns about moving forward before the county makes a definitive decision regarding county-wide economic development as informed by CWU. Del Bankston emphasized the current phase of data collection and shared goals driving CenterFuse's direction.

Charlie Smith elaborated on the benefits of partnering with the Chamber, suggesting that such a partnership would allow each organization to capitalize on its strengths, with CenterFuse focusing on attracting businesses. The challenges of finding suitable sites and spaces for businesses were discussed, with Del Bankston questioning the main hurdles and Jennifer Lubanski asking about strategies to address building vacancies. Charlie Smith provided examples of policies from other areas like Chelan to combat empty buildings and noted the Chamber's need for support in business recruitment. The conversation also touched on the potential for shared resources among organizations. The necessity for clear metrics of success and accountability to city and county authorities was underlined.

4. Strategic Discussion: The Future of Our Organization (40 minutes)

4.1 Review of Decision Matrix for Strategic Direction

Executive Director Kristine Miller shared an overview of the decision matrices that were used to evaluate strategic options for CenterFuse. This approach helped quantify the evaluation of different strategic directions that CenterFuse could consider.

4.2 Board Input on Adjusting Strategies Based on Task Force Outcomes

The board deliberated on the next steps for a potential partnership with the Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce. Charlie Smith expressed his approval for Chamber CEO Amy and CenterFuse Executive Director Kristine Miller to collaborate. Jared Vallejo highlighted the importance of CenterFuse maintaining its autonomy while still engaging in a meaningful partnership. Del Bankston emphasized the necessity for collaborative meetings to align goals and work towards common objectives. John Perrie pointed out the critical need to avoid competition between the directors of CenterFuse and the Chamber when forming connections. The conversation stressed clarity in communication as essential, as summarized by Charlie Smith who noted that everything must be clear as "clear is kind." Jennifer underscored the importance of ongoing communication. process, not just at the end.

4.3 Determination of Next Steps

Kelle Vanderbilt noted the importance of the city receiving feedback. Executive Director Miller mentioned that a communication matrix, like those used in project management, could be beneficial in organizing the partnership discussions. Amy and Kristine will discuss further to define what the partnership will entail. Dawn Alford emphasized the importance of managing communications effectively and consistently throughout the process, not just at the end.

5. New Initiatives and Projects (15 minutes)

5.1 Introduction of Potential New CenterFuse Initiatives Related to Macro-Economic Changes, WEDA Winter Conference Insights, and Recent Discussions with Community Stakeholders

Executive Director Miller shared some key points from the conference related to Artificial Intelligence, healthcare in the state and the "Start Trek Economy". Asked board members to consider what changes we might need to make to strategy and initiatives in light of macroeconomic changes.

5.2 Board Feedback on Potential Initiatives

Nothing to report.

5.3 Determination of Next Steps

Nothing to report.

7. Closing (5 minutes)

7.1 Summary of Decisions and Action Items

Nothing to report.

7.2 For the Good of the Order

Del Bankston resigned from the CenterFuse board due to moving out of the area.

Adjournment – time 5:32 PM Motion to adjourn by Del Bankston.

Drafted: 3/14/2024

Approved: *Dawn Alford*

Submitted by: Kristine Miller