

FLINT HILLS REGION

FHRC Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

April 19, 2024
The Pearl Theater
Alta Vista, KS
and via Zoom

Present from Board: **Trish Giordano**, Geary County Commission, Board President; **Dee McKee**, Pottawatomie County Commission, Board Vice President; **Jim MacGregor**, Wabaunsee County Commission, Board Treasurer; **Sharon Haun**, Council Grove City Council, Board Secretary; **Ryan Armbrust**, Alta Vista Mayor; **Ben Van Becelaere**, Fort Riley (ex-officio); **Terry Cook**, Eskridge Mayor; **Richard Foster**, Ogden City Council; **David Fox**, Morris County Commission; **Karen McCulloh**, Manhattan City Commission; **Bruce Meininger**, Westmoreland City Commission; **Ken Smith**, Alma City Commission.

Absent from Board Voting: **Alex Miller**, City Onaga City Council; **Teri Naylor**, City of Harveyville City Commission; **Jimmy Thatcher**, City of Clay Center Mayor; **Debi Urbanek**, City of Herington Planning Commission; **Richard Weixelman**, Wamego City Council.

Absent from Board – Non-voting: **Cheryl Grice**, Kansas State University (ex officio); **Tim Himelick**, City of Milford, City Clerk; **Susan McKenzie**, City of White City, City Clerk; **Julie Murphy**, Wakefield, City Clerk; **Kelly Paskow**, Fort Riley Garrison (ex-officio); **Matt Stiles**, City of Hillsboro, City Administrator; **Lou Thurston**, City of Hillsboro, Mayor **Perry Wiggins**, Governor’s Military Affairs Council (ex-officio).

Guests Present: **Michelle Campbell**, Westmoreland; **Alan Eichelberger**, CAC; **Stephanie Imthurn**, Director, Wabaunsee County Office of Economic Development; **Bruce McMillan**, Manhattan; **Linda Morse**, Manhattan; **Janet Wade**, Herington.

Present from Staff: **Mike Couch**, Executive Director; **Janna Williams**, Regional Planner; **Holly Boice**, Grant Specialist.

- 1. Welcome / Roll Call / Establish Quorum** Trish Giordano, President
Board President Trish Giordano called the meeting to order at 9:01.
Roll call showed a quorum did exist.
Ryan Armbrust, Mayor of Alta Vista welcomed the board to the city and provided the history of The Pearl, which held many activities over the years, including dances, a skating rink, and a theater.
- 2. Approval of March Meeting Minutes** Trish Giordano, President
Karen McCulloh moved to approve the March minutes, and Bruce Meininger seconded the motion. The board approved the March Meeting Minutes.
- 3. Review and Approval of Financial Reports** Jim MacGregor, Treasurer
Jim MacGregor presented the financials. Dee McKee moved to approve the financials, and Sharon Haun seconded the motion. The board voted to approve the financials.

4. New Business

a. Opening Comments

Mike Couch thanked Alta Vista for hosting the board meeting and introduced the guest speaker from the Capitol Access Center.

b. Capitol Access Center Speaker

Alan Eichelberger spoke about his role at the Capitol Access Center and the services which are funded through grants and are free to those receiving them. CAC helps with the transition to owning a business and helps clients develop a business plan and obtain funding. He has worked with large and small businesses of all different types, including childcare, dog kennels, meat packing plants, restaurants, and more.

c. Defense Community Infrastructure Program FY24

Ben Van Becelaere presented on the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP), which is a program that provides grants for defense communities for infrastructure projects support their military installation and related infrastructure and promote quality of life for military families. Grant amounts are between \$250,000 and \$20 million. Eligible projects include complete and usable transportation projects, community support facilities, and utility infrastructure projects that support a military installation, are located off the installation, owned by government or is a not-for-profit, and will enhance military value, resiliency, and military family quality of life. Applications must be endorsed by the installation commander through a letter of endorsement, and the project must be construction ready with no ground disturbing work accomplished yet. Proposal submissions are due to OLDCC on June 17, 2024.

d. Fresh Start Shelter Letter of Support

Janna Williams stated that the FHRC was approached by the Fresh Start Shelter for a letter of support for a grant application through KHRC. It is a 100% match grant, and the shelter has a budget of \$200,000. The grant will help to maintain the facility and staff. Junction City is the applicant for the grant. Trish Giordano explained the history of the facility and recommended providing the letter of support. Dee McKee moved and Jim MacGregor seconded a motion to write the letter of support for the application. Motion carried.

e. CEDS Revisit

Mike Couch presented information from Chapter 2 of the region's CEDS document. Opportunities in the region include growing own labor force, additional training opportunities, support for business retention, incentives to recruit businesses into communities, growing support and capacity for entrepreneurs, and supporting Fort Riley's mission and victory wellness. Something the region seems to be doing well is marketing travel and tourism. Jim MacGregor stated that the council should take a look at the full list of struggles and opportunities and come up with a regional plan to use opportunities and combat challenges.

5. Old Business

a. EDA grant update

The EDA Planning Partnership grant has been submitted for 2024-2027. This funding is for \$70,000 per year for three years with a 100% match. Mike Couch said the application should be fully completed and submitted next month.

b. EPA Brownfield and OLDCC Grant Updates

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfield Grants

Current grant 2022-2024: Janna Williams presented that structural studies in Eskridge are completed. The Eskridge Downtown Corridor planning will begin in June.

New grant 2025: Janna Williams presented that awardees for the new grant will be announced soon. She is studying the application for a revolving loan fund grant for 2025 to assist owners with cleanup.

Office of Local Defense and Community Cooperation (OLDCC)

Janna Williams presented that the 2024/25 OLDCC grant is being revised with additional scopes.

FHRC is working with two communities for the DCIP grant.

Other Grants

Kansas Water Office grants were announced, and four communities in the region received technical assistance grants: Harveyville, Milford, Ogden, and Paxico. The FHRC Regional Micro-Grant Program will be announced soon. To receive one, entrepreneurs must complete an entrepreneurial class. The grants will be in amounts of \$500 to \$2,000. The Entrepreneur Convening grant is underway to create a regional RE101 class. A contract is signed, and the class is under development. Congratulations to Ogden for writing and receiving \$1.8 million in Thriving Communities funding for Riley Avenue planning and design.

c. CDBG and EDA Disaster Grant Updates

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Update

Holly Boice reported that the Kansas Department of Commerce has a list of competitive CDBG grant categories on the commerce website and encouraged communities to look at them and consider application. She reported that the competitive category grant deadline is in September. The new LMI data is supposed to be published in the next two months. Three categories which do not have city-wide low to moderate income requirements include ADA Improvements, Youth Job Training, and Non-Profit Childcare and Early Education Facilities.

Alta Vista CDBG park project administration next steps include Alta Vista contracting with the engineering firm which completed the PER for the project design work. Once the engineering piece is completed, the city will publish an invitation for bids using the city's procurement policy. The second quarterly report to the Kansas Department of Commerce due March 31 was completed and sent.

EDA Disaster Supplemental Update

Holly Boice reported that the Kansas State University/Kansas Forest Service project grant application is completed. There were technical difficulties with the EDGE submission system. After these issues are resolved, the application will be officially submitted.

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant

Holly Boice reported that she is working with Herington to apply for funding to replace all street lighting in the city with more energy efficient lighting. The grant is part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law grant opportunities and requires no match. The next step is working with City Manager Thatcher Moddie on forming a plan and timeline for submission. She suggested communities take a look at the grant opportunity and consider applying.

6. Community Updates

Alma – Ken Smith

Alma is doing residential clean up and planning street and sidewalk improvements, as well as resurfacing roads.

Alta Vista – Ryan Armbrust

Old Settler's Day is August 9-10 and is expected to be one of the best years yet, with lots of planning behind it. The chamber of commerce Facebook page will have more information on that and other events. The city is participating in a county-wide housing remodeling program. Anyone who makes a commitment to improve the lot or building which adds over \$25,000 in value will get property tax rebates for the next five years. The city has used a few different methods to survey people about the lead and copper pipes which need replacing, including using the city website, Facebook page, and a postcard with a QR code on it. There will also be a table at Old Settler's Day. Chamber Bucks will be used as an incentive. Others are welcome to use the same methods.

Council Grove – Sharon Haun

Roadwork on the highway is finishing up. The city is planning for events that are coming up. The city is still working toward water and sewer at the lake.

Eskridge – Terry Cook

The Unbound Bike Ride is coming through Eskridge on Saturday, June 1. It will be a water stop for them. There is a new business coming into Eskridge called Crosswinds. Sidewalk improvements continue. The city is having discussions to acquire some type of law enforcement in the city. The month of April is a city-wide cleanup month with a place to put large garbage items.

Geary County – Trish Giordano

The Veteran’s Entrepreneur group is holding a summit on April 30 in Junction City. They have additional information on their Facebook page. The Junction City Little Theater show “Footloose” is showing this weekend and next at the C. L. Hoover Opera House. Fort Riley recently secured \$116 million for improvements.

Herington – Janet Wade

The new Casey’s in the city is newly opened and is catching a lot of highway traffic. On the last weekend in April will be a model railroad show. Drag races at the Herington Regional Airport is in mid-May. There will be a city-wide clean-up in early May. The Dollar Tree closed last Friday, but the city is left with a building that is in good condition. There was a ribbon-cutting for Asian Fusion which is opening back up in the city. The city received an RHIB grant for assisting in additional housing development. The city still needs grant funding for a rural water line.

Manhattan – Karen McCulloh

The city is hiring a new city manager after the retirement of Ron Fehr who was the city manager of Manhattan for 24 years. The city is doing a lot with housing, but there is not a lot of buildable space, so the city is looking at solutions. The budget is coming soon. The Flint Hills Discovery Center had 93,000 visitors last year.

Morris County – David Fox

FEMA recognized the winter storm in January as a disaster in Kansas, and Morris County will get reimbursed \$890,000 for damages.

Ogden – Richard Foster

The city is elated to have received the two grants which were discussed earlier in the board meeting. The city is currently looking to hire lifeguards and a pool manager, which is an ongoing challenge across the region.

Pottawatomie County – Dee McKee

A bill has gone through to allow five commissioners for counties after Pottawatomie County determined it wanted five instead of three. There has been a lot of discussion on what happens when cities use extraterritorial, like in Manhattan, which can affect people who live in the county in a negative way. It has to be looked at in an objective way. Cities and counties should work together to make sure the Ad Valorem tax goes back to the cities and counties, as well as the gambling money.

Wabaunsee County – Jim MacGregor

KDOT is going to start working on Hwy 99 from the interstate north in the next couple weeks which will take a year or more to complete. The fire districts and emergency manager in the county put together a fire taskforce with volunteers to make sure the county has the capacity to quickly put out pasture fires. There are a few upcoming cross country biking events that will go through the county, which is a great opportunity to highlight the Flint Hills.

Westmoreland – Bruce Meininger

The city is not happy that the pool had to close, but the next step would be to have someone evaluate the structure and see what needs to be done. There are some housing opportunities in the city.

7. Adjourn

Trish Giordano, President

The meeting was adjourned at 11:18. The next meeting will take place on May 17.