

**Joint Economic Development Organization Board Minutes
December 9, 2015**

City Council Chambers, 214 SE 8th Street, Topeka, Kansas, Wednesday, December 9, 2015.

The Joint Economic Development Organization (JEDO) Board Members met at 6:00 p.m. with the following voting Board Members present: Deputy Mayor Karen Hiller, Councilmembers Michelle De La Isla and Jeffrey Coen; and Shawnee County Commissioners Shelly Buhler, Kevin Cook and Bob Archer -6. City of Topeka Mayor Larry Wolgast presided -1.

Nonvoting Board Members Present: Councilmembers Sylvia Ortiz, Jonathan Schumm and Brendan Jensen

Absent: Councilmembers Sandra Clear, Elaine Schwartz and Richard Harmon

PRESENTATION and DISCUSSION by Garner Economics, Inc., regarding the Situation Analysis Final Report for Topeka and Shawnee County, was presented.

Mayor Wolgast announced JEDO Operational Rules do not allow public comment on a non-action discussion item; however, if the Board agrees, and in order to foster a more robust discussion, it may be worthwhile to entertain public comment to give Mr. Garner the opportunity to respond to questions of the public. He stated it would be necessary for the Board to vote to suspend the Rules to allow for public comment.

Commissioner Buhler moved to suspend the JEDO Operational Rules to allow public comment. The motion seconded by Councilmember De La Isla carried unanimously. (7-0-0)

Jay Garner and Jim Walton, Garner Economics, Inc., provided a presentation and recommendation summary overview (*See Attachment A*) of the final report titled, "A Strategy for Effective Economic Development Change in Topeka and Shawnee County Kansas." (*See Attachment B*)

In response, JEDO Board Members asked the following questions:

1. Is the current community branding already being used by Visit Topeka, Inc., on target?
2. Why are only certain areas of the city being considered for free intranet access instead of the entire city?
3. Why would Topeka and Shawnee County not be considered a good business location prospect?
4. In reference to the workforce development analysis and low level of academic achievement, what are the strategies recommended to continually improve the problem?
5. Expand on the statement, "Topeka and Shawnee County have too many manufacturing companies which has depleted the workforce"?
6. If it was determined to only have one contractor for economic development, what would be the separate roles of each organization (GO Topeka and the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce)?

7. Is there still a need to acquire large and small parcels of land for businesses and do other cities utilize smaller parcels of land?

In response, Jay Garner reported the following:

- Community Branding - it is not as robust as it should be and needs work. He noted community branding should be based on the audience and what they want from Topeka and Shawnee County.
- Workforce Development – The community has a great funding source that is not being spent in the most effective manner for what is being received. The noted there are 14 workforce development groups and only 8 are receiving funding.
- Economic Development Groups. There should be only one economic development group because the economic development indicators are not as good as they should be. It is crucial for GO Topeka and the Chamber to be separated. Possibly have one entity managing the town attraction component and one entity actively engaging in career pathways and promotion coordination.
- Manufacturing and Workforce – They do not believe the workforce is depleted; however, there is a group of qualified workers not being served.
- Internet Access – only certain parts of the city were proposed due to the cost of wireless service; however, serving the entire city would not be financial feasible.
- Good Business Location – Topeka and Shawnee County citizens have too much negativity right now and there needs to be a plan in place to end the sustained negativity as it relates to relocating people to the area and quality of life issues.
- Land Inventory - Continue to enhance land inventory including large and small parcels.

Mayor Wolgast asked if there was anyone present who would like to speak to the matter.

Jack Sossoman, Clark Trammell, Joseph Ledbetter, Lazone Grays, Beth Ann Branden, Mick Urban, Wendy Wells, Scott Griffith, Carol Marple appeared to speak and spoke about the final report and recommendations and how it relates to GO Topeka and the importance of following through with the direction given by Garner Economics, Inc.

JEDO Board members asked Jay Garner to expand on the recommendation of hiring a full-time economic development coordinator with support staff.

Jay Garner reported JEDO should hire 1.5 full-time employees for an approximate amount of \$80,000 annually that would be responsible for (1) all public meetings including the administrative functions related to the operations of JEDO (2) JEDO's incentive process and (3) JEDO-funded properties (that should be titled in JEDO's name).

Councilmember Jensen encouraged citizens to move forward with their great ideas by also seeking funding through the private sector not just economic development dollars.

Commissioner Buhler stated JEDO could not resolve all the problems of the community; however, the report failed to identify resources already in place to improve community engagement and quality of life issues.

Councilmember Schumm asked if there were recommendations specifically relating to Shawnee County.

Jay Garner stated there were no recommendations specific to Shawnee County because the majority of the feedback received was from city residents.

Councilmember De La Isla stated that she believes Topeka is an amazing a place with great people; however, they hired Garner Economics because they need change. She encouraged Board members to remain open to feedback.

Deputy Mayor Hiller expressed the importance of the JEDO Board taking responsibility of making the necessary improvements to the economic development model of Topeka and Shawnee County. She noted they have been challenged to make a change and they must decide if they want to follow-through with the recommendations. She expressed her support of moving forward with the recommendations as needed.

Mayor Wolgast stated he has seen a great change within JEDO over the past several years; however, the Board needs to make a decision regarding the recommendations and how they want to move forward.

Councilmember Schumm stated infrastructure has become a constant demand with the community; therefore, they have to continue to keep building all aspects of infrastructure and the JEDO Board needs to take a more active role in this matter because they have the funding to do so.

General public comment included Camille Nohe, Clark Trammell, Joseph Ledbetter, Lazone Grays, Scott Griffith and Carol Marple.

Mayor Wolgast announced a JEDO Board meeting would be held December 16, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers located at 214 SE 8th Street, Topeka, Kansas.

No further business appearing the meeting was adjourned at 8:41 p.m.