



Meeting: GO Topeka Special Board Meeting  
Date: January 19, 2016  
Time: 1:30 p.m.  
Location: Washburn Institute of Technology Conference Center

Present: Brent Boles, Beth Anne Branden, Jeff Coen, Dr. Jerry Farley, Neil Fisher, Vince Frye, Scott Griffith, Kurt Kuta, Nathan Morris, Jim Parrish, Matt Pivarnik, Mark Ruelle, Matt Strathman, Allan Towle, Mick Urban, Keith Warta, Wendy Wells, Mayor Larry Wolgast, Glenda Washington, Matt Lara, Andrea Bailey, Neil Dobler, Scott Smathers, Barbara Stapleton

Griffith stated the GO Topeka Executive Committee requested this special GO Topeka board meeting to review and discuss GO Topeka's mission, recommendations made by Garner Economics to JEDO and the new initiatives contained within our 2016 plan that was presented to and approved by JEDO. The executive committee feels it would be beneficial to have a clear strategy related to the purpose and mission so that when new initiatives are presented GO Topeka does not proceed with those that would not be beneficial or fitting to our organization. The purpose of this meeting will be to get the board's perspective to be able to assist and participate with JEDO's task force as they evaluate Garner's recommendations.

Griffith stated JEDO's plan is to create a task force to review and discuss the Garner recommendations. It is our understanding that the task force will submit their findings and recommendations to the JEDO board. It was stated that Commissioner Shelly Buhler is the Chair of JEDO for 2016 and their intention is to meet in the next couple of weeks to discuss the task force.

Griffith stated that GO Topeka is a contractor for JEDO and that we are in year two of a three year agreement.

Griffith introduced Neil Dobler with Bartlett & West to facilitate the meeting.

Following are notes from the facilitated discussion:

#### **Strategy I: Execute Effectively (Organizational)**

Build a customer-friendly and highly effective economic development service delivery mechanism for existing and potential businesses in the community and supplement JEDO contractual/agent positions to focus on economic development needs.

#### **Goal/Results**

Topeka is better able to attract the types of companies that will make it competitive for years to come and produce wealth-creating opportunities for its citizens.

#### **Actions**

1. Develop a JEDO-specific mission statement that guides economic development efforts for itself and its agents. 2016  
*The mission statement of JEDO should be defined by their board members. GO Topeka needs a mission statement that coincides with what is expected of them through the agreement of service between JEDO and GO Topeka.*

2. Create the position of a full-time JEDO economic development coordinator. 2016  
*It was discussed that this recommendation is JEDO's prerogative. It was suggested to work more closely with JEDO to give them more information and documentation to be able to be more supportive with the communication of GO Topeka's successes as a contractor for JEDO.*
3. JEDO should encourage GO Topeka to be a standalone, autonomous organization. It is a total and separate organization. 2017  
*The board feels that actions have been taken to fully address this recommendation, consistent with opportunities to still purchase services from the Topeka Chamber at a lower expense than if acquired without the benefit of a joint services agreement.*
4. Create performance metrics to measure the community's health and the operational success of JEDO's agents. 2016  
*GO Topeka leadership agrees that we need to clearly define our metrics for success.*
5. Modify the JEDO/GO Topeka incentive policy. 2016  
*This has been initially completed but will continue to be evaluated and revised with JEDO input as the market changes.*
6. Create a JEDO Board of Advisors. 2016  
*It was suggested there could be more public involvement or open dialogue with elected officials and members of the public. GO Topeka stands ready to support with JEDO open dialogue with the public.*
7. JEDO should institute new operational guidelines: 2016-2017
  - a. Transfer of land ownership had accountability
  - b. Incentive management
  - c. Funding of its agents
  - d. Fund balances
  - e. JEDO disbursements to agents
  - f. Performance contracts
  - g. Meeting protocol*Please see response on 2. The group discussed 2 and 7 together.*

### **Strategy II: Renew and Transform (Product Improvement)**

Take concrete steps to improve the City and County's infrastructure, so as to strengthen the area's quality of place and differentiate itself from competitor regions.

#### **Goal/Results**

Topeka is able to overcome its current shortcomings and better able to attract and retain the talent and companies it desires to grow and sustain its economy.

1. Invest in more quality of place projects that will enhance the competitiveness of the community and attract and retain talent: 2016-2020
  - a. Create a plan to improve gateways in the City-including new signage and landscaping. *GO Topeka is supportive and believes this is being addressed by Visit Topeka, City of Topeka and Heartland Visioning.*
  - b. Provide free public high-speed internet access to enhance the visitor and resident experience in the core business district and in disadvantaged neighborhoods where access is limited based on affordability.  
*It was stated that a task force was being put in place and GO Topeka is supportive and has funds*

*allocated in its 2016 budget for the initiative. It was mentioned that some of the companies are putting hotspots in their pocket parks in downtown redevelopment.*

- c. Create a “cool factor” in the core business district that will encourage families and young professionals to live, work and play there.

*It is felt that it is already happening with Downtown Topeka Inc. efforts but there needs to be more publicizing of the positive things that happen in our community.*

2. Conduct a countywide community improvement planning effort that looks at assets and neighborhood planning by City and County districts. 2016-2017  
*Supportive but don't believe GO Topeka is the entity to carry out this recommendation.*
3. JEDO should continue to acquire real estate for economic and growth opportunities. 2016-2020 *There is discussion about the acquiring of land and possibly putting together a committee to review what other communities are doing. It was mentioned that many of the requests and prospects are only asking for submission because GO Topeka does own land. It was mentioned that there is such a thing as owning too much and also not owning enough. Analysis and assessment needs to be done to assure there is a fund balance to allow for acquiring of land and making it readily available with utilities. Ultimately GO Topeka and JEDO need to develop a land policy and strategy to govern this effort.*

### **Strategy III: Communicate Effectively (External Marketing and Internal Communications)**

Proactively work to increase communications about JEDO's economic development efforts so as to grow support for long-term initiatives using the monies from the ½ cent sales tax, as well as differentiate Topeka in the perception of external audiences. *GO Topeka receives approximately 1/3 of the half-cent sales tax monies allocated from JEDO for economic development efforts.*

#### **Goal/Results**

JEDO is able to gain support for the initiatives it undertakes and supports, and Topeka becomes known as a vibrant location for high-quality business and world-class talent.

1. Strengthen internal external JEDO Communications 2016
  - a. Develop/enhance the current JEDO website.  
*There is support for the enhancement.*
  - b. Adopt an open communications policy.  
*There is support for this policy.*
  - c. Host a local/regional media tour.  
*There is support for this recommendation.*
  - d. Conduct a community pride campaign.  
*There is support to work with Visit Topeka and Heartland Visioning on this recommendation.*
2. Explain the process to disclose Economic Development projects. 2016  
*GO Topeka supports an education initiative, but strongly believes that it is important to maintain project confidentiality, so as not to discourage prospects from considering Topeka for fear that they might experience an unplanned disclosure of their business plans before they are ready to announce them to their current communities or employees who might be negatively affected by their relocating here.*
3. Inclusion of community groups 2016  
*There needs to be more communication about what GO Topeka actually is and why we're here. It is part of the communications and marketing committee plan.*
4. Change the name of GO Topeka 2016-2017  
*There is not strong support for a name change at this time as the board feels site consultants have an*

*awareness of the name and it has brand equity. GO Topeka is not opposed to the change but believe this should be at the end of efforts after there is more time to work through the committees and plans going forward.*

5. GO Topeka communications – internal.  
*GO Topeka is supportive of this initiative.*
6. Strengthen and enhance branding and communications efforts around Topeka’s value as a business location. 2016  
*GO Topeka is supportive of this initiative and will continue work with the City, County, GO Topeka, Heartland Visioning, Visit Topeka and the Topeka Chamber on community branding.*
7. Develop a prospectus for each targeted industry that clearly articulates Topeka’s value 2016 - *Support and in the process*
8. Refresh GO Topeka website 2016  
*Agree with this initiative. GO Topeka has launched a new website and will continue to modify it.*
9. GO Topeka social media activity 2016  
*Agree with this initiative. GO Topeka will continue to enhance their social media presence and content.*
10. GO Topeka trade show, conferences and event activities  
*Administration will make sure GO Topeka staff is attending higher value conferences. There was mention of elected officials and even board members possibly attending some of them.*

There was discussion about what the board members can do to enhance the relationship between GO Topeka and the members of the public. It was suggested to have open meetings with JEDO, GO Topeka and members of the public similar to this meeting that would assist with that effort.

Griffith stated that this meeting did not leave opportunity to discuss the new initiatives and the GO Topeka mission statement. Griffith stated the executive committee is scheduled to meet February 1<sup>st</sup> and can discuss next steps and work on an action plan with moving forward.

Minutes taken by: \_\_\_\_\_