



THE HONDO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, (HEDC) Meeting Minutes

Type of Meeting: Regular Meeting
Date and Time: Thursday, March 20th, 2025 7:00 a.m.
Location: South Texas Regional Airport Board Room
700 Vandenberg Road, Hondo, TX 78861

1. **Determination of Quorum**

1.1 Call to Order

Chair J. Gruber, Vice-Chair Ronnie Miller, Secretary Ashley Lowe, Treasurer Brett Riff, Rachel Ramirez, Roger Hernandez & Rose Mary Mares.

“President J. Gruber called the meeting to order at 7:03 a.m.”

2. **Public Forum:** *Upon recognition by the Chair, persons desiring to address the Board may speak on any topic not to exceed three (3) minutes in length. Board Members are prohibited from deliberation on any item presented but may recommend placement on a future agenda for discussion.*

No comments were made by a visitor.

3. **Consent Agenda:** *All consent items are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion. If requested by a Board Member, any item may be taken off the Consent Agenda by the Chair for individual consideration.*

4.1 Approval of Feb 20th, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

“Correction to minutes regarding appropriation of \$10,000 Microsoft Scholarship. Tabled to April Meeting”

4. **Consider Items: Consider and take any action necessary**

4.1 Approval of Resolution ED 2-25 for exp. of Microsoft funds to HISD CTE Program- \$10,000

“Resolution to be tabled to April Meeting per correction for appropriation.”

4.2 Presentation and adoption of STRA Lease Agreement (J. Gruber – Chair of EDC)

“Lease Agreement to be tabled to April Meeting per need to review changes made by STRA Aviation Director”

4.3 Presentation of Summer Music Series (Jamie Kindred – Dir. Of PR & Recreation COH) \$5470

Jamie Kindred, representing the Office of Public Relations for the City of Hondo, presented the proposed **Summer Music Series**, a four-month event aimed at increasing foot traffic and revitalizing the downtown area. The series will feature four live music acts, taking place in April,



May, June, and July, with performances designed to engage the community and encourage local businesses to extend their hours.

Jamie outlined the broader vision of the initiative, which includes the long-term goal of creating a **dedicated green space** in downtown Hondo, stretching from the Administrative Building to the front of the Courthouse. To acclimate the community to this idea, the city has been frequently closing 16th Street between M and K for events, promoting a pedestrian-friendly downtown environment. The initiative aligns with HEDC's mission to support downtown economic development and improve community engagement.

Event Details:

- **April 26:** Cutting Edge Entertainment (Karaoke DJ)
- **May 17:** Cactus Country (Country Music & Line Dancing)
- **June 21:** Gunpowder Soup (80s Throwback Band)
- **July 19:** Jenny B (Tejano)
- **Additional Features:** Food and drink vendors, street closures, and community engagement activities.
- **Total Estimated Budget:** Under \$12,000

Funding Request:

Jamie requested **\$5,470** from the HEDC to sponsor Gunpowder Soup's performance, the most expensive act in the lineup. In return, HEDC's logo would be featured on **all** event marketing materials, not just for the Gunpowder Soup performance, but for the entire series.

Discussion & Board Comments:

- **Budget Considerations:** Jamie emphasized that she worked within a constrained budget, prioritizing music bookings first while also accounting for contingency costs like porta-potties and unexpected expenses.
- **Event Logistics:** Power supply concerns were addressed, with confirmation that the county provides a generator for event use.
- **Sponsorship Approach:** Jamie expressed reluctance to seek additional sponsors, as the city considers this a community giveback event. However, future editions may incorporate sponsorships more proactively.
- **Alignment with HEDC Goals:** Board members noted that the event aligns with HEDC's focus on downtown economic development and improving quality of life.

"A motion was made by Ashley Lowe to approve Resolution No. ED3-25, authorizing an expenditure of \$5,470 to the City of Hondo for the Summer Music Series. The motion was seconded by Rosemary Mares. Motion passed unanimously."

5. Discussion Items: Discuss with no formal action to be taken

5.1 Presentation of Connect Platform (Justin McKenzie – Das Greenhaus)

Justin McKenzie introduced the **Connect Platform**, emphasizing its role in community engagement and collaboration. He demonstrated its functionality using **Hondo** as an example, illustrating how the platform can aggregate local events, discussions, and resources into a **centralized, visible system**.

Key Features of the Connect Platform

1. **Event Management & Visibility:**
 - The platform can host and display **community events** such as the Airstrip Attack.
 - Events will be visible across multiple platforms, promoting wider engagement.
2. **Community Groups & Discussions:**
 - Hondo's first community group was set up as **Innovation and Growth**.
 - Users can create and join nested groups tailored to different initiatives.
 - Groups can be public or private, allowing for controlled discussions.
 - A **private HEDC Board group** could facilitate document sharing and discussions.
3. **Document Sharing & File Management:**
 - Works similarly to **SharePoint** for storing and managing files.
 - Reports and other community documents can be uploaded and discussed.
4. **Polling & Community Engagement:**
 - Offers interactive features similar to **Facebook groups**, without the distractions.
 - Allows for structured discussions and decision-making.
5. **Member Benefits & Resources:**
 - Users will have access to **special member benefits**, such as **discounts on travel, hotels, and airfare**.
 - The platform can highlight **local business promotions** and other perks.
6. **Business & Entrepreneurial Support:**
 - Knowledge Hub offers **resources for business planning, accounting, and legal guidance**.
 - Features **entrepreneurial courses and self-paced learning modules**.
 - Custom Learning Management Systems (LMS) can be created for Hondo-specific initiatives.

Implementation & Next Steps

1. **Group Setup & Community Expansion:**
 - Goal is to establish **15+ sub-groups** for different initiatives.
 - Admins will be trained to manage groups and discussions.
2. **Marketing & Community Adoption:**
 - Rollout will include **social media promotion (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)**.
 - Encouraging maximum **free memberships** to enhance participation.
 - Regular **webinars and event highlights** to boost engagement.
3. **Integration with Schools & Workforce Development:**
 - Potential partnership with **Career & Technical Education (CTE)** programs.

- Internship opportunities through **Das Greenhaus' internship program**.
- Structured pathways for students to connect with local businesses.

"No action was taken by the Board."

5.2 Review of STRA signage and EDC participation – (Sean Patty –Director EDC)

The Board reviewed an update on the proposed signage at the entrance of Castro and Highway 90, which will serve as a prominent feature for the Business Park, Industrial Park, and South Texas Regional Airport.

- **Project Overview:** Ryan Elder – (Director of Aviation) previously provided details on the new sign, which has since gone out for bids. A vendor has been selected, and the sign was approved by City Council with an estimated cost of **\$132,000**.
- **Design & Features:** The sign will prominently display "South Texas Regional Airport" and include an LED/video display for advertisements, community messaging, and welcoming information. The sign will be positioned on the west side of Hondo for high visibility.
- **Tenant Leasing:** Ryan Elder is finalizing pricing for tenant spaces on the sign.
- **Funding Discussion:**
 - The Board revisited a prior discussion from when Doug Dowler was Executive Director, where the EDC considered using its annual loan payment from the airport fund to cover part of the signage cost.
 - The annual payment, approximately **\$31,000 to \$37,000** (from a \$500,000+ loan at 5% interest), could be used for this year's contribution.
 - No action was required at this time, but Ryan Elder sought confirmation that the Board was still aligned with this approach.

Concerns About LED Maintenance

Board members raised concerns about the long-term maintenance of the LED portion of the sign, citing common issues:

- High maintenance costs, with frequent panel failures and costly replacements.
- Limited serviceability from manufacturers, which could leave the city with expensive, non-functioning equipment.
- The need for constant updates to ensure relevant content, which could pose an operational burden.

Board members shared experiences with electronic signs, noting that maintaining and repairing them can be challenging and expensive, sometimes requiring **\$75,000+** in replacement costs. Several members recommended exploring **backlit signage** instead, as it would be easier and cheaper to maintain while still achieving visibility.

- The EDC's financial contribution will be revisited, with final decisions expected at a future board meeting.

6. Standing Reports

6.1 Budget Report (Sales Tax & General Ledger Detail)

Sean Patty (Executive Director for HEDC) provided an update on the monthly budget report, including sales tax revenue and general ledger details.

- **Sales Tax Revenue for February:**
 - Sales tax receipts for **February 2024** totaled **\$182,900**, reflecting a **5.3% decrease** compared to **February 2023 (\$185,612)**.
 - This follows a trend of slightly lower sales tax collections in **January and February** compared to the previous year.
 - Despite the recent dip, sales tax revenue for **November and December** saw **significant year-over-year increases**.
- **Sales Tax Trends & Business Impacts:**
 - While specific sales tax details for individual businesses are confidential, general trends indicate **slower retail sales in the first few months of the year**. However, improvements are anticipated in the coming months.
- **General Ledger & Budget Status:**
 - The detailed **budget vs. actual report** was included in the meeting packet.
 - **All expenses and revenues remain on track**, with no unexpected variances.
 - Chris Hill had previously reported that the **overall budget trend remains positive**, and Sean reaffirmed that the EDC's financials are stable.

6.2 Executive Director Report

Kaitlynn Jensen (BR&E Coordinator for Hondo EDC) presented a rough draft of the new HEDC monthly e-newsletter, requesting feedback on content and a creative title, as *Hondo Hustle* was a placeholder. The newsletter will feature highlights such as the Capital Farm Credit ribbon cutting, including event photos and a formal press release. It will also incorporate business infographics, insights from the *Building Texas* show, and links to HEDC's social media. A "Resource Roundup" section will showcase business opportunities like the Texas PACE Program. To engage the community, the newsletter will include a public poll—starting with input on *The Loading Dock* improvements, which are tied to a \$50,000 T-Mobile grant application.

Proposed enhancements for *The Loading Dock* include lighting, seating, landscaping, and converting storage space into a visitor center. A discussion arose about potentially relocating the caboose or museum downtown. Additionally, the newsletter will feature commercial property listings and an upcoming events section linked to the Chamber's community calendar. It will be distributed via email, with a signup link promoted on the HEDC website and social media. Kaitlynn encouraged feedback on the content and format before finalizing the first edition.

7. Topics for Future Meetings: *Board/Staff discussion*

“No topics were suggested for future meetings”

8. Executive Session: *As authorized by the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code Section 551.001, the Board may enter into a closed Executive Session at any time concerning any and all subjects and for any and all purposes permitted by the Act, including, but not limited to, the following:*

- 8.1 Section 551.071 - Consultation with the Board’s attorney
- 8.2 Section 551.072 - Deliberation regarding the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property
- 8.3 Section 551.074 - Deliberation on personnel matters
- 8.4 Section 551.087 - Deliberation regarding economic development negotiations

9. Actions Resulting from Executive Session

“There was no executive session.”

10. Adjournment

“A motion was made by Rose Mary Mares to adjourn the meeting. Brett Riff promptly seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 a.m.”

ATTEST:



Ashley Lowe, Board Secretary

On 4/17/25