



THE HONDO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, (HEDC) Meeting Minutes

Type of Meeting: Regular Meeting
Date and Time: Thursday, September 18th, 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, Secretary Ashley Lowe, Treasurer Brett Riff, Rachel Ramirez, & Rose Mary Mares.

Absent: Vice-Chair Ronnie Miller, Roger Hernandez

“President J. Gruber called the meeting to order at 7:05 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 deliberating 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.*

3.1 Approval of August 21st, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

“Ashley Lowe made the motion to approve the consent agenda items. Rachel Ramirez seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0”

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

4.1 Presentation of Wayfinding Signage Proposal – Studio 16:19 Round Rock, TX

Presenter: Courtney Kuehner, Project Manager, Studio 16:19

Summary:

- Studio 16:19, a Texas-based landscape architecture and planning firm, presented a proposal for a **wayfinding and signage project** in Hondo. The firm specializes in signage, branding, and wayfinding design for small Texas communities. Previous projects include La Grange, Lampasas, Belton, and Dripping Springs.

- Purpose of the project is to **draw more intentional traffic from Hwy 90 into downtown Hondo** and better guide both visitors and residents to key community destinations (e.g., City Hall, courthouse, parks, hospital, library, stadium).

Key Discussion Points:

- **TxDOT Compliance:**
 - TxDOT will not allow specific businesses to be listed on highway signs. Only general categories (e.g., “Downtown,” “Dining,” “Library,” “Park”) are permitted.
 - TxDOT limits signs to **three destinations per sign** with specific size and text requirements.
 - Studio 16:19 has extensive experience navigating TxDOT approval processes.
- **Branding Component:**
 - In addition to navigation, the signage design would serve as a **branding and marketing tool** for Hondo.
 - Studio 16:19 would help develop a consistent visual identity (colors, fonts, shapes, logos) to unify the city’s signage system.
 - Examples from other cities show incorporation of unique community identity into signage design.
- **Proposal Details:**
 - Estimated cost: **\$41,000 (design phase)** – covers stakeholder engagement, site visits, branding, signage design, and placement planning.
 - City of Hondo would be responsible for **fabricating and installing** the signs, though Studio 16:19 can also assist with sourcing contractors if desired.
 - Process includes kickoff meetings, stakeholder input, preliminary concepts, TxDOT coordination, final design, and handoff of construction documents.
 - Timeline: approximately **six months**, depending on TxDOT approval speed and local consensus.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Determine whether HEDC should provide **initial funding for design and branding** (as this is currently an **unbudgeted item**).
 - Engage the **City, Chamber, hospital, school district, and other stakeholders** since the project scope extends beyond downtown.
 - Consider long-term phased approach: **Phase I** – wayfinding/directional signage; **Phase II** – entry monument signs and potential overpass branding.

Outcome:

- No action taken at this meeting.
- The Board acknowledged the importance of wayfinding and branding for Hondo and agreed further discussion with the City and stakeholders is necessary before committing funds.

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

5.1 Discussion of STRD Fees for Boise Cascade

Summary:

- The Executive Director reported that Boise Cascade's project manager, Rick Hoffman, raised concerns regarding the cost of solid waste disposal services under the City's exclusive contract with STRD.
- Boise Cascade requires a 40-yard roll-off container to be emptied three to four times per month. STRD has quoted **\$1,142 per load**, which is nearly double the cost Boise Cascade pays in Houston, Dallas, and other markets.
- The higher cost is attributed to (1) the City's exclusive contract with STRD, which prevents use of alternate providers within city limits, (2) a 50-mile haul distance to the landfill, and (3) a 12% fee added by the City for administrative costs.

Discussion Points:

- Board members questioned whether the exclusivity agreement should apply to roll-off containers for special projects, rather than only to recurring waste services.
- Some members suggested the matter should be addressed directly between Boise Cascade and the City, as the fee structure is dictated by the City's contract with STRD.
- It was noted that Boise Cascade did not request any economic incentives when locating in Hondo, only a streamlined permitting process. The Board discussed whether cost relief could or should be considered.
- Members acknowledged the concern but expressed reservations about HEDC involvement, noting this type of cost is typically a **business-to-city matter**, not an EDC responsibility.
- Several members recommended facilitating a **meeting between Boise Cascade, the City, and STRD** to review the exclusivity contract and discuss potential options.

Outcome:

- The Board took **no formal action**.
- The Executive Director will communicate to Boise Cascade that this matter lies beyond the EDC's direct role, but assistance could be offered in facilitating a conversation with the City and STRD regarding the contract terms.

6. Standing Reports

6.1 Executive Director Report

Mission Focus

- The Executive Director reiterated the refined mission statement emphasizing the EDC's role to **attract, support, and grow business** in Hondo, creating a robust environment where local businesses can prosper.

Chamber of Commerce Funding

- Reviewed the Chamber of Commerce's **\$35,000 allocation from HEDC**, with a budget breakdown provided by the Chamber.

Sales Tax Update

- Sales tax receipts continue to serve as a key performance indicator (KPI) for economic growth.
- August collections (reflecting June sales) showed **10% year-over-year growth**, placing Hondo ahead in annual comparisons.
- Fiscal year-to-date growth stands at **3.2%**, with early previews of September data indicating continued strength.
- Discussion noted the connection between retail activity, school enrollment stabilization, and growth in larger retailers.

Social Media & Communications

- Continued growth across platforms, with Facebook as the strongest channel and LinkedIn developing gradually.
- Current following: **1,147 across Facebook**, with consistent monthly growth in followers and impressions.
- Newsletter open and click-through rates remain steady.

Lunch B.I.T.E.S. Program

- First session scheduled for **October 8th**, featuring guest speaker **Stephanie Scheller**, author and entrepreneur.
- Event capped at **30 participants** and already at capacity with a waitlist, demonstrating strong community interest.
- Program offers **Business Insights, Tools, Education, and Strategies (B.I.T.E.S.)**, with catering provided by El Restaurante Azteca.
- Board noted this initiative as a successful new avenue for business engagement and education.

BluDot Open Rewards Program

- Launched August 1, showing strong early results.
- **Economic impact to date:** Over **\$200,000** in local spending generated, with more than **500 active users** enrolled.
- Return on investment currently estimated at **23:1**, positioning Hondo's program alongside larger EDOs across the country.
- August purchases from users totaled approximately **\$70,000 in Hondo businesses**.

Outcome:

- Report received with appreciation; no board action required.

7. 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

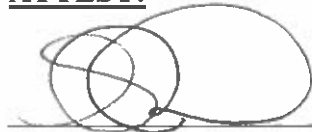
8. Actions Resulting from Executive Session

"The Board did not enter into Executive Session."

9. Adjournment

"Brett Riff made a motion to adjourn, and Rose Mary Mares seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 a.m."

ATTEST:



Ashley Lowe, Board Secretary

On 10-14-2025