



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### MINUTES

April 22, 2025

1:30 p.m.

Hybrid

Approved: July 24, 2025

#### Call to Order

The start of the meeting was delayed because of a building fire drill. Chair Hanson called the meeting to order at 1:44 p.m.

#### Roll Call

Members present: Chris Hanson, Lisa Avery, Brent Stutzman, Tim Weber, Sherrie Payne.

Members absent: None

#### Election of Officers

1:45 p.m.

**Nomination:** Commissioner Weber nominated Chris Hanson to continue as the 2025 Chair. Commissioner Avery seconded the nomination. Hanson accepted the nomination, which passed 5-0.

**Nomination:** Commissioner Payne nominated Lisa Avery to continue as Vice-Chair. Commissioner Weber seconded the nomination. Avery accepted the nomination, which passed 5-0.

#### Approval of July 25, 2024, Minutes

1:46 p.m.

**Motion:** Commissioner Stutzman motioned to approve the minutes from July 25, 2024. Member Weber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

#### Business from the Public

1:47 p.m.

None.

#### Scheduled Business

1:48 p.m.

Economic Development Manager, Sophie Adams opened giving commissioners the opportunity to provide an update to the group with what's has been happening with their businesses/organizations and the people they are representing.

- Department Updates

Adams began the department update sharing a snapshot of data points for a periodic review. Adams asked members to let her know if there are specific things they are interested in tracking for future reports.

Economic Development Program Coordinator, Jen Wehr continued reporting on growth or employment changes in Albany. Overall, Albany has stayed at 1.5 percent change and unemployment rate between 4.4 and 4.7 percent. They see growth in manufacturing, private education and health services as well as government services. Countywide in the past year there has been an employment drop in construction, trades, hospitality and professional/business services. The financial services sector has been flat.

Wehr then shared some news on the commercial space vacancies and new businesses downtown. And then reported on offerings/activities available through the Small Business Development Center at LBCC. She shared client demographics, capital infusions, numbers of businesses being advised and jobs created through support of SBDC. The city promotes the program when appropriate through social media, monthly reports, partner associations, stakeholders and the Downtown Association.

Commissioner Avery added she's on the Statewide Advisory Board and the program is nestled in community colleges with the Workforce connection. They then discussed the connections to COG. The COG manages the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, but they don't do the advisory part that SBDC does; they are more focused on regional planning.

Wehr then went over the data on housing growth and trends. Referring to data from September 2024, but overall, there are an average of 130 to 150 single family dwellings built.

Commissioner Weber offered that as an economic development commission they should start with what the objectives are, getting more specific about what success looks like and where the commission is focusing on are relative to that goal. He thought it is crucial to identify the gaps to achieving those goals. One may be a struggle to find property and licensing restrictions. If businesses decide not to establish in Albany try and determine why and what the solutions may be. Adams theorized that some kind of SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, threat) analysis would be beneficial as the last Economic Opportunity Analysis was last done in 2020.

Commissioners agreed it would be good to see an inventory of available usable lands categorized. Commissioner Avery brought up the successes in Millersburg and how that may spill over to Albany. Commissioner Hanson explained the historic reasons for business success there.

Adams shared that staff had a conversation with the city council to look at the potential for a grant program for business efforts as outlined in a Business Retention and Expansion Program. Currently there has not been a formal or cohesive approach to BRE by staff, but staff's intent is to make it a goal to increase BRE visits including partner organizations for any support the city could provide.

Adams provided a brief overview of projects that they are working on:

- One is the Multi-Unit Property Tax Exemption Program similar to the Enterprise Zone Program. It will provide a tax exemption on new investment of multi-unit or mixed-use development with close proximity to transit. The council has supported it and are working on presenting it to the taxing districts.
- Staff took a code amendment to City Council that deals with collection of Transient Lodging Tax for short term rentals like Airbnb's to remit tax the same as motels do.
- The undergrounding of the power at the waterfront continues which will better facilitate events in that area.
- Public Works is leading an airport economic feasibility study. The RFP is posted on the city website.

An internal goal is to do a better job at telling the story of economic development in the City of Albany, doing weekly or bi-monthly reports to city council and stakeholders. Along with that Adams wanted to propose a quarterly meeting of this commission to better work on consistency and project work, or a grant program. Commissioner Weber noted it is hard work to do well as a commission and welcomes additional opportunities to meet if we want to make progress.

Commissioner Avery indicated that email updates are welcome in between meetings.

As the city council has given staff direction that they would like to pursue a business support grant program of some kind. This commission can gather ideas to develop a grant. Adams thought that would be an exciting project for the commission.

- Strategy Review and Discussion

Staff's perspective is that the Economic Development Strategy document doesn't need to be super lengthy but focus on accomplishing the 4 pillars of a healthy economy under the city strategic plan. The document should provide the context and guidance for everyday operations to tie back to those goals. She asked for any initial thoughts on content or general framework.

Commissioner Avery offered that it seemed to have all the big buckets on business recruitment as well as retention.

Commissioner Hanson added some minor grammatical changes, but also that the objectives could be not only growing the economy and employment, but also attracting new business as that is what brings dollars in. Adding another bullet under a Healthy Economy for room to grow.

Commissioner Hanson suggested they focus on what Commissioner Weber had suggested for the next meeting. Discussing what the current state is and then what the future might look like. Staff responded that other counties have detailed strategies and have their SWOT analysis within the document. But that depends on whether the commission wants a document to update every year or two or more fixed. Adams will email out some examples from other counties/cities. She preferred to leave out things that will become outdated.

#### Business from the Commission

**2:45 p.m.**

None.

#### Next Meeting Date

The next scheduled meeting date to be determined. A poll will be sent out regarding available dates.

#### Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Hanson adjourned the meeting at 2:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Signature on file*

Susan Muniz  
Recorder

Reviewed by,

*Signature on file*

Sophie Adams  
Economic Development Manager

*\*Documents discussed at the meeting that are not in the agenda packet are archived in the record. The documents are available by emailing [cdaa@albanyoregon.gov](mailto:cdaa@albanyoregon.gov).*