



# Meeting Minutes: 04/19/2023

Adams Building - UA Cossatot De Queen Campus

## Attendance

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Branson, President	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Greg Revels, Vice President
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jay Bunyard, Secretary/Treasurer	<input type="checkbox"/> Jimmy Bristow
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dr. Steve Cole	<input type="checkbox"/> Ned Hendrix
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Angie Walker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tiffany Maurer, Ex Officio

Others in Attendance: Jeff Brown, Sandra Dunn, Diana Ramirez, Suzanne Babb, Megan Williams, Lori House, Dana Poindexter

## Minutes

The board voted to approve the 3/15/2022 minutes with a motion from Dr. Steve Cole and a second from Greg Revels.

Tiffany updated the members on the financial reports. After additional membership dues received in March were deposited, the current balance stands at \$109,757.83. Several memberships are still pending payment. Tiffany notified the group that she has gone in and completed the annual renewal process for FRIENDS' sam.gov account to keep the foundation in good standing with the federal government to remain eligible for grant funding. She shared that after more than 2 years of working with the area schools, employers, and workforce development staff, Sevier County is now officially designated as the first county in Southwest Arkansas to achieve a Work Ready Community designation from the ACT organization. This is a large step toward becoming a Competitive Community recognized by the AEDC and the remaining work for that designation will be her focus and priority moving forward, along with maintaining the ACT designation for the county, as it is a continuous improvement metric and re-evaluated periodically. The Red River Leadership Institute will be providing their May training in Southwest Arkansas and the region is working together through the SADA organization Tiffany is president of to help host the group and provide a memorable experience for the attendees.

Tiffany updated the group on the Community Navigator grant and introduced the new hub administrative assistant, Megan Williams to the group. The Quarter 5 federal reporting wrapped up in March and Tiffany was able to submit all documents prior to her and Diana's leaving for Quality Service training in Florida later that month. The training went well and both employees felt it was valuable to the development of their skills and service delivery methods.

Diana updated the group on current CNPP grant activities, as detailed below:

- The Chamber hosted Keisha McKinney from McKinney Media Solutions for a Website 101 training at the Chamber office on March 23 and had 5 business owners attend. Keisha will return



## Meeting Minutes (Continued)

for a 2.0 (hands-on) training over the summer and plans are in the works to have her provide a training on Persona and understanding the business' audience.

- Greg Revels will be scheduling times with Diana to host 3 trainings over the Spring/Summer on establishing a business with the State, IRS, and with a partner.
- The hub has contracted with Bunyard Broadcasting to begin marketing the hub and spokes' services through their platforms via radio ads, website mentions, and monthly radio interviews with hub staff to discuss events and services offered through the program.
- The FRIENDS spoke has partnered with Jennifer Collier to provide in-person social media training. The Facebook training was held in two-parts this week and May's training will be on using canva.com for digital marketing designs.

The group then discussed potential projects and events to offer with remaining CNPP grant funds allocated to FRIENDS. They considered additional marketing and outreach efforts and suggested contracting with local newspapers also. They agreed to have CNPP staff research a leadership development program, hospitality management training, young entrepreneur development, and providing translation services in Marshallese in addition to the ASL and Spanish interpreters.

Dr. Steve Cole discussed a federal grant opportunity specific to economic development and made suggestions for a potential project to pursue writing the grant for. The group agreed it could be worthwhile and to pursue writing for the grant. Steve will share additional information and he will work with Tiffany to gather all required information if the grant writer can verify the applicable uses for the funds.

Mike Branson called for CEDS committee updates from committee chairs, with reports provided below:  
**Entertainment/Recreation (chairperson: Ned Hendrix)** – N/A, chairperson absent.

**Housing (chairperson: Angie Walker)** – Community leaders hosted a housing development group in De Queen again this week with hopes of recruiting a large-scale apartment development to Sevier County. The firm is being urged to develop housing here to address the increased need for housing of employees at the new Choctaw casino in Hochatown upon its completion. This will add to the need already in place for Pilgrims and Tyson employees and UA Cossatot's growing sports teams and re-implementation of an international student program.

**Job Diversity/Quality (chairperson: Jay Bunyard)** – N/A, committee has not begun meeting yet.

**Broadband (chairpersons: Greg Revels & Jimmy Bristow)** – Greg shared that community leaders met with Glen Howie and some other staff from the Arkansas State Broadband office to discuss internet for Sevier County. He recommended additional members to be added to the local committee (including churches, mayors, healthcare organizations, schools, and other diverse groups). The committee recently met with Kecia Wolf, the new CEO for REA/Four States Fiber to identify their plan for broadband rollout under the new leadership. Kecia expressed that they still have the same intention of providing fiber internet throughout Sevier County and look forward to continued partnership with our community.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned.