



Minutes from June 21, 2018 Regular Board Meeting
Palestine Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors

Attendance Record:

Larry Weber, Alan Herrington, John McDonald, and Ben Campbell

Absent were Linda Dickens, Stuart Whitaker, and Michael Page

PEDC Attending: Gayle Cooper, Economic Development Director; Greg Laudadio, Economic Development Asst. Director, Main Street Manager; Terry Johnson, Economic Development Coordinator; Mary Raum, Tourism & Marketing Manager; and Rachel Nichols, Tourism Event Coordinator

City of Palestine Staff Attending: Jim Mahoney, Finance Manager

Visitors Attending: Jack Coleman and Kurt Herrington

A. Call to Order: 11:33 am

The Palestine Economic Development Corporation reserves the right to convene into executive session at any time during the course of this meeting to discuss any of the matters listed on this agenda as authorized by Texas Government Code Sections 551.071 (Consultation with Attorney), 551.072 (Deliberations about Real Property), 551.073 (Deliberations about Gifts and Donations), 551.074 (Personnel Matters), 551.076 (Deliberations and Security Devices) and 551.087 (Economic Development) to wit:

B. Public Comment: - Kurt Herrington discussed purchase of lot next to Herrington's Land of Memory Funeral Home. Their business purchased 1.057 acres of land from PEDC for expansion of their services.

Board Member John McDonald mentioned the Supreme Court Ruling for e-commerce sales tax. Gayle Cooper, ED Director, explained this decision will benefit local government because we will receive additional sales tax revenue never received in the past. If the internet seller had a presence in Palestine, Texas, the city always received the sales tax revenue. We now can receive sales tax revenue when the internet seller does not have a business presence in Palestine, provided the state legislates to participate.

C. Board Report – None to report.

D. Staff Reports – Director Report

- Gayle Cooper attended the Texas Economic Development Council conference in Galveston which was very good this year. Galveston is a town of 55,000 citizens and 700,000 visitors each year. It was reported our Lt. Governor is against Economic Development getting more support from the State of Texas.
- Gayle Cooper will complete the State Comptroller's Economic Development Corporation Report for Fiscal Year 2016 and 2017. These reports are due the end of February each year.
- In order to nominate the Palestine Economic Development Corporation Board for an award in economic development excellence, it is recommended that the Board complete a six hour training course sponsored by the Texas Engineering Extension Service. Gayle will be asking the PEDC Board to consider this training which will get us to the excellence award in a future meeting.
- The PEDC will be making some changes to our website. We are going to add our national

retailers to our website and change our front page.

- Palestine is working towards creating an Education Committee chaired by Dr. Kathy Ray. Gayle will be a part of this new committee and will continue to make reports as new things arise.
- The Palestine Mall needs a buyer or redeveloper and Gayle has been tasked with selling the Mall. Since our loan is right at two million, we must recoup the loan amount. There is no set sales price for the Palestine Mall. Two letters went out recently to potential developers concerning the Palestine Mall sale.

Tourism Report –

- Hotel Revenue is up 2.8% Year To Date (October through September)
- Social Media numbers are holding strong
- Visitor Center traffic is down due to our new website that is mobile friendly
- The Visitor Center is generating more leads because the TSRR provides leads to us. There were 340 mailed leads, up 81.8% from May 2017.
- Website traffic is up on page views by 55.1%, users up by 106.2%, and website sessions up by 104.2%. Wiggy Thump is the record label for the Whiskey Meyers Band and their local performance created a lot of web traffic for Tourism Department. The City and Tourism Office had visitors all the way from Paris, France. The Texas State Railroad also has some international reach. Goggle Analytics will show Tourism what the international patrons are viewing on the visitpalestine.com website.
- The current Tourism projects include: the wayfinding signage project, adding additional rack card locations in Houston, Waco, and Dallas, rebranding the strategic planning for the Dogwood Trails Celebration, implementing a filming permit and application processes, and working with the Texas legislature to designate Palestine as the Dogwood Capital of Texas.

Civic Center Report –

- As of 06-11-18, the Palestine Civic Center is now called Performing Arts Center of Palestine. The fencing in front of the building will eventually be removed and greenery will be enhanced around the front entrance. The Austin based Community Assessment Team stated rebranding was necessary, with new brochures and performances such as the ballet and different music venues.
- The Tourism Department is looking for a digital marquee that features both the Palestine Athletic Complex and the Performing Arts Center. Signage will be visible from both the loop and Highway 19.
- The floors to the Performing Arts Center will also have floor work done at some point in time.

Main Street Report –

- The Main Street social media statistics have grown a great deal recently. Main Street had 27,320 users reached with 14,648 engagements for the This Place Matters campaign. The Texas Historic Commission publication mentioned Palestine, Texas in a recent publication concerning this campaign.
- The Second Annual Imagine the Possibilities Tour, which showcases available properties for lease or sale in Main Street Palestine was held on Friday, May 25th, from Noon to 4 pm. Mark Thacker, Restoration Architect, was special guest speaker. This Main Street event featured 12 Main Street properties. Last year, five properties either sold or leased during the event, and we are waiting on results from this year's event.
- Currently three businesses are renovating downtown. We will soon have a new business downtown called New Creations Dance Studio, operated by Shauna Hansen. Since O'Sweet Pea business closed, building owner Heather Calhoun will rent three months at a time for short term businesses, keeping the Christmas season open herself. We are also expecting a new brewery downtown as well.

- Project Curb Appeal is still an ongoing project for Main Street because we need to seek another bid for the specific Main Street curb fixes and curb painting.
- The Main Street Board reviewed and approved a Façade Improvement Grant application that will be reviewed by the PEDC Board at our next meeting.
- The Main Street Board will review a historic preservation grant application during our Special Board Meeting on 06/26/18. Larry Weber pointed out that the FIP Grant is on a first come and first served basis for the year 2018.
- Main Street now has a presence on the PEDC website page found at www.palestinetexas.net and we invite all the board members to review our website

Winnsboro Main Street Visit –

- On 06-20-18, three members from the Main Street Board, and three PEDC staff visited Winnsboro Main Street Program. For a city with a population of approximately 3,500 citizens, they have a very active Main Street Program. The Winnsboro Center for the Arts is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization run primarily by local citizens. The EDC pays the salary for one part-time staff employee. The Bowery Stage offers world renowned musical entertainment through the financial support of local business sponsors, ticket sales, and Winnsboro Center for the Arts community membership and volunteer program.
 - Winnsboro Main Street thrives for several reasons. From a business perspective, the Winnsboro Economic Development office supported businesses with grants averaging up to \$50,000 matching funds. The EDC office worked with the local businesses to move them to locations within Main Street and Winnsboro that made sense for their business purpose and their business location. The cost for the demolition work was built into the waste management contract when buildings had to be moved or torn down.
 - The Winnsboro business community and the volunteer community work together to make everybody successful. They do a few things very well, being careful not to get involved in too many different projects so that they can concentrate on just a few to make them extremely successful.
 - The most effective Main Streets typically have 10 to 12 blocks. Palestine is currently investigating ways to manage our Main Street program more effectively. The crux of the Main Street Program in Winnsboro was that the EDC would do its best to give a lot, but have performance agreement claw backs in case a downtown business did not meet its agreed expectation.
- E. Consideration and Possible Action Concerning: Minutes from PEDC Regular Board Meeting conducted on May 17, 2018 – Ben Campbell moved to accept meeting minutes; seconded by John McDonald. Motion carried.
- F. Consideration and Possible Action Concerning: Financial Report for May 2018 -- Motion to approve May 2018 financials made by Alan Herrington; seconded by John McDonald. Motion carried. Jim Mahoney, City Finance staff, stated PEDC expenditures are lower than normal, and with 66% of the fiscal year over, revenue is above the mark. There will be some cash flow next fiscal year to help Palestine Main Street Program. An entry of -\$97,000 from the balance sheet will be removed by next month from the PEDC financial statement.
- G. Briefing and Discussion Concerning: Discuss scoring and award amounts for 2018 Community Development Grant Program, and determine award recipients and grant amounts. – PEDC received a total of seven grant applications under this program this year. Under the suggested guidelines, each applicant needed a minimum of 50 points to be eligible for grant consideration. Any financial award amounts are paid retroactively in grant matching funds. The PEDC Board voted to fund the \$50,000 Community Development Grant for 2018 in this manner:

Museum for East Texas Culture Display Room - \$2,000
City of Palestine for Museum for East Texas Culture - \$34,000
G-4orce Athletics - \$4,385
Meals on Wheels - \$4,615
Texas Youth Advocates - \$5,000

Alan Herrington made motion to approve the 2018 Community Development Grant funding for the five recipients in the amounts mentioned above; seconded by Ben Campbell; and motion carried. Alan Herrington further requested PEDC staff to revamp the CDG scoring criteria for 2019.

H. Consideration and Possible Action Concerning: Discuss and determine and final approval for Main Street curb repairs and painting from bids received. – This item was tabled until PEDC has a bid that centers solely on Main Street curb repairs and painting.

I. Consideration and Possible Action Concerning: Compliance Issues. Gentle reminder to those Board members who have not yet completed online courses for Public Information and Open Meetings Act.

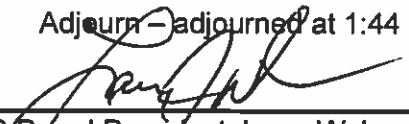
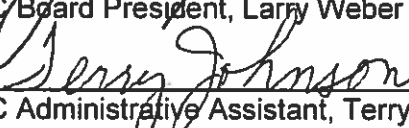
Please get your two certification documents to Terry Johnson to keep on file in our office for compliance purposes. We now need three more PEDC Board members to complete their courses. One of these Board members will complete his courses on Friday this week.

J. Closed Session – The Board will retire into executive session pursuant to the provisions of Texas Government Code. In accordance with the authority contained in Section 551.071 (consultation with Attorney), 551.074 (Regarding personnel matters), 551.072 (Deliberations regarding Real Estate) and 55.087 (Deliberations regarding economic development).

Update of real estate items.
Executive Session began at 1:12 pm

H. Reconvene into Regular Session at 1:44 pm
TAKE ACTION FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION: No Action taken.

I. Adjourn – adjourned at 1:44 pm.

	7-19-18	2:25 pm
PEDC Board President, Larry Weber	Date	Time
	7-19-18	2:25 pm
PEDC Administrative Assistant, Terry Johnson	Date	Time