



January 21, 2021

TO: SOUTH EAST TEXAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS (SETEDD)

FROM: BOB DICKINSON, DIRECTOR
TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES
SOUTH EAST TEXAS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT: SOUTH EAST TEXAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT MEETING

A lunch meeting for a small group, with a virtual or call in option, will be held at the MCM Elegante hotel on **Wednesday, January 27, 2021 at 11:30 a.m.** The purpose for this meeting is to get feedback and to define work elements that our Economic Development Consultant, Mike Barnes, will utilize to develop our short- and long-term Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic.

MEMBERS CAN ATTEND THE MEETING BY JOINING US AT

**MCM Elegante Hotel
Veranda Room
2355 IH-10 South
Beaumont, Texas 77705**

OR

FROM YOUR COMPUTER BY LOGGING INTO:

<https://www.gotomeet.me/SETRPC/ter>

OR

BY SIMPLY DIALING:

1-877-309-2073

ACCESS CODE: 499-824-429

If any questions arise, please do not hesitate to contact me at bdickinson@setrpc.org or (409) 899-8444 ext. 7520.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

I am looking forward to meeting with some of the “plant managers and leaders” within the South East Texas Region to discuss how a COVID-19 Economic Development Strategy could enhance your businesses. I would specifically like to get your input regarding the following topics:

1. What might a community/regional economic development strategy include to assist your company regarding workforce issues during COVID?
2. What are the biggest threats to your business during this COVID period? What might be helpful in a strategy to address these issues?
3. What might a partnership between business, industry and the public sector do to address COVID related issues?
4. Are there strategies that could be put in place moving forward to ease the burden of future pandemics similar to COVID?
5. How do we as a region plan for potential loss of revenue, employment, and potential outmigration of population?

Our Plan

Prepare a Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic Short & Long Term Economic Recovery & Resiliency Plan to address the pandemic through a strategic approach directly.

Mike Barnes Group, Inc. was the economic development firm chosen to develop a short and long-term Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan. Also, to create a Resiliency component for our SETRPC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to deal with future pandemics.

- Stakeholder roundtables to discuss opportunities and challenges. Including disruptions to the supply chain and workforce, and highlight those aspects of the regional economy most likely to be under stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Important participation from:
 - Small Business
 - Major Employers
 - Elected Officials
 - Real Estate Commercial & Residential
- Identify opportunities for accelerating SETX rebound. Including expansion & modernization of manufacturing and commercial & retail opportunities.

**SOUTH EAST TEXAS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (SETEDD)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

MEETING MINUTES

DATE: December 2, 2020

TIME: 11:30 a.m.

PLACE: MCM Elegante Hotel – Fountain View Room

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Dean Robinson, President of the South East Texas Economic Development District (SETEDD), welcomed board members and guests. He requested introductions from all present.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE “DRAFT” 2020 SETEDD COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDs)

- Bob Dickinson, Director, Transportation & Environmental Resources, SETRPC

Mr. Bob Dickinson, Director, Transportation & Environmental Resources, SETRPC, reviewed the CEDs document with everyone present. Mr. Dean Robinson called for a motion to adopt the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) document as presented. Mr. Scott Hall, General Manager, Lower Neches Valley Authority (LNVA) made the motion and it was seconded by Fred Jackson, Staff Attorney, Jefferson County, which carried unanimously.

III. DISCUSSION OF SETEDD’S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA) CARES ACT GRANT PROJECTS

- Bob Dickinson, Director, Transportation & Environmental Resources, SETRPC

Mr. Bob Dickinson introduced the newest employee to the T&ER's division, Ms. Rachael Robinson as the Economic Recovery Coordinator. He then discussed the CARES ACT (COVID-19) grant, what it entailed along with its regional challenges and identified the area's priority and potential projects.

The regional challenges include but not limited to:

- High unemployment rates
- Protection of critical industries from economic fallout
- Continued investments in flood mitigation, water & transportation infrastructure

The area's priority and potential projects include but not limited to:

- Establish a SETRPC Broadband Advisory Committee
- Regional Broadband Strategic Plan
- Broadband Economic Advantage
- Tourism

IV. PRESENTATION AND ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC SHORT- AND LONG-TERM ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY PLAN FOR THE SOUTH EAST TEXAS REGION

- Mike Barnes, Mike Barnes Group, Inc.

Mr. Dean Robinson introduced Mike Barnes from the Mike Barnes Group. He is an economic development consultant that has been hired by SETRPC to help with the development of a short- and long-term Recovery and Resiliency Plan in regard to the effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the South East Texas region.

Mr. Barnes presented recent facts on how the pandemic has affected the nation. Primarily how businesses were impacted by all the closures. Here are some of the facts stated:

- As of August 31, 2020, nearly 164,000 business have closed
- That was a 23% rise from July 2020
- The majority of closed businesses were restaurants in which 60% will not reopen

He then encouraged the members to express their ideas and concerns on what the region needs to focus on to improve economic development. Here are a few statements made by the group:

1. There is a need for improvement in accessibility and sustainability of internet access. There are too many restricted areas that do not have broadband coverage.
2. Students are having to park in the school parking lot to access their classwork because they can't get internet at home.
3. There is a need to teach and educate the older generation on how to handle the everchanging technology. Mainly simple tasks like video chat so they can feel more connected.
4. As the population declines, there is a concern that it will affect the grant funding that is desperately needed.
5. There is a major concern with the level of education coming out of online classes.
6. Due to the amount of time spent on devices and games, kids are having trouble interacting with others in social settings.

The next discussion was on how businesses and agencies can help to solve these issues and what strategies should be put in place? Here are the group's comments:

1. Enhancing internships within the community.
2. Broadband is a definite issue.
3. Forming a coalition of communities.
4. Bring back ½ workday in schools, work placements.
5. Bring back mentoring programs.
6. Promote trade jobs.
7. Create a regional workforce center to add trade programs in school.

Mr. Barnes finished his presentation by asking the group to contact him with ideas and thoughts on related topics discussed.

V. DISCUSSION OF TOPICS FOR NEXT BOARD MEETING

No topics were discussed.

VI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

None.

VII. SET NEXT MEETING DATE

No date has been set for the next meeting, however, it will be a virtual call-in meeting.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 12:42 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chris Kirkendall	Commissioner, Hardin County
Dean Robinson	Owner, Neches Belle
Eddie Arnold	Commissioner, Jefferson County
Fred Jackson	Staff Attorney, Jefferson County
Scott Hall	General Manager, LNVA

GUESTS PRESENT

Ana Pereda	VP, Chamber of Commerce
Ida Schossow	Present, Orange Area Chamber of Commerce
Jessica Hill	Executive Director, OCEDC
Karl Segura	Manger/Business Development, Entergy
Kay DeCuir	Executive Director, Nederland EDC
Kevin King	Business Representative, Workforce Solutions
Larry Kelley	Port Director, Port of Port Arthur
Leigh Anne Dallas	EDC Assistant, City of Orange
Megan Romero	EDC Business Development Manager, OCEDC
Pat Avery	President/CEO, Port Arthur Chamber of Commerce

SETRPC STAFF PRESENT

Shanna Burke	Executive Director, SETRPC
Bob Dickinson	Director, T&ER Division, SETRPC
Jimmie Lewis	Planner III, SETRPC
Rachael Robinson	Economic Recovery Coordinator, SETRPC
Lucie Michaud	Administrative Assistant, SETRPC