

The Governing Body of the City of Emporia, Kansas, met in a Special Commission Meeting, on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, with Mayor Harter, presiding and Commissioners Brinkman, Curtis, Sauder, and Smith present. Also present were City Manager Cocking, Deputy City Manager Detter, Assistant City Manager Wash, Deputy City Clerk Bryson and City Attorney Montgomery. City Clerk Sull was absent.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
(Economic Development Organizational Assessment)**

At the May 15, 2024, Study Session the City Commission, voted to enter into a contract with Vision First Advisors to develop the Economic Development Organization Assessment.

At this meeting, City Manager Cocking read the Vision First framework:

- *An organizational structure that allows Emporia's five city-funded entities to work together in collaboration and efficiency.*
- *Recommendations to improve processes metrics and expected outcomes of the collective entities for success.*
- *Process and efficiency strategies utilizing best practices and research to position Emporia's entities for success.*
- *A customer-groups-served-matrix.*
- *A shared economic development vision and mission that will guide the stakeholders in implementing economic development programs and efforts.*

City Manager Cocking stated the five city-funded entities are the Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas, Visit Emporia, Emporia Chamber of Commerce, Emporia Main Street, and Ignite.

Tayler Wash, Assistant City Manager was recognized and addressed the Governing Body. Mr. Grey Swoope with Vision First was present for the meeting by phone, to present the draft of the Economic Development Organizational Assessment for initial review. He stated that Vision First's approach incorporated a collection of local and regional data, a review of existing documentation, and stakeholder feedback to strategically align the City's economic development efforts. While each phase was unique, the results provided the foundation for the recommendations. He stated they had in-depth conversations with the Commissioners, and stakeholders from all the

organizations' boards to get key findings to develop tactics from an organizational point. The report recommended the formation of a Steering Committee to organize entities receiving City Funds, the dissolution of Emporia Enterprises, the transfer of assets to the RDA, and the establishment of a private not-for-profit umbrella organization to coordinate a holistic approach to economic development. VisionFirst recommends the early development of an organization at 18 months with a goal to launch a new organization in three years.

Commissioner Sauder asked about expediting the implementation of the umbrella organization.

Mr. Swoope stated the RDA with an interim president, unfortunately, leaves the organization sitting on an interim basis. Full-time leadership would be beneficial for moving forward in any manner. It would require the board to put the right person in place, which will take time.

Commissioner Curtis requested the addition of Simmons Pet Foods to the "Employment and Unionization" list on page 8, and disc golf be added to the list of activities under "Residents Are Proud but Want Additional Services" on page 10 of the report.

Commissioner Brinkman stated she was pleased with the functionality of the report, and how it did not come back as something unattainable, it was actionable with options. She asked how we should contractually engage with that non-governmental organization so there is open access, the community has access, transparency, and equitability, while not impinging upon their membership structure.

Mr. Swoope stated the importance of any umbrella organization are the contractual relationships with these entities. The importance of transparency, being transparent with funds, and the use of those funds in the overall plan.

Commissioner Curtis stated one of the tenets of an umbrella organization is to operate at the speed of business. When you layer over an umbrella organization. Does it make you more efficient or less efficient? What are your thoughts on this in terms of speed of action?

Mr. Swoope stated speaking from experience, leadership matters. If you have the right people on your board have the right people in place, and have the right goals, your paid staff can move efficiently.

Mayor Harter asked Mr. Swoope if he could foresee the umbrella organization micromanaging the organizations underneath it.

Mr. Swoope stated this does not happen if the organizations are all in. You have one staff, and one CEO, managing through contract for the others. The correct leadership, and philosophy, will help make relationships, and show how we can work together instead of working against each other.

Commissioner Curtis stated the report provided the profile for the RDA President & CEO. What is the profile of someone who oversees an umbrella organization?

Mr. Swoope stated an umbrella organization leader must have the ability to facilitate and communicate. It requires broad experience in economic development but must understand how economic development and tourism can work together. They understand how each organization works in Emporia, and how to navigate an umbrella organization with a unified shared vision.

City Manager Cocking asked if the RDA could serve as an umbrella organization?

Mr. Swoope stated if you restructured the RDA it could be an umbrella organization, but it could also be perceived as the RDA taking over.

Mayor Harter stated if we were to move forward into an umbrella organization, he would like the boards in charge of their executives.

Commissioner Sauder stated proof must be shown for future funding, requests. We are asking that those boards be held accountable to the commission and commission be accountable to those boards.

Mr. Swoope pointed out page 17 of the report which shows Organizational Focus & Roles. It shows all the organizations, how to streamline them and make them more effective, and more efficient in resources and working together.

Jim Shephard asked if Mr. Swoope could give examples of cities that had the umbrella organization structure.

Mr. Swoope stated he could provide a list of cities in the future.

Jim Kessler stated it was a good report. He did not see anything in the report that showed him anything was broken. He agreed with the recommendation for more communication. He also spoke in favor of the search for a new RDA executive director.

Brad Kraft, stated some concerns about hiring the RDA executive director. This role is very different than that of an administrator of an umbrella organization.

Mayor Harter stated regardless of whether the position is filled or not the philosophy needs to be in place, the city wants to see metric-wise and deliverable-wise with each organization.

Jeff Longbine stated after a brief review of the report, he agreed there should be goals objectives and metrics measured. He is hopeful this governing body has the political courage needed to follow up with an organization not performing according to its goals, objectives, and matrices.

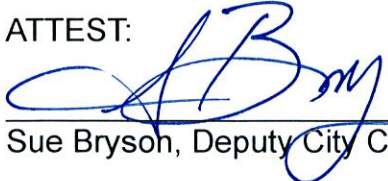
City Manager Cocking briefly stated we need to look at the strategic plan, then the agencies, state what those agencies are good at, and determine which agencies will take that on, the report has the suggested indicators.

Following further discussion, it was agreed Mr. Swoope would provide the City Commission with samples of contracts of entities in umbrella organizations, and key performance indicators and what those indicators would look like. It was also requested to have all those entities review the report and state what are their likes and dislikes. Topics will be discussed at a future, Study Session.

Mayor Harter then made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Brinkman seconded the motion. The vote follows: Mayor Harter, aye; Commissioner Brinkman, aye; Commissioner Curtis, aye; Commissioner Sauder, aye; Commissioner Smith, aye.


Erren Harter, Mayor

ATTEST:


Sue Bryson, Deputy City Clerk