SPECIAL WORKSHOP
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ADVISORY BOARD (EOAB)

Held at Grand County Commissioner's Meeting Room
125 E Center St
Moab, Utah 84532
01/15/25 Economic Opportunity Advisory Board (EOAB) Special Workshop

MINUTES

January 15, 2025 | 3:00pm
****Time stamps (HH:MM:SS) correspond to the video****

Members in Attendance: Mary McGann, Ben Fredregill, Randy Martin, Chris Wilson, Melisa Jeffers, Melodie McCandless, Ashley Korenblat, Mark Tyner

Members in Attendance Remotely: Jazmine Duncan, Kristian Olsen, Cory Shurtleff

Non-members in Attendance: Debra McKee

Non-members in Attendance Remotely: Ben Alter

Welcome
00:00:20
Citizens to -be- heard
00:0:30, none at this time
Introductions
00:00:35, the board thanked Mary for her service

Discussion and Action Items:

Presentation Of Draft "GC General Plan_ Strong And Resilient Economy Chapter W Redlines" Document, Chris Wilson (00:04:15)

a. Melisa and Ben F. discussed the process leading up to this point, including the Trail to Tomorrow study. Mark and Debra joined the group and the group held brief reintroductions.
b. Chris explained the “GC General Plan_ Strong And Resilient Economy Chapter W Redlines” and discussed his intentions for the board’s workshop. He and Ashley discussed the existing economic development language in the current general plan, which is sparse.

Workshop: Collect Feedback From Board Members On Key Questions (00:12:55):

a. Chris discussed how the two opening goals set out may compete with each other. He explained the structure that his document followed.

b. Ben F. discussed the need to include Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute research to underscore Moab's unique and challenging housing market. Ashley voiced support for this, noting that the "fundmanetals" section should acknowledge the macro economic trends the community contends with. Melisa discussed how the Trail to Tomorrow plan assessed like communities.
c. Chris read aloud the structure that the Trail to Tomorrow plan took and how it fit his own draft document. He and Melisa also discussed the framework she had proposed during the board's December meeting. Chris asked Ben to share Melisa's framework slide. The group discussed how and where in the document to discuss tourism-adjacent business, including what constitutes such a business.
d. Melisa suggested that the "fundamentals" section corresponded to her "strengthen" section and should instruct on how to "tighten up" the supports of the county's existing businesses and services, "to service what we are currently servicing in an even better way." She added that this would include housing. She suggested "develop" would instruct on how to "double-down" on the existing visitor economy, strengthening and making more efficient the county's economic driver. She suggested "diversify" would instruct on harnessing "excess capacity," for example, filling hotel rooms and visitor services with new attractions. She suggested that "evolve" include the elements of risk mitigation and instruct on how to consider strategic economic developments totally new to Grand County.
e. Ashley advocated against identifying business outliers like "the next Synergy" should it come at the expense of refining the product already offered to guests, suggesting Grand County become "the best" at what it offers.
f. Cory discussed the need to continually assess the economic sustainability of future and current projects and industries. He noted the "negative trajectory" in Grand County, due in part to a lack of housing as well as a lack of non-tourism businesses and subsequent jobs. He attributed these failures in part to the issue of "highest and best use" that has proven hard to overcome in Grand County, in which business owners rightly choose to open more profitable, visitor-facing businesses over businesses that focus more on the local economy, such as a dry cleaners. He suggested "highest and best use" as an idea be used throughout the planning process, especially when considering the role of land use designation in promoting economic prosperity.
g. Ashley asked for clarification and Cory confirmed that he was suggesting economic resiliency in Grand County might benefit from asking and incentivizing private property owners to fill the needs the county sees gaps in. He added that buy-in from the private community is crucial, and that incentivizing may represent a more selective process.
h. Melodie and Ben F. discussed the challenge of addressing housing while also realizing that concurrent challenges need to be addressed as well. Ben F. elaborated on his office's work to understand the Moab visitor economy's true capacity.
i. Ashley and Melisa discussed the merits of incorporating Cory's thoughts and the need to develop non-visitation-focused businesses in its own section, noting that this would represent new capacity needs as well as increased direction for funding and grant opportunities, but may not be worthwhile if the board decides the leadership on these projects should come from the private sector or land use code.

j. Ashley discussed how less mature recreation economies were working to not only attract recreationists, but also business investments that build a holistic economy alongside the growth of their recreation assets.
k. Jazmine commented that supporting the need for housing goes hand-in-hand with supporting non-tourism businesses and Melisa's "evolve" section, noting that services that support housing like HVAC, plumbing and landscaping are in desperate need in Grand County. She added that numbers on second home ownership would bolster this section, noting that as a county, "perhaps our goal is to get that number down" and better support full-time residency. Ashley elaborated on the "support economy" services Jazmine highlighted, noting that they provide a buffer when visitation economies slump. On second home ownership, Ashley suggested that bold actions might be necessary and that the board should work to help the commission understand what actions require prioritization, especially if it involves work through the state legislature. Melodie voiced support for this and her interest in certain taxes that target second home ownership as well as buyout programs. The group discussed how these comments could support both the "fundamentals" and the "evolve" sections as proposed by Melisa.
l. Cory explained his comments in the Zoom meeting chat, echoing his agreement with Jazmine's comments and noting that the Moab Area Housing Task Force Affordable Housing Plan contains great information that both quantifies second home ownership and suggests possible policy solutions for the county. He and Chris discussed deed restriction programming, with Cory noting that though a voluntary deed restriction program currently exists within the city, it understandably has seen almost no utilization.
m. Chris began a review of the draft document's sections as they currently stand. He asked for the board to "frame their goals" in their feedback. Ashley discussed recent visitation economy history. Ashley suggested that visitor and experience management ultimately fall under the guise of "product management" and that this should take a policy form. She discussed how certain user groups had seen recent expansions that had amounted to a best-in-class visitation product, whereas others had not, leaving Moab "behind" in supporting the experience of users such as OHV operators. Her concern was that the development of the visitation economy in Moab "has been run without [a] product development" focus, and cited the success of Trail Mix as an example of good product development which forced engagement of land managers at the local level.
n. Melisa asked for a "definition of role" as an actionable item. She noted that the board and the county at large do not manage the lands that visitors come to use, and that a role should be defined based on the county's aspirations to either manage land or communicate its preferences to its partner land managers. Chris suggested that Ashley's public management comments may drive the creation of a section separate from the visitation economy section's goals.
o. Ben A. asked if the board was close to assigning writing roles, noting that the meeting was drawing to a close. Chris discussed his intentions for these assignments, noting that Ashley could be tasked with writing a "product development" section for future workshopping. Ashley added that in this exercise, even outlining a problem is helpful, rather that focusing solely on identifying a solution. Chris added that he hoped to use this process to present to the commission a suite of policies and programs to consider

pursuing. Jazmine noted that, as an amendment to the General Plan, this document will receive public input as well. The following assignments were discussed:

   i. Ashley to draft writing on the "product development" aspect of Grand County's visitation economy
   ii. Ben F. and team to draft writing on the "service infrastructure of the visitor economy," meaning "the lodging and food service sales" piece of the economy

p. The group further discussed the goals of the process going forward.

Update On Rural County Grant FY25 Award (01:40:50)

a. Ben F. discussed the grant process to date, noting the obstacles encountered and his office's work to ensure a speedy and transparent process. He discussed the loss of the Chamber's Executive Director and his subsequent outreach to the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity to discuss options for reallocating or encumbering the grant funds associated. Ben F. discussed his intention to encumber the funds for the chamber, should the board approve of the plan. Debra offered brief insights on the process and Ashley discussed the chamber's progress with previous grant-funded business trainings. Ben A. also commented on the proposed plan to "empower the chamber."

At 01:48:43, Melisa adjourned the meeting.