

GUN BARREL CITY
Economic Development Corporation
1720 W. MAIN STREET
GUN BARREL CITY, TX 75156

Tuesday, January 10, 2023
6:00pm
Gun Barrel City Council Chambers
1716 W. Main Street, Gun Barrel City 75156

Minutes

Call to Order/Establishment of Quorum:

Present: Diane Johannes

Brian Crull

Keith Bond

Kate Weller

Deidre Jones

Roy Key

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance was led by Diane Johannes.

1. Citizens' Comments: Comments from citizens are limited to 3 minutes each. No action may be taken.

Citizen's comments: Lana Ahrens introduced herself: My name is Lana Ahrens, 334 Schooner Road, Gun Barrel City, Texas 75156 and I am here today to talk about Keith Bond. I met Keith a couple weeks ago and he's been telling me a lot about the EDC and really boosting what you guys do and how important you are. He's told me about the good things that you've done in the past and sometimes there's problems and he's explained how to fix those and what his vision is for the city. He's also very supportive of community growth. I've been talking with him about some items we want to do at the POA and bringing children's programs into the community. I've got a non-profit and we do community center kind of thing and we've realized we have lots of little centers and Keith is very supportive of that and meeting the needs of his community in Tamarack and I just really appreciate that. He's very smart. He knows a lot about what the rules are and how to find the right information and I can tell he loves his city. You know sometimes he has things that he doesn't like and he's got ideas on how to change them. He's not always just like I don't like this and it's horrible but he has solutions. He has ways to move forward and every team needs a cheerleader and a realist and I think that Keith is a realist and you're lucky to have him. Thank you. I appreciate your time.

Two other Citizens opted to speak during item #4.

2. Discuss/take action: to approve the December 13, 2022 EDC Meeting Minutes. Roy Key moved to approve the December 13, 2022 meeting Minutes and Keith Bond seconded. Motion passed

unanimously.

3. Discuss/Take Action to approve the December 2022 EDC Financials. Keith Bond moved to Table the approval of the December 2022 EDC Financials because they were not ready until the day before the meeting. Deidra Jones seconded. Motion to Table passed unanimously.
4. Discuss/Take Action to address EDC Board Member statements and actions. Brian Crull move to Discuss/Take Action to address Board Member statements and actions and Keith Bond seconded. Diane Johannes invited Robin Sykora to give some detail before opening the floor to discussion and public comments.

Robin Sykora: I want to say thank you to our EDC Board. I'm grateful for the time that you volunteer and the service that you provide to our community. We have a great group right now and we have been working very well together. I would like to remind everyone that the purpose of the EDC is to promote and develop business related enterprise and to promote and encourage employment and the public welfare in the City of Gun Barrel. EDC Board Members are volunteer Gun Barrel Citizens who are appointed by the City Council and part of the application process lists requirements of these volunteers including representing the organization in a positive and supportive manner at all times and in all places, avoiding conflict of interest between your position and your personal life, and respectful workplace behavior at all times toward all elected officials, commissioners and city employees. I have had a private conversation one-on-one with each of you about the need to promote and support the City. Board Members have come to me with concerns about negative comments being made by an EDC Board Member that are having detrimental effects. There are tensions between the EDC and the City again that I have worked hard to overcome this last year. Having been unable to address this with private meetings, I have added this to the agenda to address tonight.

Kate Weller: Some of you may be wondering why is this even a big deal? We all have First Amendment Rights and that's very true, but when you join a Board and especially the EDC Board, part of that is you many times must surrender part of your First Amendment Rights. I sent each of my fellow Board Members a clip from the July 26, 2022 meeting between Council Member Foster and me when I was being interviewed by Council for an EDC Board Position. Those of you who have not seen the clip my view it on the YouTube channel. Let me summarize quickly. During that interview Mr. Foster made a statement about social media and when I asked him why he was asking me he said "Well you have a fairly well-known presence on social media and I'm glad to hear that you think that you have to speak in a positive way." I'll be honest with you, I was angry at the moment but when I started thinking about it and then when I had my meeting with Director Robin to sign my documents, I had a discussion with her about it and I decided after some careful consideration that Mr. Foster certainly had a point that when you join a Board, especially the EDC Board that is basically here to promote the City, you have to filter everything you say publicly speaking and on social media through that filter that you have accepted the job to support your city. We all have personal agenda and passions and we get very emotional about them. But when you're on a Board and I've been on many, you have to drop those at the door and consider what is best for everybody. If the time comes that you, after searching you

conscience, cannot fulfill that obligation to filter what you say, then I think it's time that you consider resigning from the Board. Thank you.

Roy Key: I'd like to add as a Board Member we are fiduciaries to the City. Fiduciary duty means that we put our goals, our opinions second and the City first. The building of the City is the utmost importance to the EDC, promoting this City, making this City successful. Together we can do that and I believe that.

What I'd like to add is I think that we look at this as a fiduciary standpoint the same way all the Council, all the Board Members do. We're to speak positively.

Brian Crull: I'd just like to add to that, and I'm putting on one of my other hats right now, but as a team you may as a group have different opinions and things of that nature but within the team and within a locker room you keep it within that group. If you have an issue you know to bring it up to your group in a proper setting at a proper time but keep it within our four walls. I think we need to do a very good job of that. When I first came onto this Board it was a little bit tumultuous to say the least and there was quite a bit of tension amongst City Council and the EDC. I think we've worked really diligently and when I say we, most of that focus goes to Robin because she has put oodles of effort into this but we don't want to go backwards. No one drives a car looking in the rearview mirror. We want to keep moving forward. We've got some wonderful things going on. I don't think there's anyone in this room that would say "What I have to say is more important than the good of the many. I think in a team setting you're only as good as your group and if all seven people are pulling together we're super strong. If you've only got six and one's not, it's not as good. I just hope we can move past this very quickly because it's in the best interest of everyone, most importantly Gun Barrel City.

Deidra Jones: I'd like to add that when you talk about a team, I am the newest member of this team and when I came into this the repair had been done. Our job here is to attract businesses and to bring and promote the good will of this wonderful city that we live in. It just worries me that people and businesses thinking of coming here are also monitoring our social media and our words and thoughts and I don't want to see that happen. I think we have a wonderful thing here, The EDC is a wonderful Corporation. They're working hard building it back to where it is today and I don't want to see that damaged. I want to see us going forward and continuing the growth that we have and continuing all the good things and I do see us as a team.

Diane Johannes: I'd just like to say that I've been here through the tumultuous time where it was very hard to continue to serve in this position because it didn't necessarily reflect what I thought was my character and my integrity but I had a commitment to our City and I always taught my kids, I was raised this way, you start something you finish it. You don't just leave because things are hard. You try to get in there and you put your shoulder to the plow and see if you can't be a part of the solution. It doesn't take a genius to point out problems, but it does take a little bit of effort to come up with a solution and I feel like we've done that. Robin has done an outstanding job coming in as the executive director trying to promote transparency not just with the City Council but also the City Workers as well as the constituents in the town and with the Board. If we ask her a question she is immediate to answer, get us that information, sit down with us if we

have a problem. She's open to suggestions and I think that has been wonderful for the healing and the reconciliation of our relationship with the City Officials. We have said numerous times as a group, we're not trying to make a name for Brian Crull, we're not trying to make a name for Diane Johannes. We are working on behalf of The Economic Development Corporation in this city. Our job is to establish that as a force that's working to help the citizens that live here, those people that need jobs, need places to go. Everything we have done is as a group. We recognize that we're doing this together but it is as the EDC just like the City Council. What they do represents the citizens. I, unlike others do not have a Facebook account. I'm very happy that I don't so I'm not part of social media and I haven't been privy to see the things that don't represent the Board Member in the way that I might know that Board Member. I only know these folks here when I see them in the community. I don't know their cyber personalities or what they do on social media. But it's not necessarily what I think, it's not even what the Board Members think. It's what our Member responsibilities say that we signed and we made a commitment to. That's really why we're here tonight. We've all had a great relationship on the Board. I feel like we all get along very well so we need to figure out how we can resolve this and move forward because we don't want it to be a spot on our relationship with the City or with our community.

Citizen's Comments: Richard Yaws introduced himself: I'd like to thank each one of the Board Members for volunteering to do the job that you do and every day that you perform the duties that you do for Gun Barrel City you have my eternal thanks. As a resident and as a Council Member and I don't think I say it enough but I want you to know it's never out of my mind. The work that y'all do is important. It has consequences and it matters and for that I thank you. I shared a conversation with Mr. Bond last year after a social media post where he very publicly criticized me in a way that I thought was over the line. I want to say as a Council Member, I respect that process. I believe in the first amendment. I absolutely stand behind it. But I also took that responsibility and took the time to call Mr. Bond and tell him that I felt like his actions had crossed the line. I felt like the criticism of me having missed two council meetings because I was undergoing cancer treatment was completely inappropriate. I believe some comments that he made later on impugning my wife's intelligence were completely across the line and I said so exactly in those words in a private phone call and I asked him to publicly apologize and tell me on this phone call privately that this will stop because there's a right way to handle things and there's a wrong way. Those were perfect examples of how we, as citizens of this Earth, much less citizens in Gun Barrel City who represent the public should not be behaving. I'm sad to say that there's just been opportunity after opportunity after opportunity where it's just not stopped. The latest thing that I'm hearing about from City Hall is what can only be described as an absolute barrage, an onslaught of calls complaining about city services all of a sudden. All about animal services which I understand we're working through a process with that with the city. Mr. Bond has made his own public opinion very well known which is his right to do so. But the result of that constant barrage has put a burden on the heads of the people that work at City Hall now and it's all because of a personal agenda. At the end of the day we're all trying to work toward the same goal but my point is words matter and they have consequences. I measure every word I say because I don't want to create a burden for someone else and I seriously cannot believe that Mr. Bond exercises that type of temperament or judgement when he is speaking in public. I respect his right to do it but, as Ms. Weller put it, I don't respect his right to do it as a member of this

Board representing the City. I don't understand how he believes that this is representing the City in a light that we would want it to be seen. So I have my opinion. I actually made the recommendation that he be on this Board and I'm sorry that I did now and I really would have never thought I'd say those words to anyone but this is how far it's come. When you've got this many notes on this many situations that just don't stop happening, it says everything that I need to know and now this Board has a decision to make and it'll be sent to the Council and Council will make its decision. I want to represent Gun Barrel City in a positive light. I intend to live here until I'm dead. I intend to represent the people that I'm elected to represent every day and when the day comes and I'm not representing Gun Barrel City, I'm going to go out and volunteer to do something else somewhere else and I'm going to represent that group.

Citizen's Comments: Mayor Skains: Thank you Madam President and EDC Board Members. I appreciate you allowing me to speak to you today. There are four pillars to Economic Development, They are bringing in new business, meaningful jobs, business expansion and community betterment such as improving the park, tourism and things of that nature. Those are the concentrated efforts of the EDC Board. I don't think the EDC Board has any input into some of the other areas of City Management such as: the council's decision on where the City Manager should live; our decision not to allow a Humane Society that's bringing in hundreds and hundreds of dogs from a larger county into our county and then Henderson County ends up with an overpopulation of dogs, then they want to charge us 850% over what we were paying four years ago. These are things Mr. Bond is very adamant about talking about on social media. As the President pointed out, in your application, item eight, Respectful workplace behavior shall be exhibited at all times towards all elected officials. Mr. Bond's comment towards Mr. Yaws "You grandstand and always have something to say. Again, you're an embarrassment to those you pretend to represent in the East" posted on social media. Mr. Bond has repeatedly berated the Animal Control Officer. He actually berated our past Animal Control Officer who died in 2021 which is an all-time low as far as I'm concerned. I appreciate this Board bringing this up. This is the first time in my history in Gun Barrel City this Board has self-managed its problems and appreciate you doing that. I look forward to seeing what your response is and to bringing it before Council. Thank you for your time today.

Diane Johannes thanked Mayor Skains and asked Mr. Bond for his comments.

Keith Bond: Well, it's pretty much a set thing I can tell. Mr. Yaws, yes we had some friction between us. That was taken care of when Ms. Key and Robin and I sat down and we discussed it and that type of comment has not since been published. I didn't belittle your wife. I questioned that it sounded like your writing style. I didn't question your wife's intelligence. I don't know your wife but I know your writing style is the only reason I did that and again, that was taken care of, I assumed, Robin, when you and Cindy met with me and we went over this. We were done with that. I have not called the city hall to barrage them about animal calls. I called the Chief of Police if I have an issue. I call City Hall quite often. Now I don't know if you're going by numbers you're hearing from staff or what but I do call City Hall a lot and the reason I call is to talk to Mike Ward about issues going on in Tamarack that need City ordinance to look at. I don't know where you're getting the barrage part that's been stated before. It's not factual. You might have numbers that I

have called. I have questions for Shannon because I'm learning on our Board what the rules are so if it's just going by a number of calls from my phone number then you are way off base. I've never belittled, I've had a good working relationship with Brooke. Britney's new, I don't know her as well but I've never had a problem. I don't know what you're talking about me bashing Carol. I have little to no dealing with Carol. I did call to see if animals were being taken and I was told by Chief Williams that at this time the kennel did not meet the state requirements but as long as they were working on it the state would allow them to keep animals there. Yes, I posted some of the meetings with subtitles, not to berate anybody but the question was asked, well actually the comment was made by a council member that the city shelter will be a no-kill shelter. My post was to rebut that in the City Manager's own words. I didn't want to take anything out of context and be misconstrued and be hearsay. There was hearsay just recently that was fabricated. I can tell you the only truth in the most recent one was that yes, my wife and I did talk to Ms. Hamilton. Did we berate her? No. I've known Tina since she moved into Tamarack in 2000 something. Did we stop her from going? No. Once we talked to her because we know she's an animal rights person. I did stop by myself once to talk to Ms. Hamilton and my question was How are you doing today? And that was the crux of it. I didn't block her. I haven't yelled at her. I know Tina too well to do something like that. I was not disparaging our past Animal Control Officer. He told me about the issue between him and Tina and Tina had shared the issue between the two. My purpose here is the betterment. I come in. I help the EDC. Robin needs checks signed, she needs money transferred, you know whatever I can do. We had a discussion when I was talking to two ladies and she felt I was belittling. It's just like I can tell you right now last night the Horned Frogs did not play well. Am I talking disparagingly about them? No. Did I feel that some of the things the city did for a particular event could have been a little bit more? That was the equivalence. It wasn't that I was bashing Gun Barrel. I love Gun Barrel. I've been coming since 1986. I decided to move down here in 2014. The Linns came to me and said "You're on the EDC, aren't you?" I said yes and they wanted to open a food truck court and asked what do we need to do? I said "The first thing you need to do is contact Robin Sykora at the EDC office". So if my having a voice for the animals is wrong, so be it. I did not put down the City of Gun Barrel. I love Gun Barrel. I go to just about every even. I didn't come with any screen shots or any copies or anything because I wasn't sure that I was the Member. I thought Robin and I had cleared the air on this but obviously it went further. After our talk over the phone she did not bring me in and tell me this still was an issue. I would have appreciated that.

Robin: Keith, we've spoken several times about negative comments on Facebook and you continue to put negative comments out on Facebook.

Keith: We've talked about it two times. The one time was when Ms. Key was in the room which she shouldn't have been and the second time was after I signed the checks, left and you called me and I explained to you what my message was, just like I did now. The issue with Brooke because you heard that I criticized her, we talked about that and I explained to you that I did not criticize Brooke. I just noticed that during the Special Meeting on Facebook Live, citizens are able to make any comment they want. My comment was, I'm paraphrasing because, again, I didn't come prepared to have to respond a lot, but my comment was, in essence, Brooke is there any way you can turn off commenting on Facebook Live when you're broadcasting the City Council? The Police

turn off comments. It's a government page so I get it, you can't delete things, no, but you can turn off commenting.

Kate: I have a question or a comment. We've heard a lot of generalizations tonight. If either Mr. Yaws or Mr. Skains has specific examples or Ms. Sykora had the conversation with Mr. Bond. If you have specific examples with you, if you would read them I think it would be beneficial. We really haven't heard anything specific. I will say that I really felt, Keith, that your comment about Renee Alonso was totally out of line. The man is deceased. What happened with him is not for any of us to comment on. It doesn't matter if it was a fact or he told you or she told you. I really feel it was out of line. That's my opinion.

Brian: I just want to add to this that I tell people all the time that this thing that you think is so wonderful in your life of social media is also a ticking Time Bomb. Once you put stuff out there you can't take it back. You may not have meant it. I know we've spoken in generalities but it's not hard to find the facts. All that stuff just doesn't go away. Your comments and your words hurt. Mr. Yaws is correct. What's worse is written words because they don't go away. I think we need to be cognizant of that when we're doing stuff like this. I hug my wife every day because she took me off that five years ago because I was probably a little emotional about stuff. If we decide something needs to be done through City Council, that's fine. It would be better if everybody is just very honest because it's out there anyway. It's best to say I said these things, it was wrong, I apologize. None of us except our Lord and Savior's perfect. We don't want to get bogged down. It's out there. Now how are we going to deal with it? Let's just move forward. Thank you.

Diane thanked Mr. Crull and asked if Ms. Sykora had anything further.

Robin: I will say that the reason we are speaking in generalities is in your best interest, Keith. We can certainly bring facts for the Board to review. I will mention that you just spoke of a private citizen who's also on a Committee and expose her health condition in a public meeting which is very wrong.

Keith: Okay then I will apologize and say I was wrong.

Robin: Are you saying you don't say other negative things or call city employees?

Keith: No well to me talking to Tina was not negative. Making a statement of what our conversation was about may not to you be prudent but to me that's why I stopped. It's part of life. It's part of the overall situation.

Kate: I think we need to bear in mind and I agree with Brian Crull none of us is perfect. I believe in owning up when you have done wrong, when you've posted something you shouldn't have. I've apologized. I know sometimes it's been accepted, sometimes, sadly, it has not. There's a point at which the recurrence of the same sort of mistake should be given more weight than the actual mistake itself. When it's an ongoing kind of comment that needs to be looked at perhaps more harshly than someone who makes a comment in the heat of the moment. I have learned that I

never hit post or send until I've taken a deep breath and gone back and re-read my comment to see if I really should post it or not. Do I mean it? I may very well mean it but as a member of both Planning and Zoning and the EDC Board is this something I should post? For those of you who know me, I've become much more circumspect in my presence on social media than I used to be for the very reason that Mr. Foster brought up when he was interviewing me and the very long soul searching I did before I talked with Ms. Sykora about the same matter when I signed my documents that come with being an EDC Member.

Diane thanked Ms. Weller and explained that EDC Board Members are approved and appointed by the City Council and any further action would have to be taken by the City Council regarding this matter. Diane said that Keith has been a great Board Member in the Boardroom as well as in Executive Session. She said even if we don't all agree on everything, we are all willing to compromise if it's in the best interest of the city. She noted that a Motion has been made to discuss this and we have.

Brian Crull moved to amend his Motion. Brian moved to recommend the City Council address the issues with Keith Bond and the disparaging remarks to the City and City Staff. Kate Weller seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Adjourn to Executive Session to discuss the following matters at 6:47pm
 - a. Deliberation regarding Economic Development Negotiations (551.087)
 - b. Deliberations about real property (551.072)
6. Reconvene into Open Session at 7:13pm
 - a. Discuss/Take Action to approve a Grant for a business to open in Gun Barrel City. Kate Weller moved to approve a Grant for a business to open in Gun Barrel City and Brian Crull seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
 - b. Discuss/Take Action to either continue or discontinue a previously approved real estate contract. Roy Key moved to continue a previously approved real estate contract and Deidra Jones seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
7. Adjourn at 7:14pm.

Approved: Diane Johannes

Signed: 