

GROW Licking County Community Improvement Corporation (CIC)

Regular Board Meeting Minutes - 12:00 PM 1/13/2025

Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority

851 Irving Wick Dr W, Heath, OH 43056

Minutes recorded by Amy Dell, Board Secretary

1. Call to Order and Roll Call - Chair Robertson

Call to order and roll call by Board Chair Robertson at 12:03 PM, 1/13/2024

Board members present:

Board Chair: Joseph Roberston - P

Board Vice Chair: Corey Alton - E

Board Treasurer: Erin Grigsby - P

Board Secretary: Amy Dell - P

Lauren Massie - P

Jennifer McDonald - P

Robert O'Neill - E

Mike Compton - P

Jennifer Ellis-Brunn - P

Brandon Hess - E

Jim Roberts - P

Mark Mauter - P

Tim Bubbs - E

Mark Johns - P

Robert Montagnese - P

Staff present:

Executive Director: Alexis Fitzsimmons - P

Marketing and Communications Manager: Reaghan Willison - P

Economic Development Manager: Gabriel Kelvin - P

Mike Compton moved to excuse absent members, and was seconded by Jennifer McDonald. The absent board members were excused unanimously

2. Introduction of Guests - Chair Robertson

GROW Licking County CIC Board Chair Robertson welcomed the following members of the public to the meeting:

- **Hayley Amick** - Vice President of Business Development - Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority
- **Commissioner Rick Black** - County Commissioner - Licking County, Ohio
- **David Edelbutte** - County Administrator - Licking County, Ohio
- **Atrina Good** - Director of Operations - Licking County Chamber of Commerce
- **Brittany Misner** - Economic and Community Development Director - the Village of Hebron
- **Scott Ryan** - Chief of Community Engagement - Ohio Department of Development
- **Alea Thompson** - Fellow - Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority

3. Approval of Minutes - Chair Robertson

GROW Licking County CIC Board Chair Robertson presented the minute meetings for the November 18, 2024 General Board Meeting and the November 26, 2024 Board Retreat meeting for approval.

Jennifer McDonald identified minor spelling mistakes in the 11/18/2024 meeting minutes, and moved to approve the minutes with the stated corrections. Mark Mauter seconded. The minutes were approved with corrections unanimously.

4. Chair Report - Chair Robertson

GROW Licking County CIC Board Chair Robertson opened by expressing his thanks to Board Treasurer Grigsby and the Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority for their hospitality in hosting the board and providing lunch.

Chair Robertson continued by expressing his satisfaction with GROW Licking County CIC's successes in 2024, and his intention to preside over similar successes in 2025. He voiced strong support for the plans to increase private sector funding for the organization, and reported on the January 6, 2025 Executive Committee meeting that included Kenny McDonald (former President of One Columbus) and Matt McCollister (Executive Vice President of One Columbus), to discuss the Intel project. He stated the meeting was helpful in keeping up to date with the project's development and to expect more information in late March 2025 for community planning reports.

5. Committee Reports

5.1 - Finance and Fundraising Committee - Treasurer Grigsby

GROW Licking County CIC Board Treasurer and Finance and Fundraising Committee Chair Erin Grigsby presented the financial documents and statements of financial position for November 2024 and December 2024, as well as GROW Licking County CIC's management report for 2024.

GROW Licking County Executive Director Fitzsimmons further explained that the documents are different from balance sheets in the private sector as they are listed on an accrual basis. She further updated that the state auditor had directed GROW Licking County CIC to write off accounts receivable after 90 days, rather than annually.

Executive Director Fitzsimmons further updated that the Corporation had ended 2024 under budget by \$34,000. She explained that underspent categories included marketing/advertising and personnel; the latter was due to the three month gap between the departure of the former GROW Licking County CIC Associate Director and the hiring of Economic Development Manager Kelvin.

Lauren Massie moved to approve the financial statements, Rob Montagnese seconded. The statements were approved unanimously.

5.2 Marketing & Licking County Works Committee - Jennifer McDonald

GROW Licking County CIC Marketing & Licking County Works Committee Chair McDonald provided an update for the most recent meeting, stating that February 2025 would be the last combined meeting of the Marketing Committee and Licking County Works Committee. Beginning in April 2025, those committee meetings will be conducted separately, with Jennifer Ellis-Brunn acting as chair of the Licking County Works Committee, and Jennifer McDonald continuing as chair of the Marketing Committee.

Committee Chair McDonald further updated the Board regarding the Emerging Workforce Study to be administered to high school juniors at the Career Xpress event hosted by Ohio Means Jobs in March 2025. She further provided information about sponsorship and support of I.CON Central Conference on November 3 and 4, CTEC's Jill of all Trades event, and the Career Xpress event.

Jennifer McDonald concluded by stating the GROW Licking County CIC annual report for 2024 was forthcoming.

5.3 - Infrastructure Committee - Jim Roberts

GROW Licking County CIC Infrastructure Committee Chair Roberts stated the December 2024 Infrastructure Committee meeting had been postponed to January 26, 2025. He further voiced he is following closely the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's 15 county water study, and would have further updates after the January and February 2025 committee meetings.

6. Staff Reports

6.1 - Executive Director Report - Executive Director Fitzsimmons

GROW Licking County CIC Executive Director Fitzsimmons opened her report by stating that Lauren Massie had submitted her letter of resignation from the Board, due to accepting an out-of-county position at the Ohio Manufacturers Association, and this would be her final meeting. Executive Director Fitzsimmons thanked Lauren Massie for her service on the board, stating she had a tremendous positive impact on the Corporation and was sad to see her leave. The Board applauded Lauren Massie for her service and Executive Director Fitzsimmons noted a replacement would be appointed by the County Commissioners.

Executive Director Fitzsimmons further updated that her one-on-one meeting with board members identified a need within the organization for opportunities to learn more about the actual day-to-day operations of the Corporation, and thus had put together an "ED 101" presentation for each board meeting, highlighting GROW Licking County CIC's role within the economic development landscape of Licking County.

The first presentation was centered around business attraction, where Executive Director Fitzsimmons gave an informative and thorough presentation on the workflow and role of GROW Licking County CIC in business attraction. Mike Compton thanked Executive Director Fitzsimmons for the ED 101 presentations and expressed their value.

Executive Director Fitzsimmons announced that recent "wins" for business attraction for Licking County included the expansion of Covestro, growing their facility with 34 FTE created and a \$110 million investment; a \$7 billion dollar investment from Cologix; and, a \$2.1 million project creating 37 new jobs from Gaelan.

Executive Director Fitzsimmons further gave an update on the trends of site requests for 2024, and a list of the 36 community engagements conducted by GROW Licking County CIC staff since the previous Board meeting.

6.2 - Marketing & Communications Manager Report - Reagan Willison

GROW Licking County CIC Marketing and Communications Manager Willison updated the board on the social media analytics of the organization, noting that LinkedIn and Facebook impressions had increased since the previous Board meeting while website traffic has remained constant.

Marketing and Communications Manager Willison further noted the website redesign had kicked off with a meeting with Market Works, the company contracted to conduct the redesign, and that blog and investor updates would be forthcoming this month.

6.3 - Economic Development Manager Report - Gabriel Kelvin

GROW Licking County CIC Economic Development Manager Kelvin stated the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program performed 18 business support meetings in 2024, compared to a goal of 24 - which, accounting for the three months without a program lead before his hire, is aligned with expectations. He shared that he is currently working with the cities of Heath, Newark, Pataskala, and Johnstown to develop a list of companies for 2025's BRE.

Economic Development Manager Kelvin further reported he was developing an instrument for the Emerging Workforce Study with Secretary Dell and that he was in the process of setting up meetings with the community partners to go over the design of the 2025 Skills Gap Study.

7. Comments from Citizens - Chair Robertson

Chair Robertson invited comments from the members of the public in attendance. Licking County Commissioner Rick Black introduced the new County Executive, David Edelbutte.

8. Items of Action

8.1 Strategic Plan Proposal Review

GROW Licking County CIC Board Chair Robertson explained that during the January 6, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting, two proposals for strategic planning services were reviewed - one by Montrose Group, the other by Strategic Location Advisors. He voiced his inclination that the plan would need to be funded at least in part externally but expressed support for the process.

GROW Licking County CIC Executive Director Fitzsimmons asked for guidance from the board in deciding between the proposals, in order to move forward with fundraising the external support. She voiced her intention to form a steering committee for the planning process with donor representation.

After discussion, Mark Mauter, Mark Johns, and Mike Compton voiced similar opinions that Montrose Group's lower quote, prior engagement, and knowledge of east central Ohio made that vendor the more desirable option. Jim Roberts concurred, but asked Executive Director Fitzsimmons to ensure there would not be any conflict of interest due to their other operations in the region.

Mark Johns moved to proceed with seeking funding for the process with the understanding Montrose Group will be the vendor once the question of potential conflict is resolved and funding is acquired, Mike Compton seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

8.2 Wilson, Shannon & Snow Letter of Engagement

GROW Licking County CIC Executive Director Fitzsimmons presented a prospective letter to engage Wilson, Shannon & Snow, Inc. for financial services in preparing GROW Licking County CIC's Form 990 and other relevant financial documents, at a rate of \$19,500 over a three year period.

Mark Johns moved to approve the letter of engagement, Board Treasurer Grigsby seconded. The letter of engagement was approved unanimously.

8.3 Update to GROW Licking County CIC Financial Policies and Procedures Handbook

GROW Licking County CIC Executive Director Fitzsimmons expressed that a section of the financial policies handbook needed revision regarding clarification on acceptable usage of public funds for reasonable purchases of alcoholic beverages during social events, after being flagged by the state auditor, pending clarification.

Mark Johns requested the revision be postponed until the state auditor's clarification is obtained. The item was tabled until the next meeting.

9. Adjournment

GROW Licking County CIC Board Chair Roberston moved to adjourn the meeting, Mark Johns seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 1:36 PM.

The next regular meeting of the GROW Licking County CIC Board of Directors is scheduled for Monday, March 10, 2025, 12:00 - 1:30 PM at the City of Heath Municipal Offices, 1287 Hebron Rd, Heath, OH 43056.