

MINUTES--NEFCO GENERAL POLICY BOARD MEETING held Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at the City of Green Community Hall at Central Park.

1a. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Marion at 8:32 a.m. in the presence of a quorum.

1b. Approval of the Agenda

A motion was made by Mr. Bennett, seconded by Ms. Kiper, to approve the agenda. The motion carried.

1c. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Marion led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1d. Audience Participation (members of the public)

Mr. Marion asked if there was anyone from the audience who had any comments.

2. Consideration of the draft minutes of the regular meeting of the NEFCO General Policy Board on December 20, 2023

A motion was made by Mr. Vinay, seconded by Mr. Bennett, to accept the December meeting minutes. The motion carried.

3. Financial Status Report - month of December

Mr. Hadley said that \$70,886.74 was received as income during December, receipts to date were \$315,324.11, disbursements to date were \$276,699.20, and cash on hand at the end of December was \$248,151.23.

A motion was made by Mr. Regula, seconded by Mr. Vinay, to approve the financial status report subject to audit. The motion carried.

3a. December Bank Reconciliations

Mr. Hadley asked for acceptance of the December bank reconciliations.

A motion was made by Ms. Kiper, seconded by Mr. Nau, to accept the December bank reconciliations. The motion carried.

4. SPEAKER: "Chicago Regional Office EDA Updates"; Ms. Ellen Heinz, EDA Economic Development Representative – Ohio and Indiana, U.S. EDA

Mr. Lautzenheiser provided some background information on today's speaker. He said that Ellen Heinz, EDA Economic Development Representative (EDR) – Ohio and Indiana spent her career in both the public and private sectors and executive leadership roles and economic and community development, workforce development and corporate development. He stated that Ms. Heinz joined the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration in November 2020 as the economic development representative for Ohio, which she now is also serving Indiana. He said prior to joining the EDA, Ms. Heinz worked as the vice president of corporate development for a wastewater treatment manufacturing company, Safety Services Director for the City of Norwalk, vice president of human resources for a baking company, and head of human resources for US Operations for a German automotive manufacturer. He said that Ms. Heinz's workforce development experience ranges from being the Director of Workforce Development at North Central State College, to teaching at post-secondary and secondary education levels. He thanked Ms. Heinz for providing information to the Board.

Ms. Heinz said that NEFCO has been one of EDA's long standing Economic Development District partners. She said that she really appreciates working with NEFCO. She said that the EDA focuses on leading the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing American regions for growth, and success in the worldwide economy. The EDA is focused on helping economically distressed communities, and wants to support bottom up initiatives. The EDA has money to help support communities but needs ideas to service strategic and catalytic seed investments for long term sustainability and economic prosperity, as well as attracting and leveraging private capital investment. She stated that EDA grants are only available to public or nonprofit partners with job creation coming from the private sector. She said that her role as EDR is to collaborate closely with communities, provide expertise in EDA's regional programs and be able to provide technical assistance. Once the EDR (Ms. Heinz) has been contacted with a possible project she will reach out to NEFCO to make sure that the project aligns with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). She also makes sure the project is eligible and goes through a technical review with the applicant before the project is submitted. The process is highly competitive. The project is then presented to EDA's Investment Review Committee. She also explained the EDA investment priorities. Ms. Heinz discussed the different grant programs (planning assistance and local technical assistance) that are available through the EDA.

Ms. Heinz said that looking at the "WHY" – is the economic justification for a project. The project must have job creation and investments. She said that the application must include either letters of support or preferably beneficiary letters signed by corporate officials explaining how the project will benefit those companies. She explained which entities are eligible to apply for funding. She described criteria used to determine an area's eligibility: high unemployment, low per capita income, or special needs. She stated that the project must also be consistent with a regional CEDs to be eligible for funding. She said that about two years ago two-thirds of Ohio weren't covered by a regional CEDs for an economic development district. Now there are only six counties that don't have a regional CEDs. She spoke about the types of projects that are not supported by the EDA.

Ms. Heinz provided a list of some helpful resources and links to help with the application process. She asked if there were any questions?

Mr. Hadley said that the EDA is the first federal agency, after FEMA, on the scene during natural disasters. He asked, for the term 'natural disaster' to trigger EDA's involvement, must it be declared by the President, the Governor, or county commissioners? He asked what will trigger that involvement and funding? Ms. Heinz said that the natural disaster has to be declared nationally, immediately. She said that she would have to look up what triggers the involvement and funding. Mr. Hadley also asked if the EDA is pushing to get the entire state of Ohio covered by some kind of CEDs program? Is EDA's Chicago office using that pressure to garner more funding for Ohio? Ms. Heinz said that from her standpoint from being at EDA for three years, there has definitely been a push for more economic development districts having CEDs. She mentioned that it isn't easy becoming an economic development district. Ms. Christian-Bennet asked to receive a copy of the presentation. Ms. Heinz said that she will send the presentation to Mr. Lautzenheiser to distribute to the Board. Mr. Marion thanked Ms. Heinz for her presentation to the Board.

Mr. Marion welcomed to the Board meeting board members or alternates Kailyn Cyrus, City of Kent, Caitlin Elrad, Summit County Economic Development, Stephan Wilder, City of North Canton Mayor, and Charles Huber, Summit County Engineers Office.

5. Adoption of the *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2024 Annual Performance Report*

Mr. Lautzenheiser said that staff is seeking consideration of its draft Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2024 Annual Performance Report. He noted that NEFCO is one of 400 regional planning organizations around the country that have been designated by the EDA as an economic development district (EDD). He said that NEFCO has been an EDD for 45 years. He said that as part of that designation staff is required to maintain a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which includes goals and strategies to promote economic prosperity and resiliency for the region. As part of the economic development district status, NEFCO is required to maintain this CEDS plan and update it every five years, The last update being done in January 2023. He stated that every year staff evaluates the CEDS through the process called the Annual Performance Report which evaluates the progress of the CEDS in meeting its seven goals. He said that the Regional CEDS Committee members were involved with this process. He stated that included in the APR are the 24-month unemployment rates for each of the NEFCO counties and the major cities; and an economic distress table for pertinent communities in the NEFCO region (Wayne County now meets the metric of distress for the per capita median income). He noted that he also included a list of the Regional CEDS Committee and the General Policy Board members; some Board appointments are pending. Also included is a figure showing the EDA awards (grants) that the NEFCO region has received. He said that a schedule of goals and strategies is shown that NEFCO is proposing for calendar year 2024. There is also a timeline for when NEFCO proposes to implement and execute some of these strategies. He stated that the Annual Performance Report is due to the EDA by January 31, 2024. He asked for approval of the 2024 Annual Performance Report and authorization to submit the document to the EDA, Resolution No, FY2024-004.

A motion was made by Mr. Bennett, seconded by Mr. Regula, to adopt Resolution No. FY2024-004. The motion carried.

6. Authorization for the continuation in CY2024 of a policy for the Chair or the Executive Director to provide, without the NEFCO board's prior approval, requested letters of support for projects and grant applications that are consistent with NEFCO's work program, or past board actions or positions, and for the handling of other support letter requests as determined by the board

Mr. Hadley said that many times NEFCO has been asked for a letter of support for a transportation project or environmental project and invariably the due date for that letter of support did not allow staff to bring it to the board for possible action. He said that a past board chair suggested a way to go about this and it was refined over the last couple of years. This policy is that if staff receives a request for a letter of support and it is for a matter, issue, or project that NEFCO has supported, in the past, the policy provides for either the Board Chair or the Executive Director to sign a letter of support, in effect, speaking for the organization. Staff would then include the letter in the board packet the following month. He said that the policy also provides for if the request for support is for an issue that the agency has never covered, staff would hold off on that letter of support for board discussion and approval. This provides for staff to seek opinions from pertinent Board members and members of the Executive Committee. He said that today's request is for NEFCO to continue a policy in calendar year 2024 of providing, without the prior approval of the Board, letters of support for projects and grant applications that are consistent with NEFCO's work program or past board actions or position.

Ms. Christian-Bennett said that this is a valuable tool to use for those "11th hour" letters of support requests.

A motion was made by Ms. Christian-Bennett, seconded by Mr. Peetz, to adopt Resolution No FY2024-005. The motion carried.

7. Appointment of CY2024 NEFCO Administrative and Functional Committees

Mr. Marion said that listed are the CY2024 NEFCO Administrative and Functional Committees. Mr. Hadley stated that these membership lists are always a work in progress. For example, with the new administration at the City of Akron, staff have been in contact with them, but Akron is not quite ready to make their appointments. He said that staff tries to get these committees together as quickly as possible in January with the help of Board members, so that the Board has an assemblance of an approved board list as well as committees for the Board to consider. He said that most of the appointments have been received.

A motion was made by Mr. Vinay, seconded by Mr. Peetz, to approve the CY20224 NEFCO Administrative and Functional Committees. The motion carried.

8. NEFCO FY2024 Work Program – status

a. Economic Development

Mr. Lautzenheiser said that the Stark Economic Development Board and its coalition was awarded an EDA Recompete Plan approval and strategy development grant in the amount of \$500,000. He said that this is for the Reconnecting Canton Project in collaboration with the City of Canton, Stark Economic Development Board and several other partners. These partners are looking to work on strategies to help reduce the prime age employment gap in the City of Canton, particularly eight census tracts in southeast Canton. He said this will connect individuals with workforce development opportunities, transportation, childcare services and other wrap around services that will help individuals find good employment. This grant was one of twenty-two Recompete Plans approved nationwide and the only plan approved in Ohio, out of over five hundred applications submitted nationwide. The EDA expects to fund between four and eight Phase 2 grants nationwide and each of those grantees would receive \$20 million to \$50 million to implement the individual projects that were included in those Phase 1 applications. The deadline for the Phase 2 application is April 25th.

Mr. Lautzenheiser discussed some upcoming funding opportunities with fast approaching deadlines. He said if anyone has any questions or requests to please contact him.

b. Environmental Planning

Mr. LaPlante said that there are three different grants for community public water systems. He stated that these could be owned by the county or any of the municipalities. The Asset Management Program Development Grant is available in the amount of \$15,000 to conduct asset management on the public water system infrastructure; the source water protection strategy grant amount is up to \$20,000, there is no local match requirement. The Ohio EPA will reimburse up to \$15,000 per sealed water well for the well abandonment grant. He stated that the sealing has to take place within six months of the grant award.

Mr. LaPlante said that the Ohio EPA's Nutrient Reduction Strategy is being updated by Ohio University. He said that four roundtable work sessions are being planned. The closest roundtable work session location to the NEFCO region will be held in Dennison, Ohio, February 14th. He stated that lunch will be provided, and an RSVP is required by January 26th.

Please reach out and contact him if you have any questions about any of these items.

9 Federal and State legislation or information of importance to local governments

Mr. Hadley said that a new continuing resolution is in the works, which will still require action by the Senate and the House. This two tier approach was to, at least in theory, get four of the appropriations bills handled no later than January 19th. He said that the second tier would handle the more difficult appropriations bills which will benefit from having additional time for discussion and hopefully compromise. He stated that there is still a need to continue some discussion on the easier appropriations bills; which includes Commerce, Justice, Science, and related agencies. But, the Senate and some of the key Republicans in the House have worked out somewhat of a deal subject to approval by those two branches on a new continuing resolution. According to the information from the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), Congress is hedging its bets a little bit that they may need a short term continuing resolution. He said that there does seem to be some interest in achieving an agreement and certainly the President will sign what is sent to him. He said that available is a 13 page document of the continuing resolution. He stated that the Railway Safety Act that Senators Brown and Vance were pushing for the East Palestine railroad disaster has still not been scheduled for a vote in the full Senate. He noted the information regarding the funding for airport improvements: of that \$66 million figure published, \$4.5 million was awarded to the Akron Canton Airport for two improvements projects. He mentioned two webinars being held on January 23rd. Please contact him for additional details.

10. For the Good of the Order: an opportunity for members to share news about their community/county/agency/company, or to list a prominent issue affecting them

No one at the Board meeting had anything to comment about for their community/county/agency.

11. Other Business

THERE BEING NO OTHER BUSINESS, the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

Submitted by Rebecca L. Morgan, Administrative Assistant



Todd Peetz, Secretary
NEFCO General Policy Board
February 21, 2024

NEFCO GENERAL POLICY BOARD 2024 ATTENDANCE SHEET

Member (alternate)	1/17	2/21	3/20	4/17	5/15	6/19	7/17	8/21	9/18	10/16	11/20	12/18
PORTAGE COUNTY^a												
Sabrina Christian-Bennett (Mike Tinlin)	X											
Daniel Blakely (Tia Rutledge)	A											
Joseph Diorio (Justin Rechichar)												
Todd Peetz (Gail Gifford)	X											
Amos Sarfo (Eric Long)	X											
Vacant												
CITY OF KENT												
Kailyn Cyrus (Bridget Susel)	X											
STARK COUNTY												
Keith Bennett	X											
Alfredo Carranza	X											
Kirt Conrad												
David Maley	X											
Joe Mazzola												
Dan Moeglin (Sarah Buell)												
Mike Naso (Helene Papczun)												
Bob Nau (Curtis Bungard)	X											
Richard Regula (Bill Smith)	X											
Jim Troike (Tom Davis and Jeff Lonzrick)	X											
Stephan Wilder	X											
Vacant												
CITY OF CANTON												
Jim Benekos (John Highman Jr. and Chris Barnes)	X											
COUNTY OF SUMMIT												
Jim Balogh	X											
Alan Brubaker (Larry Fulton and Chuck Hauber)	A											
Caitlin Elrad	X											
David Kohlmeier (Zak Kaczor)												
David Lukas	X											
Sam Scaffide	X											
Ilene Shapiro (Craig Stanley & Joe Eckenrode)												
Dianne Sumego												
Michael Vinay (Matt Calcei)	X											
CITY OF AKRON^a												
Chris Ludle (Michelle DiFiore)	A											
Shammas Malik												
Linda F. R. Omobien												
Helen Tomic (Kurt Mulhauser)	A											
Vacant												
Vacant												
Vacant												
WAYNE COUNTY												
Jonathan Hofstetter (Sue Smail)	X											
Jennifer Kiper (Rob Kastner)	X											
Steven Wheeler (Kevin Givins)	A											
CITY OF WOOSTER												
Robert Reynolds (Vince Marion & Joel Montgomery)	A											
OHIO EPA-NEDO^b												
David Emerman (Allen Tyler)	A											
CITIZENS COUNCIL												
Vacant (2)												

X = member present A = alternate present

^aappointments pending

^bex officio

See reverse side for a list of guests who attended last month's Board meeting

Guests in Attendance at the January 17, 2024 meeting

Meghan Adair, Summit/Medina Workforce Development Area
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Justin Rechichar, Portage County Health District
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Mycheala Holley, Congresswoman Emilia Sykes OH-13 Office
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Ellen Heinz, EDA
