

## Highlights of the **February 16, 2017** meeting:

**WEBSITE** – Our website is **LIVE!** Please take a minute to check out our new website by clicking here: [www.mitchellcountykansas.com](http://www.mitchellcountykansas.com) We will use the site to provide information for our residents, but also as a positive snapshot for those businesses, families and individuals looking for a new place to relocate and establish themselves. Please take a look and let me know what you think.

**EMPTY BUILDING ASSESMENT** – I will once again be hosting a Beloit High School intern this year for three weeks. One of the things we are going to tackle is an empty commercial building assessment. We are going to have a list of the empty buildings in Mitchell County for prospective, new or transitioning businesses. We want to list the buildings, square footage, contact information, pictures, and rental or purchase price. We have a great avenue now to list sites on our website, you can check out our current properties listed here: [Mitchell County Properties](#) If you have a commercial property that you would like to list, please contact me.

**DANE G. HANSEN** – The Dane G. Hansen Foundation will be hosting a Community Forum in Hays on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017. I hope to hear the next exciting things that will be coming from the Hansen Foundation. The Solomon Valley Community Foundation was asked to present a break-out session on the Matching Campaign that we ran last November. This forum is a great place to share success stories and I am anxious to hear what other communities have been accomplishing with funding from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation.

**BUSINESS APPRECIATION MONTH (BAM)** – Business Appreciation Month serves as a statewide tribute to Kansas businesses for their contributions to our state. The awards program takes place each spring and invites individuals and organizations to nominate the proud Kansas businesses that contribute jobs and support their local communities. Finalists are recognized at the Team Kansas awards ceremony in June, with the top nominee receiving the Governor's Award of Excellence which is the top award given to a business by the state of Kansas. The intent of the program is to recognize Kansas businesses for their contributions to the local and state economy. Kansas businesses continue to be the foundation of our economy, communities and overall quality of life, and Business Appreciation Month is the state's way of recognizing Kansas businesses for all they do to keep Kansas strong.

The first step of the process is for businesses to be nominated for the award. Solomon Valley Economic Development would like to once again nominate businesses in our area for recognition. If you know of a business that has the following qualifications please contact me.

Award qualifications include:

- Business expansion in Kansas
- Successful employee retention and recruitment practices
- Employee training/educational programs
- Capital investment in Kansas
- Support of local activities including school activities, community events, economic development and leadership programs

Past nominations include:

- **2014**
  - Solomon Valley Hospice

- Kohler Manufacturing
- Becker Auto and Trailer – Regional Winner
- **2015**
  - Sonic
  - The Eye Care Center – Regional Winner
- **2016**
  - The Port Library
  - Cunningham Cable – Top 5 Finalist in the State of Kansas

**ISLE OF LIGHTS** – Bob Severance was present to give an official count from the Isle of Lights 2016. Over 11,000 people visit our Chautauqua Isle of Lights on a yearly basis. Here are a few highlights of the visitors that our spectacular display attracts.

- 11,747 visitors from 185 towns in Kansas
- 1,095 visitors from 39 States
- 34 visitors from 11 Foreign Countries

**MEETING OPTIONS** – The Solomon Valley Economic Development Board would like to change our meetings up a little bit. We understand the noon hour is a little hectic and we would like to be more accommodating. We are going to cater a meal to have available for purchase each month and our meetings will be held at The Porter House. We will have a box lunch available at noon and then still start our meeting at 12:30pm. We will send out a menu and price with the agenda each month. You will need to RSVP so we know how many meals to order. The meeting will still start at 12:30pm and you are welcome to just attend the meeting if that works better for you. This will be a little trial and error, until we work out the kinks! ☺ We will start this at our April SVED meeting. More details to follow!

**FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM** – I am very pleased to announce the start of a new program in Mitchell County, the Façade Improvement Program.

Purpose – This program is designed for small scale renovation projects to the façade of the buildings in Mitchell County. The program is available to provide an affordable financing option for improvements to commercial building facades in order to improve the functionality, structural integrity and aesthetics in commercial areas.

Applicant Eligibility –

1. Building must be located in Mitchell County;
2. Building owner or business owner must be the program applicant;
3. Project must comply with applicable city, building, electrical, mechanical codes and have a valid permit;
4. **The applicant MUST have 2 of the following 3:**
  - a. A credit score of 700;
  - b. Been in business for 1 year;
  - c. Provide a matching fund of 1:1 for the requested amount

Eligible Use of Funds – Funding will only be approved for exterior improvements only. Projects may include but not limited to:

- Building Expansion
- Window replacement and repair
- Vacant building redevelopment
- Canopy or awning replacement, repair or installation
- Signage – not more than 30% of the funds can go towards signage
- Removal of contemporary facades to expose original construction of building
- Repair and/or tuck point existing structures

- Repair or Replacement of siding, trim, windows, doors, awnings
- Exterior painting, pressure washing, sand blasting
- Exterior Lighting
- No Interior renovations
- Will consider Heating/Air/Energy Efficiency Projects
- Other improvements not listed may be approved

Requirements include:

- All projects awarded must be completed within one calendar year from the official date of the award letter
- Will not fund debt
- Quotes for work to be completed

Loan Terms and Repayment:

1. Maximum loan of \$5,000
2. Interest rate fixed at 0%
3. Maximum loan term of 5 years
4. Closing fee of 1% to cover NCRPC expenses of administering the program
5. The loan will be paid in equal monthly installments by ACH draft from the applicants

**Application period is open and on a first come, first served basis with no deadlines, based on the availability of funds.**

**SMALL BIZ SURVIVAL – Small-business Ownership: It Gets Easier! OR NOT?  
by Glenn Muske**

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Getting a business up and running takes a lot of hard work.

Trying to decide what business to start, determining if there is an audience, and getting your systems in order takes a lot of your effort. And these initial tasks happen at a time when you have only yourself or, at best, limited help available.

As I talk with startup-business owners, they often comment about looking forward to getting beyond the startup stage when they won't have to work so hard.

Thinking it gets easier, though, is somewhat of a myth.

Yes, certain things do get easier. You have a market of regular buyers. Certain aspects of the business become routine. Your business has an established presence, it's visible. And you have key employees performing some of the key tasks.

Probably one of the biggest things is that money is coming in and you have established a cash flow that can be used to pay bills and expenses. Plus that cash flow is allowing you to pay yourself and pay off some of the debt you probably took on when you started the business.

But while certain things get easier, new tasks come along and existing tasks get harder.

One of the biggest challenges is how to keep things new and fresh for you existing customers. It is much easier to sell to someone who has already purchased from your business. However with all of the competition, it can be hard to keep the customer coming back to your store.

Keeping things new means not only updated products and services but bringing on new products and product lines. It means new means of service. New ways to market and even new ways for customers to pay (think near-field communication or payment through an app) are now your challenges. New regulations

come along. Finally, your cash-flow issues don't go away. They change to finding ways to allow for your growth and to increase wages and benefits.

The bottom line, as reported by existing business owners, is that running a business gets different but it doesn't get easier.

This should not stop you and your pursuit of a dream. Small-business ownership offers great opportunities and rewards. Just understand the realities and then enjoy the ride.

**NEXT MEETING** – It is time for another Solomon Valley Economic Development FIELD TRIP! Our March meeting will be held Jewell and catered by Kevin Thompson at Jewell Grocery. Watch for more information with the March agenda.

As always, please contact me with any questions or comments.

*Heather Hartman*