

Emery County Economic Opportunity (CEO) Board

Meeting Minutes

February 10th, 2026 @ 3:00 p.m.

Emery County Courthouse, Commission Conference Room
75 East Main Street, Castle Dale, Utah 84513

In Attendance:

Board Members: Nicole Steele, Brock Johansen, Patsy Stoddard, Laren Huntsman.

Others: Commissioner Dennis Worwood, Commissioner Jordan Leonard, Commissioner Keven Jensen, Natalie Olsen, Debra McKee with GOEO (online). Edward Bennett, Green River City (online)

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm.

1. **Welcome** - Nicole Steele

Nicole Steele welcomed everyone to the Emery County Economic Opportunity Board meeting.

2. **Discuss/Approve/Deny** - County Economic Opportunity Board Meeting Minutes September 9th, 2025 Minutes.

Brock made a motion to approve the minutes with a second from Patsy. Voting was unanimous.

3. **Discuss/Approve/Deny** - 2026 CEO Board Meeting schedule.

- February 10, 2026 @ 3:00pm
- August 11, 2026 @ 3:00pm
- May 12, 2026 @ 3:00pm
- November 10, 2026 @ 3:00pm

It was discussed that dates may be adjusted if needed and meeting invites will be sent out. Patsy made a motion to approve the 2026 meeting schedule with a second by Laren. Voting was unanimous.

4. **Discuss/Approve/Deny** - Doug Miller-Weber State Study Update:

Doug Miller was unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts.

The Board provided an overview of the study, which was funded by the board approximately three years ago. The Weber State MBA study evaluated potential impacts to the region related to population growth, housing demand, and potential development scenarios, including nuclear-related workforce impacts.

Key discussion points:

- Study findings focus primarily on housing demand and population growth.
- Students researched comparable communities and workforce needs.
- One finding from comparable regions was strong demand for short-term housing options such as extended-stay lodging with kitchen facilities.
- Study has been presented to the Economic Development group and the Council of Governments (COG), where it was well received.
- Slides and materials were distributed to board members.

It was noted that: Orangeville has implemented a moratorium on short-term rentals to encourage family housing and some short-term rentals in Ferron shifted to long-term workforce housing.

- 5. Discuss/Approve/Deny-** Cort Probst-Entrepreneurial Loan Fund. (Was unable to attend)
Cort Probst (with Utah State University Eastern) wanted to introduce a small business loan program concept.

Purpose:

Informational overview to the board.

Program similar in structure to revolving loan funds already used by local organizations.

- 6. Discuss/Approve/Deny-** Rural County Grant Funds.

Discussion focused on allocation of remaining rural county grant funds and funding requests.

*****Business Improvement Grant*****

Grant Program Overview by Patsy:

- 27 business applications received.
- Total requested funding: \$322,561.93.
- Requests from new applicants only: \$117,332.52.
- Estimated economic impact with matching funds: \$645,123.86 (minimum).
- Many projects exceed the maximum \$15,000 grant limit and represent additional investment beyond grant funding.
- Current program budget: \$115,000.

Available Carryover Funds:

- Approximately \$150,000 remaining from prior years (2024 and 2025 allocations).
- Additional current-year funds available.

Discussion included:

1. Whether to reallocate prior-year funds into the grant program rather than continue holding them.
2. Desire to put funds to use while still maintaining reserves for future economic development initiatives.
3. Review of projects submitted, including equipment purchases, building improvements, training, signage, and business upgrades.
4. Discussion of Green River business participation and related proposals for local business development support.
5. Broader conversation regarding county-wide economic development versus city-specific initiatives.

Brock made a motion to recommend funding the rural business improvement grant program up to **\$215,000 total**, by transferring **\$100,000 from prior-year carryover funds** (including the full \$75,000 from 2024 and \$25,000 from 2025) with a second from Laren. Voting was unanimous.

*****Green River Business Alliance / Small Business Development Proposal*****

The board discussed a request related to funding support for a Green River small business alliance and part-time local business outreach coordinator. Discussion focused on:

- Clarification of multiple funding requests and applications
- Whether responsibilities overlap with SERDA, Small Business Development Center, or county economic development efforts.
- The distinction between regional economic development and local small business outreach
- Concerns about funding wages for a city-specific position using county funds
- Equity among municipalities and potential precedent for other cities
- Existing county interest in hiring a countywide economic development director
- The concept of the Green River proposal as a pilot program
- Funding structure including contributions from Green River City and SERDA
- Ongoing economic challenges in Green River

Board members expressed support for economic development broadly but concern about funding a city-specific position with county resources.

Laren made a motion to deny funding for the Green River Business Alliance application with a second from Brock. Voting was unanimous.

7. Discuss/Approve/Deny: Economic Development Director.

The board discussed the continued need for a dedicated economic development professional.

Key points:

- The county currently lacks a single point of contact for development inquiries.
- The board has recommended hiring a consultant or employee for several years.
- Position would respond to development inquiries and coordinate opportunities.
- A defined scope of work is recommended for accountability.

Patsy made a motion to continue recommending establishment of an economic development coordinator, contractor or employee position with approximate funding of \$125,000, with potential support from grants with a second from Brock. Voting was unanimous.

General agreement expressed that the position is needed, though final hiring authority rests with the county.

8. Discussion: New Board Member

We need to replace Mayor Ren Hatt's position on the board. The board felt like the board needed someone from Green River. They suggested the new mayor, Larry Packer. Brock Johansen said he would reach out to Larry and see if he would be available and willing to be on the board. Debbie with GOEO did recommend keeping it staff or city officials.

9. Other Business:

Nothing to report

10. Adjourn:

Brock made a motion to adjourn the meeting with a second from Laren.

NEXT MEETING WILL BE MAY 12TH, 2026 @ 3:00 pm