

Meriden/Ozawkie Area Chamber of Commerce
Chamber Meeting Minutes – January 21st, 2016

Announcements/Updates

Chamber Board and Officer Elections – Chamber President Scott Stanley reported that incumbents Pat Happer, Diane Shaw, and Chuck Wilson returned to office, each for a three-year term. Additionally, at its January meeting, the board elected the following officers for the new year: Scott Stanley, President, Chuck Wilson, Vice-President, Kent Duncan, Secretary, and DeDee Skaggs, Treasurer.

Membership Renewals – Membership Invoices for 2016 have been sent to 2015 members. Area businesses who are not active members have been sent an application via email. Any questions can be directed to any Chamber board member.

Christmas Lights Contest – Chamber president Scott Stanley reported the names of the Christmas Lights Contest winners who had been announced at the December “After Hours” event. This year’s winners are:

- *Meriden Residence Smoke (Larry) & Verna Diven @ 105 E. Huffman*
Business Fender Menders-Mark Searls @ 608 E. Wyandotte
- *Ozawkie Residence Deric and Cara Arnold @ 528 Delaware*
- *Rural Residence Jim & Linda Cummings @ 3933 102nd St, Meriden*

Each winner received \$50 in Chamber of Commerce gift certificates. Thanks to everyone who participated, and special to the **Meriden Pride Association** for sponsoring one of the Meriden awards!

December “After Hours” – The chamber’s “After Hours” event was held Saturday, December 19th, at the Lake Ridge Bar & Grill (at the Lake Perry Country Club). Participants enjoyed a great evening, but attendance did seem to be impacted by the shift to a Saturday evening so close to the Christmas holiday (as opposed to Thursdays in previous years). Scott announced that the board had discussed this and will experiment with moving the next “After Hours” event to January and utilizing that as an opportunity to encourage annual membership renewals and new member applications.

Chamber Gift Certificates – Members were reminded that Chamber gift certificates can be redeemed by mailing them to chamber at “PO Box 175, Meriden, KS, 66512.”

Community Events – Chamber members announced a number of community events:

- 20th Annual Kaw Valley Eagles Day – January 23rd – Free State High School, Lawrence
- Marie Dunn’s 92nd Birthday Celebration – Meriden Community Church – January 23rd – Meriden Community Church Fellowship Hall
- Community Blood Drive – January 24th – Jefferson Assembly of God, Meriden

- Crossroads Rodeo Bible Camp – Grades 5-8 - July 8-11 / Grades 9-2 – July 12-16 – Leavenworth County Fairgrounds – more info at CrossroadsCowboyChurch.net

Economic Development – Brittany Chaplin (unable to attend) sent the following report:

- Housing & Redevelopment

The committee is working on compiling information for our Summit in March. We will be inviting stakeholders to this Summit to gauge interest in formally organizing a Housing and Redevelopment Commission. Stakeholders include: contractors, banks, title companies, cities, the County, chambers, schools, real estate, and any other person/organization with a vested interest in housing matters. At the Summit, we will go over preliminary housing data to give everyone an idea of what housing looks like in Jefferson County. We will also discuss expectations and what serving on the Commission will entail.

We are looking to form an advisory council containing a diverse group of stakeholders that will aim to address the housing and redevelopment needs in Jefferson County. They will work with County offices to perform assessments of our needs and then partner with federal, state, and local organizations to research programs and projects, communicate findings, and facilitate implementation.

- Food Council

The Food Council met with the consultant who will be performing the assessment to map out their strategic plan. They're first going to work on building foundations out of existing databases and then prepare to send surveys out to producers in Jefferson County.

We plan to compile a comprehensive inventory of food producers, processors, and distributors for Jefferson County. Our goal in this assessment is to include the crops, livestock, and value-added products produced within the County. It is our intention to identify new economic opportunities in our County.

The council is also working on applying for a grant that will help the Oskaloosa School District get a school garden in place. This will be a wonderful educational opportunity that the Food Council looks forward to being a part of.

- Think Local First

This group is working on building a strong Facebook presence so that we can have a platform to showcase businesses on a County-wide level. Please, search "Jefferson County Think Local First" and like our page! Also, invite your friends and neighbors, so that we can spread the word about all the wonderful things our County has to offer. We are also working on putting a County-wide calendar of events together. We will use information from the Chamber Chronicles plus allow non-Chamber members to submit events and information. It will be available on the EDC website via calendar format. Additionally, we are beginning to put together a comprehensive list of businesses that we will use, in partnership with the future County web developer, to create a business directory that will be in a map, GIS format.

For more information on any of these committees, contact Brittany at brittany@jfcoksed.com.

Special Guest

Heidi Pickerel, Directors of Meals on Wheels for Jefferson and Shawnee County, addressed the chamber. She noted that the chamber and Meals on Wheels share a similar mission: We want to keep businesses “present and healthy” in our community—and Meals on Wheels wants to do the same with our seniors.

Heidi addressed some of the misconceptions surrounding Meals on Wheels. Common misconceptions include the notion that that Meals on Wheels is “only for poor people, only for older people, and only for long-term clients.” Heidi informed the board that Meals on Wheels can service clients of varied ages and financial standing and that short term services are available.

One of the advantages of the Meals on Wheels program (beyond a healthy, well-balanced meal delivered hot to the door) includes the ability of Meals on Wheels volunteers to provide a “safety check” for clients. If a volunteer does not get an answer at the door when delivering a meal, the client receives a phone call. If no one answers, an emergency contact receives a call from the agency. If emergency contacts can’t be reached, area hospitals and rehab centers are contacted. When all those avenues have been exhausted, the local police are contacted to make an in-person safety check.

Funding for Meals on Wheels begins at the Federal level with the Older Americans Act, but is funneled through the State legislature. Funding has remained level (no increases) for the last ten years. Some \$700,000 is provided through the Shawnee County Area Agency on Aging, but the current budgetary needs exceed \$1,000,000. Because of this, a client waiting list has been a necessity in recent years.

In short, Meals on Wheels provides an essential service to Jefferson Countians, not only through regular delivery of healthy meals, but the auxiliary care and contact made possible through the network of volunteer deliveries.

Upcoming Meetings

Chamber – Thursday, February 18 – Gambinos Community Room – Meriden