

**Kountze Chamber of Commerce
Special Called Meeting
City Hall Council Chambers
January 28, 2016
2 p.m.**

Members Present: Natosha Brown (Kountze Nursing Center), Kathy Von Feldt (Benchmark Plumbing), Sonya Spurlock (Hardin County Motors), Thomas Cryer (Brookshire Brothers), Milton Lollar (Lollar Automotive), Linda Miller (BBVA Compass), Sandip Bhakta (Relax Inn Hotel), Daniel & D'Ann White (WhiteHall Crafts), Elaine Allums (Photography by Sunset Lady), Lauri Thompson (State Farm), Jeff LaComb (City of Kountze), Rod Hutto (City of Kountze), Tim Drake (City of Kountze)

Natosha Brown called the meeting to order.

Daniel White led the invocation.

Natosha Brown explained that it was time for new officers to be elected. Natosha Brown opened nominations.

- For the office of president: Jeff LaComb nominated Lauri Thompson. It was seconded by Rod Hutto. All in favor, motion carried.
- For the office of secretary: Natosha Brown nominated D'Ann White. It was seconded by Rod Hutto. All in favor, motion carried.
- No other offices were filled at this time.

Lauri Thompson now presided over the meeting.

Old Business

Music Fest--- Rod Hutto moved to cancel Music Fest for this year. It was seconded by Natosha Brown. Discussion: It would be too difficult to carry for the few officers there are at this late date. Lauri Thompson responded that she had agreed to take the office of president, but she would not take the Music Fest, as it is too much work for the officers to handle. She further stated that there would need to be a special committee for the Music Fest. No one volunteered to head the Music Fest Committee. Daniel White called the question. All in favor to cancel the Music Fest, motion carried.

Officer Elections were revisited. D'Ann White expressed a concern that there were only two officers on the Chamber.

- Office of Treasurer: Jeff LaComb stated that he no longer wanted the position of treasurer, but that he would stay until the position was filled. Kathy Von Feldt nominated herself to be treasurer. D'Ann White seconded. All in favor, motion carried.
- Office of Vice-President: Linda Miller nominated herself to be vice-president. Daniel White seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

New Business

Commercials---Lauri Thompson had an idea for a project brought to her attention: to have a TV commercial on K-JAC, the NBC channel in Beaumont. Jasper's Chamber of Commerce has been having some success with this project. It features three businesses in a fifteen-second spot, and then ends with the Chamber. It will help promote tourism and highlight local businesses. Funding will be provided by a partnership of the EDC, Chamber, and the three businesses. The fee would be \$350 for each business per month (\$1050 a month). Each business would pay \$175 a month, and the EDC and Chamber would split the other \$175 a month. This includes production costs. Each business is asked to commit for ninety days. Lauri Thompson's idea is that three businesses would be featured the first month and a different three businesses would be featured the next month. This way each business would pay for three months, and then the commercial would roll throughout the year.

Lauri Thompson opened the floor for discussion. Several members stated they were interested (Sandip Bhakta, Milton Lollar, and Sonya Spurlock).

Lauri Thompson stated we needed a motto. Jeff LaComb mentioned that "Gateway to the Big Thicket" is on the city letterhead.

The commercial would state "Brought to you by the Kountze Chamber of Commerce" at the end of the fifteen-second spot. When people see the ads, it will generate interest in the Chamber. Daniel White stated that the Anson Chamber of Commerce recently did this, and they had excellent success.

Lauri Thompson also stated that maybe the churches, library, and schools would also be interested, but we would focus on the businesses first. Lauri Thompson said she thought the ads would run every day. Rod Hutto stated he would be surprised if they run every day at that price. This would be something we need to check.

It was also mentioned that another town tried this, but they could not get three businesses to agree to be in the same ad. For this project to work, the businesses need to realize that they will be sharing space in the same commercial.

Tracy Davis from K-JAC has agreed to come and explain to the Chamber the process, if the Chamber approves to investigate this project further. Thomas Cryer so moved. Linda Miller seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Membership---Out of 53 members, 40 have paid their dues for the current year.

Communication---Lauri Thompson stated that business owners have a difficult time getting away during the day, and we need to have an alternate way to communicate. Lauri Thompson suggested a Facebook page. D'Ann White stated that the Chamber already had a Facebook page. Daniel White mentioned that the page is good for announcements, but that the best way to communicate would be through a Facebook group. Sonya Spurlock stated that it was an effective means of communication. D'Ann White nominated Daniel White to administrate the group. Daniel White stated that some people may be opposed to having a Facebook profile, so an alternative would be to set up a yahoo group and communicate through email. Sonya Soulock prefers to utilize Facebook. Milton Lollar expressed a concern that this group will eliminate the need to meet. Kathy Von Feldt stated that a big problem is that there has been no communication other than an email stating when the next meeting is to occur. Everyone needs feedback and to know what is going on. Lauri Thompson created a large contact group to send out emails. Linda Miller stated that she would like to see a copy of the minutes for each member, and it was decided that the minutes would be emailed out to all members. Kathy Von Feldt expressed a concern with using Facebook as a means to communicate business because it is not very private, and she had a previous problem when there was only one administrator. Daniel White explained that we could set up a closed group, and he suggested having three administrators on the group. There could even be editors and other positions under the administrators. It was decided by general consensus to have Daniel White set up a closed Facebook group.

Ideas to Encourage Meeting Participation---

- Daniel White suggested that each time we meet we have a program that will benefit the businesses.
- Milton Lollar suggested having an alternate time after normal business hours.
- Lauri Thompson suggested that maybe every other month having a Chamber networking meeting in the evening.
- D'Ann White suggested a Chamber breakfast, however Lauri Thompson stated that Elaine had tried that in the past.
- Lauri Thompson stated that the purpose of the Chamber is to support each other. Kathy Von Feldt stated that Beaumont has mixers.
- Kathy Von Feldt suggested having a newsletter, however as observed by Lauri Thompson, this would be difficult without a paid staff.

Recognitions---Thomas Cryer mentioned that it was time to start planning for the Teacher of the Year, Business of the Year, and Citizen of the Year awards. The Chamber also awards a \$1000 scholarship to the salutatorian. The banquet is usually held in February but Lauri Thompson said at the January meeting the Chamber voted to cancel the banquet. Daniel White stated that he thought the banquet was just tabled until a later date. No record of this discussion was found in the January minutes. Linda Miller stated that we do not necessarily have to have a banquet, we could invite the recipients to a meeting and have the newspaper there as well. D'Ann White stated that she has seen other Chambers have the banquet in May to include scholarships. In the past, Elaine Allums organized the awards, and Lauri Thompson asked her to coordinate the ballots. Elaine Allums agreed to coordinate. Banquet is tabled until the February meeting.

Stockshow---Thomas Cryer mentioned that the school has an FFA Livestock Show. The Chamber used to bid on an animal in the 100 Club. He thinks we need to start setting aside for this. Discussion was tabled for a later date.

It was decided by general consensus to keep the meetings at City Hall on the second Thursday of the month at 2 p.m.

Daniel White moved to adjourn. Linda Miller seconded. All in favor, meeting adjourned.