



**EDA/EDC – Joint Board Meeting**

**Board Roundtable**

**Year-in-Review Dialogue**

**Thursday, January 8, 2026**

**7:30 A.M. to 9:30 A.M.**

**Rock31/BSED Building**

**Zoot Training & Event Space (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor)**

**BIG SKY ED Mission Statement:** - Focused on sustaining and growing our region's vibrant economy and outstanding quality of life, **Big Sky Economic Development** provides leadership and resources for business creation, expansion, retention, new business recruitment and community development.

Agenda items may be rearranged unless an item is listed as having a "time certain". Action may be taken on any item listed on the Board Agenda.

**Agenda**

**7:30 A.M. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call** – Jen Kobza, EDC Chair

**7:32 A.M. Public Comment/Introductions & Special Guest Presentations**

- Public Comment/Introductions
  - New Board Members
    - EDC: John Pearson and Shannon Christensen
    - EDA: Austin Stacey and Stefan Cattarin
  - Staff Announcements – Tereza Brownell, 5 years of Service

**7:45 A.M. Changes to Today's Agenda**

**7:47 A.M. Consent Items for Board Action**

- EDA/EDC Joint meeting Minutes- December 11, 2025

(Action)

(Attachment A) (EDA & EDC)

**7:50 A.M. Executive Director Report – Brandon**

- Big Sky Finance Loan Approval
- SBDC Agreement

(PENDING) (Handout)

(Attachment B) (EDA & EDC)

**8:00 A.M. Board Roundtable – Year-in-Review Dialogue (2 minutes each)**

- Looking back: Two successes and biggest challenge
- Looking forward: I am excited about

**9:30 A.M. Adjourn**

**Next EDA/EDC Joint Board Meeting – February 12, 2026 (7:30 A.M. to 9:00 A.M.) Location-Zoot Training & Event Space, BSED Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor.**  
*Big Sky Economic Development Board of Directors will make reasonable accommodations for known disabilities that may interfere with an individual's ability to participate. Persons requiring such accommodations should make their requests to Big Sky Economic Development as soon as possible before the meeting day. Please email Reann Keller, [reann@bigskyeda.org](mailto:reann@bigskyeda.org), or call Big Sky Economic Development at 406-256-6871.*



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# ATTACHMENT A

**Big Sky EDA/EDC Joint Board Meeting Minutes**  
**December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025 - 7:30 A.M. to 9:00 A.M.**  
**Zoot Training & Event Space (2nd Floor)**

**BIG SKY ED Mission Statement:** - Focused on sustaining and growing our region's vibrant economy and outstanding quality of life, **Big Sky Economic Development** provides leadership and resources for business creation, expansion, retention, new business recruitment and community development.

**Committee Members Present:** **EDA** – Debbie Desjarlais, Lucy Aspinwall, Bryan Wood, Kate Vogel, Zachary Dunn, Aaron Redland, Vince Mistretta, Ken Lutton, Darin Uselman  
**Ex-officio** – Dr. Erwin Garcia, John Brewer, Mike Boyett, Kurt Markegard

**EDC** – Nick Pancheau, Jennifer Kobza, Andy Gott, Dr. Stefani Hicswa, Dave Ballard, DJ Clark, Keagan Harsha, Nichole Mehling, Michael Phillips, Matt Robertson, Jerry Simonson, George Warmer, Dr. Bob Wilmouth, Tyler Wiltgen

**Committee Members Absent:** **EDA** – Riley Bennett, Turk Stovall  
**Ex-officio** – Mike Waters, Katy Schreiner

**EDC** – Jennifer Weaver Kondracki, Cole Derks, Spencer Frederick, Mike Marsh, Kim Jakub, Mark Morse, Judi Powers, Molly Schwend

**Staff and Others Present:** Reann Keller, Brandon Berger, Marcell Bruski, Tereza Brownell, Keith Hart, Rick Brown, Lorene Hintz, Heather Kirpach, Tami Fleetwood, Dianne Lehm, John Pearson, Krista Hertz, Shannon Christensen, Edgar Johansson, Paul Neutgens, Melanie Willardson

**Call to Order:**

Debbie Desjarlais, EDA Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:47 A.M.

**Public Comment/Introductions & Special Guest Presentation:**

- Introduction – Edgar Johansson with Montana Spaceport and Test Range. Plans to present to the Board at a Board meeting at the beginning of the year.
- Introduction – Paul Neutgens past Board member
- Introduction – New EDC Members John Pearson (Rocky Mountain College) and Shannon Christensen (Cushing Terrell)
- Brandon recognized outgoing Board members- Dr. Bob Wilmouth, Andy Gott, Michael Marsh, and Ken Lutton. Thanked the Executive Committee for their service, Jen Kobza, Lucy Aspinwall, Andy Gott, Riley Bennett, Bryan Wood, Jennifer Weaver Kondracki, Stefani Hicswa, Kate Vogel with special thanks to our Board Chairs, Nick Pancheau (EDC) and Debbie Desjarlais (EDA).
- Guest Presentation – Melanie Willardson and Krista Hertz with Billings Public Schools provided an overview on the Innovative Educational Tax Credit- HB408. Dollar for dollar tax credit for donations to Billings Public Schools. Individuals or Businesses are eligible to donate. No minimum donation but

maximum donation is \$200,000. Billings Public School District is capped at \$1.4M and there is a maximum for all Public School Districts in Montana capped at \$7.2M. The Department of Revenue opens the portal on January 21<sup>st</sup> at 10:00am and the funds are anticipated to be claimed within 45 minutes. Donations will be entered into the portal at this time. Funding received will be focused on healthcare pathways and Ag programs in 2026. Mail or drop off donations at the Lincoln Center. This credit applies to income tax and can be carried forward 3 years.

**Agenda Changes for Today's Meeting:**

Loan approvals moved to the beginning of the Executive Director report to ensure there is a quorum.

**REGULAR AGENDA**

**Consent Agenda Items for Board Action**

**Approval to November 13, 2025, EDA/EDC- Joint Board Meeting Minutes**

Motion: **Andy Gott** to approve the November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025, EDA/EDC Joint Board Meeting minutes as presented to the Board.

Second: **Ken Lutton**

Discussion: None

Motion: Carried

**Approval of EDA/EDC FY'26 September and October Financial Statements**

Motion: **Ken Lutton** to approve the EDA/EDC FY'26 September and October financial statements as presented to the Board.

Second: **Jen Kobza**

Discussion: None

Motion: Carried

**Executive Director Report**

**Big Sky Finance Loan Considerations**

**SBA 504 Loan Request** – Big Sky EDC is requesting approval to submit to the US Small Business Administration the following SBA 504 loan request. The Big Sky EDC Loan Committee has reviewed the request and recommends approval to the full EDC Board for submission to the SBA for final approval. The request meets all the underwriting and eligibility requirements of the EDC.

4H Plumbing, Heating and Cooling, Inc. – The purpose of this request is for the purchase of a commercial real estate building and minor tenant improvements for 4H Plumbing and Heating located in Billings, MT. 4H Plumbing was established in 2019 and is owned and operated by Justin Herlyn. The company is a full-service plumbing and HVAC company offering services from emergency repairs to new installations of furnaces, boilers, AC and water systems. They do both residential and commercial work. There are projected to be three new positions (technicians) hired over the next two years.

The total SBA debenture will be \$284,000 on a 25-year note comprising 40% of the total project. Big Sky EDC and the SBA will be in a 2<sup>nd</sup> lien position on the real property behind Opportunity Bank of Montana (Billings). The project meets a Community Development goal being located in a HUBZone.

Motion: **Dave Ballard** to approve the SBA 504 loan request for 4H Plumbing, Heating and Cooling, Inc. in the amount of \$284,000 as presented to the Board.

Second: **Jerry Simonson**

Discussion: None

Motion: Carried

**Matt Robertson** recuses himself from this vote

**Big Sky SSBCI Loan Request** – Big Sky EDC Finance Department is requesting approval for the following Big Sky EDC SSBCI loan request. The Big Sky Loan Committee has reviewed the request and recommends approval to the full EDC Board. The request meets all the underwriting and eligibility requirements of the program.

Papa Murphy's (Fox Trail Enterprises LLC) – Request is for the use of new SSBCI 2.0 (3<sup>rd</sup> tranche) loan funds to assist Papa Murphy's with the purchase of commercial real estate located in Hamilton, MT. The purchase of the real estate is associated with the purchase of the operating business by the borrower. Borrowers are Sean and Chelsey Williams, who currently own the Missoula Papa Murphy's operation. This will be their second restaurant under ownership. The purchase of this location and operation is from the same sellers as who the Williams purchased the Missoula location from in February 2024.

Note will be a 10-year term amortized over 20 years at fixed rate of 3.50% (SSBCI portion). Big Sky EDC will be participating in the overall financing with First Security Bank of Missoula. Big Sky's portion utilizing the SSBCI funds will be 36% of the total project for a total of \$400,000. We will be in a shared 1<sup>st</sup> lien position on commercial real estate. The Big Sky EDC Loan Committee has reviewed and approved the request as presented.

Motion: **Matt Robertson** to approve the SSBCI loan request for Papa Murphy's (Fox Trail Enterprises LLC) in the amount of \$400,000 as presented to the Board.

Second: **Andy Gott**

Discussion: None

Motion: Carried

**Jerry Simonson** recuses himself from this vote

**Approval of Search Committee Members/Scope of Work** – Brandon reviewed the Search Committee scope of authority and noted that it was similar to the scope that was used during the last Executive Director search except for the elimination of verbiage that indicated that Stakeholders would be consulted when finalizing the Executive Director job description as this step has already been completed.

Motion: **Dr. Stefani Hicswa** to approve the Executive Director Search Committee members and the committee's scope of work/authority as presented to the Board.

Second: **Darin Uselman**

Discussion: None

Motion: Carried

**Nominating Committee Update** – There were two vacancies on the EDA Board, and six applicants were interviewed by the Nominating Committee. A recommendation was made to the Yellowstone County Commissioners to appoint Austin Stacey and Tom Rupsis to the EDA Board. The Commissioners discussed the recommendation on 12/10 and requested that the Nominating Committee reconsider Tom Rupsis's recommendation but agreed to forward the recommendation of Austin Stacey to the Board for approval. The Nominating Committee will meet to discuss the other candidates and prepare a new recommendation to present to the Commissioners. The EDC Board will have a vacancy as of January 1, 2026, due to Judi Powers' resignation from the Board effective 12/31/2025.

**Program Action Items/Reports**

**MT APEX** – Tereza Brownell introduced herself to the Board and shared that she has served as a Government Advisor the last 3 years. Reviewed BSED's subrecipient and financial partners and areas of coverage throughout the state of Montana. APEX provides businesses of all sizes guidance in navigating the complexities of the government contracting marketplace. Some of the services that APEX offers include help with registration, market research, proposal assistance, and post award support. APEX also ensures businesses are competitive and compliant. This year the MT APEX program has faced challenges with funding uncertainties, the government shutdown and leadership changes. Over 1,040 businesses were assisted by MT APEX in 2025, and they hosted over 40 events. Tereza shared Rock Solid Excavating Inc's success story. APEX started working with this client about a year ago and they did not have any current government contracts. They have since been awarded about \$250,000 in various government contracts and have diversified their portfolio. Tereza encourages the Board to reach out with any questions they may have about the APEX program.

**Community Development** – Dianne provided Brownfields program update, sharing that the funds from the assessment grant that was awarded in 2022 have been expended and that grant will be closed out. An additional Brownfields grant was applied for and granted in fall 2025. Met with two new projects within the last week that will likely get to utilize RLF for cleanup. Updates on the Coulson Park project were shared- parking lot updates with ADA access, addition of a shade structure, walkway and improvements made to artist's point, boat launch upgrade, new vault toilets, and accessible picnic tables and seating added. The initial phase of the pump track is in progress, and it is anticipated to be completed by early spring 2026. Grant was awarded through the City of Billings to add welcome signage and upgraded lighting as well. BSED's webcam is live in downtown. Laurel Urban Renewal Agency (LURA) has had recent traction with their projects which include filling in an irrigation ditch, curb and gutter repairs, and new street lighting. Future projects include railroad crossing repairs and addition of parking lots along main street.

**Business Development & Communications** – Marcell recapped the Annual Membership Gathering held earlier this week, annual reports are available. Economic Pulse for Q4 of 2025 is also available and provides an economic overview of 2025. Last Friday BSED helped host the Youth Market Day during the holiday stroll. The first Behind the Build for 2026 will be held on February 18<sup>th</sup> at Wood's Powr-Grip, an invite will be sent out soon. Marcell highlighted the success of the Rock 31 program under Keith's leadership and shared a video that was made to aid Rock 31-member recruitment. The Board noted that they missed the holiday gift guide that BSED did last year and hope this is something we can do again in the future.

**Adjourn**

Debbie Desjarlais adjourned the meeting at 8:57 A.M.

Next Meeting – January 8, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

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Bryan Wood, EDA Secretary/Treasurer

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Jennifer Weaver Kondracki, EDC Secretary/Treasurer



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# ATTACHMENT B

**MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
CONTRACT AMENDMENT # 21-51-070-26**

This Contract Amendment is entered into by and between Big Sky Economic Development Authority, Billings, Montana (Contractor), and the Montana Department of Commerce, Helena, Montana, (the Department) effective January 1, 2026.

The Contractor and the Department mutually agree to amend **Contract #21-51-070** executed on December 28, 2020, and as previously amended (the "Contract"), as follows:

**1. Section 2. AUTHORITY is hereby amended as follows:**

This contract is issued under the authority of Title 90, Chapter 1, Part 1, Montana Code Annotated and under authority of Title 18, Montana Code Annotated, and the Administrative Rules of Montana, Title 2, chapter 5.

The Host Agency will engage in activities as set forth in the List of Deliverables, attached hereto and specifically incorporated by this reference (Exhibit 1). The Host Agency shall also meet all responsibilities and obligations listed in the Host Agency and SBDC Business Advisor Duties, attached hereto and specifically incorporated by this reference (Exhibit 2).

Consistently and correctly enter client information, sessions, and impact into Neoserra as required but not limited to the following goals for 2026:

- 100 clients advised
- 25 rural clients
- 600 client hours
- 6 new business starts
- \$3,400,000 in capital funding obtained
- Record all transactions
- 30 long-term clients
- 1 success story

**2. Section 5. EFFECTIVE DATE AND TIME OF PERFORMANCE subsection (a) is hereby amended as follows:**

(a) This Contract shall take effect January 1, 2021, and will terminate on **December 31, 2026**, unless terminated earlier in accordance with the terms of this Contract.

**3. Section 6. BUDGET is hereby amended to add the following paragraph:**

For 2026, the Department has allocated \$48,000.00 in federal funding for Contractor reimbursement. The Department will provide up to \$28,000.00 in state funding reimbursement for match for 2026. The funding allocation is based on direct costs for one Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employees. The SBDC Host will provide the remaining 1:1 match, in which at least 50% must be cash match.

**4. Section 8. AMOUNT OF CONTRACT AND METHOD OF PAYMENT is hereby amended by adding the following paragraph:**

The Department will authorize the Host Agency to draw up to the allocated amount of \$76,000.00 against the funding reserved for it by the Department for 2026. In drawing against the reserved amount, the Contractor will follow the instructions supplied by the Department.

**5. All other provisions of the Contract remain in full force and effect.**

IN WITNESS OF THE TERMS SET OUT ABOVE, the parties hereto have caused this Contract Amendment to be executed.

**BIG SKY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:**

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Brandon Berger, Senior Director of Business Lending & Development      Date

**MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE:**

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Mandy Rambo, Deputy Director      Date

## Contract Information Sheet

Division staff are required to complete the items in blue print.

*Last Revised September 2024*

Contract Number:	21-51-070-26	Original Contract Amount:	178,787.48
Contractor's Name:	Big Sky Economic Development Authority	Amount of Prior Amendments:	860,261.52
Contractor Liaison:	Lorene Hintz	Current Amendment Amount:	76,000.00
Contractor's Liaison Email:	lorene@bigskyeda.org	Total Contract Value:	936,261.52
Approved to Form Name:		Funding Source:	Both
Approved to Form Email:		Program Number/Division:	51 - Business MT
Contractor (signee) Name:	Brandon Berger	Org Number:	511102 & 511104
Contractor's Email:	<a href="mailto:Brandon@bigskyeda.org">Brandon@bigskyeda.org</a>	Vendor Number:	208927
Contractor's Address:	201 N Broadway	Project Name (optional):	Billings SBDC
Contractor's Address 2:	Billings, MT 59101		
Attest Name:		Start Date:	1/1/2026
Attest Email:		End Date:	12/31/2026
Delegation:	Commerce	Absolute End Date:	12/31/2027
Procurement Method:	Sole Source		Purchasing Delegation Agreement
Contract Type:	Contract for Goods/Services		
Contract Usage:	Fixed		
Purpose of this contract/amendment:	Small Business Development Center Host		
Scope & duties of this contract:	SBDC Host is to provide no cost, confidential business consulting and low-cost training programs to small businesses and entrepreneurs		

Liaison:	Lori Gilliland	Program Manager:	Chad Moore
Liaison Email:	<a href="mailto:lgilliland@mt.gov">lgilliland@mt.gov</a>	Bureau Chief:	<a href="mailto:mackenzie.espeland@mt.gov">mackenzie.espeland@mt.gov</a>
Liaison Phone:	406-841-2716	Additional Email:	
Signatures:	Copies To:		
Division Administrator	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px;">Signed by:</span> <span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px; margin-right: 10px;">mackenzie espeland</span> <span>10/27/2025</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-top: 5px;"> <span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px;">Signed by:</span> <span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px; margin-right: 10px;">Kassie Clement</span> <span>10/27/2025</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-top: 5px;"> <span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px;">Signed by:</span> <span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px; margin-right: 10px;">Amy Barnes</span> <span>10/27/2025</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-top: 5px;"> <span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px;">Signed by:</span> <span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px; margin-right: 10px;">Mandy Rambo</span> <span>10/27/2025</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-top: 5px;"> <span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px;">Signed by:</span> <span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px; margin-right: 10px;">Amy Sassano</span> <span>10/27/2025</span> </div>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Fiscal Review		Director (> \$200K)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal Counsel		Deputy Director (<\$25K)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deputy Director		Perceptive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
OBPP			
Information Technology			
SITSD			