

CDC of El Campo & Wharton EDC Joint Workshop Summary

June 21, 2021 at 12:00pm

During the June 21, 2021 Special Joint Workshop of the Wharton Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), and the City Development Corporation of El Campo (CDC of El Campo) the following items were discussed.

Presentation by Triple Oak Power. Mr. Jesse Gronner, Chief Executive Office, of Triple Oak Power provided a power point presentation on their wind energy development and gave a time line for the beginning to the completion of the project. Mr. Gonner said that the project would bring a significant long-term investment to Wharton County. He stated that the project would supplement traditional energy sources currently used and would co-exist with ongoing agricultural activities. Mr. Gonner said that lease payments to landowners, the creation of full-time wind technicians and management positions would boost local economic development at a very critical time, hundreds of workers would be hired and hundreds of thousands of dollars would be spent to boost local economy.

Mr. Groner said the project, would have between thirty to fifty-five turbines, encompass approximately 12,000 acres of privately owned land, but would utilize only one to two percent of the tract and serve the electrical needs of approximately 50,000 homes annually. Mr. Grooner fielded several questions and was thanked for his presentation. No action was taken on the item.

Presentation by Connected Nation. Ms. Pam Waggoner, Broad Band Solutions Manager, of Connected Nation addressed the Board and provided a presentation on the Wharton County draft broadband plan. She explained how technology plays a pivotal role in how businesses operate, institutions provide services and where consumers choose to work live and play. She went on to explain that the success of a community has become dependent on how broadly and deeply a community adopts technology resources, which include access to reliable, high-speed networks. Digital literacy of residents is also important for broadband expansion.

Ms. Waggoner said that the Connected Nation Texas Connected Program partnered with the Wharton County Broadband Team to conduct a study designed to determine the availability of broadband infrastructure: how its residents are adopting and using broadband services: and what steps would have the greatest impact toward improving broadband access, adoption, and use across every sector locally. She gave a brief summary of the study, which provided the socio-demographics of Wharton County, the average available internet and households internet speeds, and efficiency. She explained that a digital ready community has an active technology action plan and is committed to ensuring all residents have access to equitable high-speed internet and the skills to meaningfully engage with businesses, government and community anchor institutions. A digital ready community has the infrastructure and the digital skills necessary to attract businesses and new jobs for its residents.

Ms. Waggoner answered several questions pertaining to the project and said that Wharton County should proceed in becoming a digital ready community in the next six months by appointing a legion to lead community engagement efforts around broadband with local stakeholders and providing classes teaching digital skills to residents and businesses and provide Wi-Fi in public places. Those present thanked Ms. Waggoner for her presentation she commented that she would be available for any additional questions. No action was taken.

With no further business to discuss, WEDC President Marshal thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the Joint Meeting at 1:07 P.M. The sign-in sheet is attached to reflect attendance.