

MINUTES

ALBION CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Monday, July 27th, 2026

ALBION CITY HALL – COUNCIL CHAMBERS; 5:30 P.M.

Chairperson Ed Knott called the meeting to order at 5:20pm. Roll was taken, members present were: Chairperson Knott, Shelley Lueken, Doug Young, Amy Zaruba, Katie Score, and Jay Wolf. Stacy Gragert was absent. Secretary Shelby Kelley and City Administrator Andrew Devine were also present. All proceedings hereafter shown were taken while the convened meeting was open to the attendance of the public. The meeting was recorded using an audio recording device and such recording is available for inspection at the office of the City Clerk.

Approve minutes of the January 27, 2026 Meeting

The minutes of the January 27, 2026 meeting were reviewed. Wolf **moved to approve the minutes as read**, seconded by Zaruba. **Vote:** (Yes) Wolf, Zaruba, Score, Knott, Young, Lueken (No) None (Absent) Gragert

REVIEW REPORT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Director Kelley presented an update on current economic development activities, summarized below.

Clark Park

- The project timeline calls for completion by end of September 2026, the deadline to submit reimbursement requests under the state grant. Remaining work — including playground equipment installation, poured rubber surfacing, and painted acrylic court surfacing — will take place in August.
- Grant funding from the Morris Donor Advised Fund (Belgrade) will cover professional court painting that was not originally budgeted under the state grant.
- All state grant expenses are expected to be paid out by September 1; the state requires substantial completion by September 30.
- The trail expansion to 11th Street has been paused at the 60% design stage due to cost; the Board is considering an alternate route (Prairie to 9th Street to 8th Street) to avoid difficult terrain and a retaining wall on 11th Street.
- A grant from Plant Nebraska will fund landscaping (circles within the figure-8 path) to add texture and discourage cutting through the park; sprinkler installation on the west side will follow completion of playground equipment installation.
- The court will include two pickleball courts (half-court) in addition to basketball, using the same contractor that installed the tennis courts, given high demand for pickleball.

South Park Subdivision

- Two homes remain unsold; the Board approved funding for yards and sprinkler installation to help incentivize sale. Installation is underway (spraying completed; Alex Johnson to install yards).
- A large pile of dirt on the west end of the property is scheduled for removal.

9th Street Lots / Housing Update

- AEDC has closed on the sale of the 9th Street lots (former church lot) to the developer.
- Eight new housing units were constructed in the last 12 months and filled quickly, reducing project risk. The developer plans two additional quadplex apartment buildings and two duplexes on the site.
- Duplexes: approximately 1,300 sq. ft., two bedroom/one bath, one-car garage, rental target around \$1,600/month.
- Apartments: approximately 900 sq. ft., two bedroom/one bath, off-street parking, rental target around \$1,100/month.
- Knott noted the new units are largely filling housing needs for new hires in town (hospital, schools, Valero) rather than relocations from existing housing, and expressed hope the development will encourage upkeep of other rental properties.

Downtown & Facade Program

- Four facade improvement projects are currently underway or recently completed downtown, including the brewery, The Nest, the building housing Cola/3 C's, and Curtis Luettel's building.
- The Highway 14 awning project (black awning, replacing shingles) is expected to be installed within a few weeks, funded through the facade program.
- The Nest is installing windows and relocating the dance studio to the second story of its building, with office space planned for the rear; the timeline has been affected by a health-related delay.
- With housing needs being addressed by private development, AEDC intends to shift more focus back toward downtown and business support through the facade program.

Bike Shop Lot Community Space

- AEDC voted to move forward with plans to convert the Bike Shop Lot into a community gathering space. Director Kelley has met with JEO Consulting, which will provide a quote for a 30% concept/design plan to support grant applications and Board budget discussions.
- Proposed elements include a permanent stage, open turf/seating area, restrooms, a small playground, and a fenced perimeter near the railroad tracks.
- The intent is to complement — not replace — the existing summer concert series venue, which is viewed as outgrowing its current space. A lean-to addition off the restroom building was discussed as a potential beer garden area.
- The existing venue would remain available for markets and smaller events.
- Once designed and grant-funded, AEDC's plan is to transfer the completed space to the City, at which point it would become a Parks and Recreation maintenance responsibility.

- The current meat vending machine agreement at the site operates on a 30–60 day notice; the vendor has experienced operational difficulties (equipment issues exacerbated by heat) and AEDC will need to coordinate on relocation or continued use of the site.
- The Board discussed access needs for the adjacent loading dock and confirmed that space must remain open; JEO and the City have been made aware of this constraint.
- Kelley will research comparable downtown community spaces in other Nebraska communities for reference.

Creative District Designation

- Director Kelley's goal is to pursue Creative District designation for Albion, which would expand access to grant funding for murals and downtown building improvements and support downtown as a destination.
- Albion's existing assets — the summer concert series, mini park, and murals — are expected to strengthen the application relative to communities starting from scratch.

National Night Out

- AEDC will host National Night Out on Tuesday, August 4th at Fuller Park, open to all first responders, with activities for children and food provided by AEDC.

Downtown Revitalization Grant, Phase 2

- Kelley plans to apply for Phase 2 of the Downtown Revitalization Grant (Phase 1 previously funded facade improvements). Phase 2 could support sidewalk improvements, building renovations, and streetlighting.
- Kelley noted the Bike Shop Lot, Creative District designation, and Downtown Revitalization Phase 2 initiatives are complementary and strengthen one another when presented together in grant applications, along with a longer-term downtown project still in early conceptual stages.

REVIEW ALBION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TREASURER'S REPORT

Kelley presented the Treasurer's report on behalf of the AEDC Treasurer.

- Funds were moved from the Rural Workforce Housing Fund this week to reimburse AEDC for its purchase of the church lot and adjacent lot (used for the 9th Street housing development); those funds will be used to cover the cost of yards and sprinklers at South Park Subdivision.
- City Sales Tax Fund balance: \$155,803, held in City Treasury pending release by the City Council.
- Rural Workforce Housing Grant funds: approximately \$352,000, plus a separate matching fund of approximately \$341,000, plus approximately \$56,000 in interest earned — for available housing program funds of roughly \$700,000 plus \$100,000, plus accrued interest.
- Reporting requirements on the Rural Workforce Housing grant funds conclude in 2026–27 (the final reporting year), after which usage restrictions will be lifted.
- Proceeds from the eventual sale of the two remaining South Park Subdivision homes (approximately \$600,000+) will also be returned to the Rural Workforce Housing Fund.

- The Board discussed that AEDC does not intend to continue acting as a residential developer going forward, and discussed potential future uses of available housing funds, including low-interest loans to private developers.
- Additional reserved funds discussed: Housing Program Director fund (covers training/conference expenses); Facade Improvement Grant fund (\$3,878 available for downtown business facade applications); and a Nebraska Community Foundation grant previously used for venue umbrella purchases.

Young **moved to approve the treasurer's report**, seconded by Wolf. **Vote:** (Yes) Zaruba, Score, Knott, Young, Wolf, Lueken (No) None (Absent) Gragert

REVIEW AEDC SALES TAX RELEASE REQUESTS TO RELEASE SALES TAX FUNDS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$15,000 FOR SUPPORT IMPROVEMENTS AT BEN BOWMAN ROADSIDE PARK/KIWANIS PARK.

Director Kelley presented a proposal to use City Sales Tax funds for improvements to the Ben Bowman roadside park, including a new entrance sign (quoted through Love Signs), removal of existing posts and installation of vinyl fencing (Nelson Brothers), and tree/brush clearing including removal of one cottonwood tree (Waldinger Tree Service).

The Board discussed current maintenance of the property (mowed and maintained by Kurt Kreitz under an AEDC-owned parcel), the history of the site as a former Kiwanis-maintained roadside park, and the appropriateness of the requested expenditure relative to other AEDC priorities. Board members expressed mixed views on the value of the investment but noted the purpose of the request was to seek Committee input and approval for use of sales tax funds, as AEDC had already approved moving forward with the project.

A motion was made by Wolf, seconded by Young to approve the request to release \$15,000 in City Sales Tax funds for the Ben Bowman roadside park improvements as presented. **Vote:** (Yes) Zaruba, Score, Knott, Young, Wolf, Lueken (No) None (Absent) Gragert

The request will be forwarded to the City Council for final approval.

DISCUSS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY OF ALBION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN, AND/OR FUTURE ACTIVITIES.

Knott asked for discussion. No further discussion.

Adjourned at 6:08pm