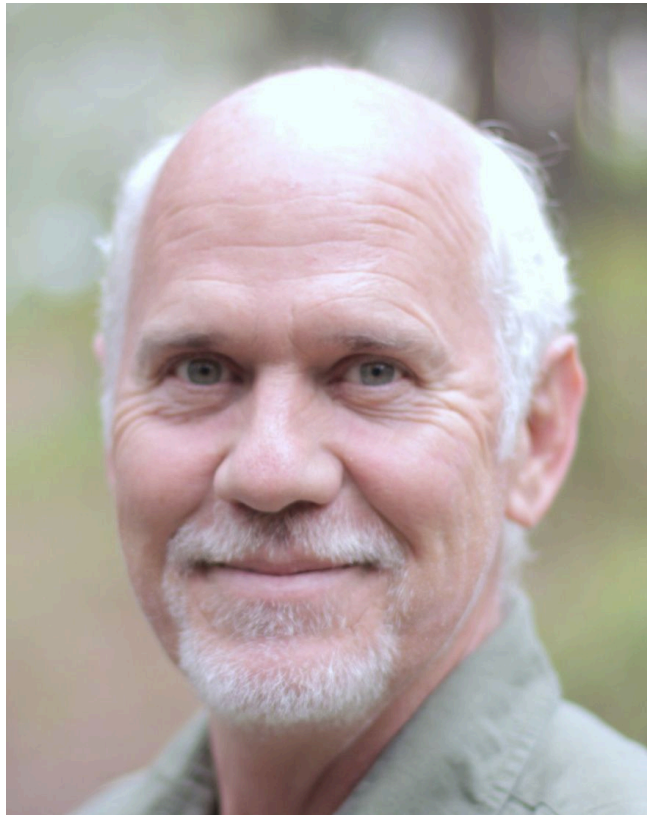


---

## In My View: Jumpstart Economic Development

May 14, 2023



The Tri-Agency Economic Development Authority Board of Directors held their monthly meeting on April 27. At this meeting they approved a work plan and budget to jumpstart regional economic development activities.

This agency is getting more organized. It was easy to find the meeting agenda on the county website. Despite this notification, I was the only member of the public present.

Five out of six Board Members attended including, Harbor District Commissioners Wes White and Brian Stone, County Supervisors Dean Wilson and Chris Howard, and City Councilman Blake Inscore.

For any business to be conducted they must have four board members present with at least one from each member agency. Thankfully, Blake Inscore attended via zoom or there would not have been a quorum.

This was the most productive Tri-Agency meeting that I have attended. Prior meetings have focused on cleaning up past mistakes and paying off old debts. Now that these debts are paid, Tri-Agency is poised to focus on the future.

## Implement Plans

This forward progress got a nudge at the February meeting when incoming Tri-Agency Chair White appointed an ad hoc committee to identify projects that Tri-Agency could work on. This action enabled progress to be made in between the monthly meetings.

There were two main action items on this agenda, “Discuss and take possible action on the Tri-Agency Work Plan” and “Discuss and take possible action on the proposed budget.” Supporting documents were provided to inform the public and to help guide the discussion of the Board.

Supervisor Howard introduced a Tri-Agency Work Plan that he prepared with the assistance of Alec Dompke who is a rural economic development advisor with UC Davis Cooperative Extension. This led to a very fruitful discussion. The Tri Agency Board approved the draft work plan and members pledged to bring this plan to their respective agencies for review.

Each agency’s economic development plan was incorporated by reference into the Tri-Agency work plan, including the Harbor District 10 Year Strategic Plan, the Del Norte County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategic (CEDS) Plan and the Crescent City Economic Development Strategic Action Plan (EDSAP).

These plans have already been vetted through a public process and include projects for future actions. Ideally the Tri Agency will focus on the projects that will benefit from regional collaboration.

## Staffing Priorities

This work plan builds on the planning that was done to prepare a grant proposal to the Community Economic Resiliency Fund (CERF) and identifies staffing as priority #1.

Tri-agency will hire an Economic Development Director to help implement the work plan and manage day-to-day activities. “A full-time staffer to conduct economic development research and community outreach will be critical to success.”

Tri-Agency also proposes to hire a grant writer. “As a JPA with the City, Harbor and County, Tri-Agency can apply for a wide array of grants which makes it an obviously centralized point to route applications through. Grant writing is a complicated process and the greatest odds for success tend to come from professional grant writers.”

The work plan also suggests that “Tri-Agency should hire a research assistant to aid the above positions specifically on wind energy.”

Some or all these positions may be funded through the CERF grant if it is approved. Notification of this grant award is expected soon. If the grant is not approved, Tri-Agency has proposed a budget that will provide funding to hire staff.

## Wind Energy

After staffing, priority #2 is wind energy. “Wind energy contributes to a sustainable economic base because of its long timescale and possibility for long term Operations and Maintenance (O&M) jobs and ongoing payments for land leases or landing fees.”

The Board members spoke about a scenario where Del Norte County could lock into lower electricity prices through negotiated wind power deals. New businesses could be drawn here for the low cost of energy.

Harbor Commissioners Stone and White have made a significant effort to learn more about the upcoming processes for offshore wind energy development. They have both attended meetings and conferences with the government agencies and businesses that are involved with wind power development.

They have traveled at their own expense to ensure that Del Norte County is at the table when decisions are made. As a result of their advocacy, Del Norte County is being considered as a viable location for wind power.

Though it may be a few years before offshore wind is built here, now is the time to pay attention. As a regional agency, Tri-Agency is a reasonable choice to take the lead on behalf of our community.

What’s Next?

Tri-Agency Board members also talked about the next steps to take. It was suggested that the work plan should have more measurable objectives. There was discussion about updating the joint powers agreement and possibly changing the name of the agency. It was agreed to first hire a director, who can help to develop more targeted work plan objectives and guide organizational restructuring.

The board members committed to present the draft work plan and budget to their respective agencies. This includes a request for contributions from the City, County and Harbor to provide sufficient startup funding.

Hopefully this process will go more smoothly than when they had to ask member agencies for a bailout to pay off past debts. It was hard for anyone to feel good about that, but it got Tri-Agency out of the hole.

This time it is easier to pitch these member contributions as an investment in the economy of our community. It is important to remember and not repeat past mistakes, but we should give this current Board a chance to succeed. Together we can make a commitment to proceed with the optimism that this effort will pay off.

Kevin Hendrick is a 30-year resident of Del Norte County. [kevinjameshendrick@gmail.com](mailto:kevinjameshendrick@gmail.com)