

*Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the Economic Development Committee at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.*

DeKalb County Government  
Sycamore, Illinois

**Economic Development Committee Minutes  
August 4, 2015**

The DeKalb County Economic Development Committee met on Tuesday, August 4, 2015 at 7:00 p.m., in the Administrative Building's Conference Room East. Chairman Brown called the meeting to order. Those Members present were Ms. Leifheit, Mr. Pietrowski, Ms. Polanco, Mr. Porterfield, and Mr. Whelan. All six Members were present.

Others present were Gary Hanson, Christine Johnson, Pete Stefan, Nathan Schwartz, Misty Haji-Sheikh, Claudia Hicks and other Village of Shabbona representatives, Dennis Sands, Dan Templin, Alex Nerad and other Preservation of the Egyptian Theatre, Inc. (PET) representatives, and Prairie Band Potawatomi Tribe representatives.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**It was moved by Mr. Whelan, seconded by Mr. Pietrowski, and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the June 6, 2015 meeting.**

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Chairman Brown announced that prior to a motion, he would like to strike items #9: Funding Request for Hosting IHSA Football Championships and #10: Resolution Supporting the Arts Council from the agenda.

**A motion was made by Ms. Polanco, seconded by Ms. Leifheit and it was carried unanimously to approve the agenda as amended.**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no members of the public who addressed the Committee.

Chairman Brown outlined two recent articles from Debbie Armstrong and Paul Borek that were published in the DeKalb County Chronicle recently relating to tourism and industry within the County.

**FUNDING REQUEST FOR THE EGYPTIAN THEATRE**

Executive Director of the Egyptian Theatre, Mr. Alex Nerad, joined the Committee on behalf of the Egyptian Theatre and the Preservation of the Egyptian Theatre, Inc. (PET) to make a funding request. He first provided the Committee with an update of the theatre's past year. Mr. Nerad also detailed the theatre's historic attributes, staffing, operations, and the community impact the Egyptian Theatre provides to not only the City of DeKalb, but all of DeKalb County.

Mr. Nerad spent some additional time outlining the theatre's fund raising efforts. Their current budget is comprised of roughly 90% earned income (rentals, ticket sales, concessions, etc.) and 10% contributed income (donations, grants, memberships, etc.). He added that their goal is to continue moving towards a balance of 60% earned income and 40% contributed; but also growing the total amount at the same time.

The bulk of the theater's season runs from September to April with limited events in May and June and no events through the summer months. This is because the theatre does not have air conditioning and has not since it opened in 1929. Mr. Nerad noted that this past season the theatre was open, their numbers were up compared to the previous season. He provided a handout to the Committee which is attached to these minutes with the specifics of his updates.

Mr. Nerad also asked the Committee to bring their attention to a draft agreement they were provided with regarding Operational Funding for the Egyptian Theatre. Ms. Jennifer Diedrich, City of DeKalb's Economic Development Coordinator also addressed the Committee regarding the City's support to the Egyptian Theater through a variety of different mechanisms, one being through TIF Funding. The City of DeKalb has provided the theater with over \$2.5 million within the past 25 years for capital funding. They have also provided operational support on and off over the past several years.

Ms. Diedrich continued that the City of DeKalb has allocated, through their FY 2016 budget, general fund money for the proposed intergovernmental agreement for operations at the theatre. The rest of the funding provided is TIF funding and that can only be used for capital improvements to the property, money for a feasibility study, and the third item is design and engineering money for updates to the architectural documents for the air conditioning.

The proposed Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) is between PET, the City of DeKalb, and the County and identifies funding amounts and allowable uses for that funding. The City of DeKalb and the County of DeKalb would be contributing \$25,000 each for operating funds for the Egyptian Theatre for the period of September 15, 2015 through September 14, 2016.

The City of DeKalb has approved the allocation of \$25,000 within their budget contingent on the County also approving a \$25,000 allocation amount.

Mr. Whelan asked if this is going to be a one-time funding request. Mr. Nerad shared that the IGA is a one year agreement and he didn't think at this point it was prudent to go beyond that one year. The results of the anticipated feasibility study will be able to tell them what the best model is moving forward for the Egyptian Theatre.

Mr. Whelan also questioned if there are any estimates on how much it will cost to install air conditioning within the theater. Mr. Nerad noted that they have been quoting a rough estimate of \$3 million.

Ms. Polanco noted that looking at the theater's 990, she noticed that their grants have dropped. She asked if grant opportunities have declined or what has changed in the environment for them

to start requesting funds from the City and County. Mr. Nerad explained that operational support grants for the arts are extremely difficult to find and in terms of capital improvements, they have had some successes throughout the years, but have found many State and Federal Grants have dried up.

Ms. Leifheit noted that she is a past PET Board Member and she has had a lot of care about keeping the theatre going. She also expressed that she wishes the theatre well, but she did not think it was appropriate for the County Board to be giving taxpayer money to the Egyptian Theatre to stay viable. She added that giving money to the theatre could open the door for other area cultural facilities within the entire County to follow suit.

Chairman Brown expressed his support to this proposal and reminded that the \$25,000 request would be coming from the County's Opportunity Fund. He added that the Opportunity Fund was established provide a one-time funding contribution to jump-start opportunities that the Board thought could have an economic return within the County. He noted that he feels that this request is a good investment and an appropriate use of Opportunity Fund monies.

The Committee continued to provide their opinions regarding the Egyptian Theatre and questions of what the feasibility study may provide. There continued to be additional questions of whether this was a one-time only contribution or whether it is fair for the County to be involved with this expenditure.

Mr. Whelan noted that he is in favor of supporting the theatre but he also has to look at this issue from a County Board Members standpoint and he feels that the entire County Board should be able to weigh-in on this issue.

Mr. Pietrowski stated that due to being the Vice-President of the Egyptian Theatre Board of Directors, he will not be engaging in any discussions on this issue nor will he be voting on any motions pertaining to this request.

**Mr. Whelan made a motion to forward a resolution supporting the proposed request and IGA to the full County Board recommending its approval. Mr. Porterfield seconded the motion and a roll call was taken. The motion carried with four yeas, one nay from Ms. Leifheit, and one abstention from Mr. Pietrowski.**

## **OVERVIEW OF 2008 AGREEMENT WITH THE PRAIRIE BAND POTAWATOMI NATION**

Mr. Hanson shortly reviewed the 25 page Intergovernmental Agreement between DeKalb County and the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation that the County Board approved on February 20, 2008. This IGA is currently in place and will remain in place. Mr. Hanson also provided a map of the displayed the Village of Shabbona, Illinois and the 128 acres along with the one-acre parcel of land that is owned by the Priarie Band Potawatomi Nation. The entire IGA and map can be found on the County's website at: [http://dekalbcounty.org/PBPN/pbpn\\_index.html](http://dekalbcounty.org/PBPN/pbpn_index.html).

## **RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE PRAIRIE BANK POTAWATOMI NATION'S "LAND IN TRUST" REQUEST**

The Tribe's Attorney, Jennifer Hughes, introduced multiple supporters and Council Members that were present to support the tribe, as well as briefly outline all of the additional agreements the tribe has in place with various entities. She also stressed that the Prairie Band strive to be good neighbors and are not looking to "take" any land within the Village of Shabbona area.

Liana Onnen, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation's Chairwoman, joined the Committee to further explain their request and answer any questions Members may have regarding it. She very briefly reviewed a previous presentation that she gave to the Committee and reiterated that the tribe is actively pursuing a Class II Gaming Facility. The big piece in that process is the land in trust process. She clarified that the land trust was not a requirement in the tribe's efforts to move forward, but having it would help mitigate any issues that might arise moving forward.

Chairwoman Onnen also reiterated that the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation is nationally recognized as a sovereign entity, and it doesn't pay real estate tax on the land. But she pointed out that through the agreement between the tribe and the County, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation has paid \$127,000 in the past six or so years in lieu of tax money.

She also briefed the Committee on how this gaming facility can be an economic engine and job creator in this community. Tribal estimates predict a gaming facility would create 400 new jobs, with a \$17 million annual payroll. There would be hundreds of construction jobs, and tourism would catapult to some 930,000 visitors each year, according to tribe leaders. They anticipate an infusion of \$12 million of bought goods into the local economy. Also per the intergovernmental agreement between the county and tribe, the county would receive the greater of \$800,000 or 2.5 percent of the gaming facilities net annual profits, a one-time payment of \$15,000 and then \$2,500 annual payment to the County Health Department, and the tribe would be required to make annual contributions to area nonprofit organizations.

**Mr. Pietrowski made a motion to forward a resolution of support to the full County Board recommending its approval. Ms. Leifheit seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.**

## **FUNDING REQUEST FOR COUNTY-WIDE ECONOMIC SUMMIT**

Mr. Dan Templin, Executive Director of the DeKalb County Community Foundation, reviewed with the County Board Chairman proposed a County-wide Economic Summit to help foster a unified approach for economic development within and throughout the various communities of the County. The DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation was asked to partner with the County in bringing such an Economic Summit to fruition.

Proposals were reviewed for facilitating the Summit and the methodology and time-line proposed by the Center for Government Studies at Northern Illinois University was determined to be the desired approach within the monies available as NIU also agreed to pay 50% of the cost of the Economic Summit.

Mr. Templin and the DeKalb County Community Foundation was also approached to be a partner in this endeavor as their current efforts to foster economic planning in communities was noted as an appropriate tie-in to this county-wide Economic Summit, and agreed to further support this effort with a financial contribution of 1/3 of the remaining 50% overall cost, and

Mr. Hanson further reviewed the DeKalb County Economic Development Vision and Strategic Framework prepared by Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies. It was determined that with NIU, DCEDC, and DCCF all on board, the County is being requested to contribute \$8,362 from the County's Opportunity Fund, plus ancillary expenses to for the purpose of funding a County-wide Economic Summit.

The Committee and remaining audience discussed community listening sessions as well as expressed that publicity and transparency is key to making this Economic Summit more successful.

**It was moved by Mr. Porterfield, seconded by Ms. Polanco and it was moved unanimously by voice vote to forward a resolution to the full County Board recommending this funding request's approval.**

#### **UPDATE ON PROPOSED NW ILLINOIS PLANNING COMMISSION**

Mr. Hanson shared that last Thursday he attended a meeting at Rockford Airport in Rockford, Illinois. The meeting included seven northern Illinois counties that were in talks over forming a regional planning partnership aimed at increasing economic development and the quality of life in the area.

The counties interested in forming the planning commission include Winnebago, Boone, Stephenson, Ogle, Lee, DeKalb and McHenry Counties. Mr. Hanson noted that local leaders say a planning alliance would help make the region more globally competitive for jobs and development projects.

The idea for the seven-county planning alliance was prompted by the desire for regional leaders to secure the 275-mile Great Lakes Basin railroad project being proposed by private investors. The proposed rail line would bypass Chicago, running from Wisconsin through Illinois to Indiana.

Mr. Hanson added that the structure isn't defined by any means yet but he anticipates in the future there will be some type of Board formed made up of key representatives from each of the counties. Floating questions right now are what the by-laws would look like and what would the costs be. Mr. Hanson added that this is just an informational item but to be on the lookout for a possible support resolution and IGA in the upcoming fall months.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**It was moved by Mr. Whelan, seconded by Ms. Polanco and it was carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.**

Respectfully submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman Robert Brown

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tasha Stogschill, Recording Secretary

**Egyptian Theatre Presentation  
August 4, 2015**

**Speaker: Alex Nerad – Egyptian Theatre Executive Director**

Preservation of the Egyptian Theatre, Inc. (P.E.T.) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization who owns and operates the Egyptian Theatre. P.E.T. was formed in 1978.

**Mission Statement:** To share and protect the historical integrity of the theatre as a regional arts center for entertainment and community involvement.

**Vision Statement:** The historic Egyptian Theatre is recognized as a center for the arts and entertainment in the region, enriching the community culturally and economically. The Theatre is a beloved gathering place and source of pride, providing programming and excitement now and for future generations.

**Egyptian Theatre Board of Directors**

President – Kathy Love (Spanish Teacher – Sandwich High School)  
Vice-President – Mark Pietrowski (Associate Director of College of Liberal Arts & Sciences External Programming – NIU)  
Treasurer – Kay Riley (Vice President – Hunt Companies)  
Secretary – Brian Scholle (Agent – State Farm Insurance)  
Jeff Keppler (Architect – Sharp Architects, Inc.)  
Jason Mangum (Executive Director – DeKalb Park District)  
Jim Mizgalski (President & Owner – Provident Direct, Inc.)  
Nancy Proesel  
Tim Rice (Assistant Athletics Director, Huskie Athletic Fund – NIU)  
Dan Schewe (Retired – Chapman Schewe Benefits Consulting)  
Denise Weinmann (Commercial Real Estate Broker – RVG Commercial)

**Staff**

Executive Director – Alex Nerad (Full Time)  
Custodian – Patrick Mlady (Full Time)  
Box Office Manager – Nora Reeves (Part Time)

**Facts and Figures for 2014-2015 Season (September 2014 – May 2015)**

135 events  
31 different groups and organizations utilized the Theatre  
30,000+ patrons attended events  
Tickets purchased by patrons from 28 different states and 32 different counties in Illinois  
Roughly 250 volunteers contributed over 5,000 hours of service  
Staff – 2 full time and 1 part time  
Budget - \$300,000

**We would like to thank all the businesses and community organizations who hosted an event at the Egyptian Theatre in the past year:**

Beth Fowler Dance Company (Genoa)  
Beth Fowler School of Dance (Genoa)  
Children's Community Theatre  
Christ Community Church  
Corn Fest  
Daily Chronicle  
DeKalb Chamber of Commerce  
DeKalb Dance Dimensions  
DeKalb Evening Lions Club  
DeKalb Municipal Band  
DeKalb Public Library  
DeKalb School District  
Downtown DeKalb  
FitWorkz  
Hillcrest Covenant Church  
Hope Haven  
Illinois State Stepping League  
Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra  
Illinois Lincoln Highway Association  
Live Nation  
Miss Fox Valley Scholarships Organization  
NIU Art Museum  
NIU Athletics  
NIU School of Nursing  
NIU School of Theatre & Dance  
NIU Time Arts  
North American Association of Flying Effects Directors (Cortland)  
ProSound Productions  
Safe Passage  
Sycamore/Rochelle Performing Arts Academy  
Thrivent Financial

**Fundraising Efforts**

The summer of 2014 we had an anonymous donor contribute \$25,000 for a matching campaign that ran through the summer months. We raised \$14,965 which was then matched.

May 2014 we participated in the inaugural Give Local DeKalb County day where \$1,700 was donated online to the Theatre.

May 2015 we once again participated in the Give Local DeKalb County day and received \$2,133 in donations.



Spring 2015 we had a private donor contribute \$6,500 to allow us to install a P.O.S. (point-of-sale) system in our concession stand which enables us to start accepting credit cards and better tracking sales & inventory.

This past season nearly \$6,000 has been donated to the Theatre through our membership program "Friends of the Egyptian Theatre".

Total contributions for current fiscal year equals just over \$25,000.

Our board of directors is aggressively involved with strategic planning for fundraising. We are working to build on recent successes and continue to grow the annual donations to support the Theatre.

Currently the Theatre budget is comprised of roughly 90% earned income (rentals, ticket sales, concessions, etc.) and 10% contributed income (donations, grants, memberships, etc.). Our goal is to continue moving towards a balance of 60% earned income and 40% contributed; but also growing the total amount at the same time.

For the 2014-2015 season the Theatre has received over \$100,000 in in-kind services from local businesses.

The Egyptian Theatre Board of Directors has a 100% level of giving among the board members.

#### Large Notable Recent Contributions

2012 – Over \$200,000 was raised for the seating campaign to replace the historic seats.

2012 - \$75,000 private donation to renovate the dressing rooms.

2014 – A planned gift estimated at \$50,000 was dedicated to the Theatre.

2014 – A private donation of \$25,000 for a matching gift campaign.

**Agreement Regarding  
Operational Funding for the Egyptian Theatre**

This Agreement is entered into as of the date set forth below, by and between the County of DeKalb (“the County”), the City of DeKalb (“the City”), and the Preservation of the Egyptian Theatre, Inc. (“PET”), with the County and City referred to collectively as “Funders” and with the County, City and PET referred to collectively as “the Parties.”

The Parties agree and acknowledge that at 132 N. Second Street, DeKalb, Illinois, there exists a certain facility commonly referred to as the Egyptian Theatre (“Theatre”), which facility is owned and operated by PET. The Parties further agree that the Theatre has certain operational funding deficiencies, which Funders propose to assist with for the period from September 15, 2015-September 14, 2016 (“the Term”).

The Funders agree and acknowledge that by approving this Agreement, they find that the Theatre provides a substantial public benefit to the communities that they respectively serve, and helps to support and promote the public health, welfare, safety and morals.

The Funders also agree and acknowledge that pursuant to applicable laws including but not limited to the Constitution of the State of Illinois, the Illinois Counties Code, the Illinois Municipal Code, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, and the respective home rule authority of each of the Funders, they have the respective authority to undertake the obligations of this Agreement, and have budgeted and appropriated sums of money to cover the obligations outlined herein.

NOW THEREFORE, be it agreed by the Parties as follows:

1) Funding to be Provided: The County and the City shall each provide up to \$25,000.00 in funding (for a total of \$50,000.00 in funding), for the purpose of supporting the operations of the Theatre as described below, with such funding being provided to PET on a periodic basis.

2) Purpose for Funding: The funding provided by Funders hereunder may only be used by PET for the purpose of covering operational expenses of the Theatre, and only to cover the following expenses:

- A) PET employee salaries and benefits;
- B) Utility costs and similar non-capital operating expenses for the Theatre;
- C) ...
- D) ...
- E) Other expenses as may be approved by the County Administrator and City Manager (or their respective designees) from time to time.

- 3) Mechanism for Funding: The funding contemplated hereunder shall be payable in two installments, in equal amounts of \$25,000.00 each. The first payment shall be made within a reasonable time after the PET submits an invoice to the City and the County, which invoice shall specify with reasonable clarity the purposes for which the funding is to be utilized. The second installment shall be payable within a reasonable time after the PET submits a second invoice to the City and the County, which invoice shall specify with reasonable clarity the purposes for which the funding is utilized. The second installment shall occur not sooner than four months after the first installment is paid.
- 4) Reporting of Funding Utilization: By not later than June 1, 2016, PET shall provide the Funders with a detailed report itemizing the purposes for which all funding has been utilized, or the purposes for which funding has been budgeted (if not previously spent). This report shall include invoices, receipts, and detailed calculations of the individual purpose for which funding has been utilized, in form and content acceptable to the County Administrator and City Manager or their designees.
- 5) Term of Agreement: This Agreement shall have a term from September 15, 2015 through September 14, 2016 as outlined above; all funding provided hereunder shall be utilized and accounted for during said term, or shall be subject to being forfeit and refunded back to the Funders. The County Administrator and City Manager or their designees are authorized waive strict compliance with this requirement, in their sole and absolute discretion. The Funders shall have no obligation of continuing this funding into successive years.
- 6) Amendment, Extension: Any amendment or extension of this Agreement shall be effective only if in writing, signed and approved by the Parties.
- 7) Nature of Relationship: Notwithstanding the purposes for which funding may be utilized by PET, this Agreement shall not create any agency or employment relationship between the Funders and PET or any of PET's employees. The Funders' responsibility under this Agreement shall be strictly limited to providing funding to PET, for use by PET in accordance with the terms of this Agreement. PET shall not be deemed to be an agent or representative of the Funders, and shall not have any authority to act or speak on behalf of the Funders.
- 8) Compliance with Laws: PET shall comply with all laws applicable to the use of public funding, to the fullest extent of the law. PET shall not utilize any funding contemplated herein for any purpose which would constitute Work for purposes of the Prevailing Wage Act or which would require the payment of Prevailing Wages, except in strict compliance with said Act. It is not contemplated that the funding provided hereunder

would be utilized for any purpose which would invoke the obligation to ascertain and pay Prevailing Wages, as the funding provided herein shall be utilized strictly for operational (i.e. non-capital) expenses. PET expressly covenants that it shall not discriminate against any person or organization on the basis of any legally recognized protected classification, including but not limited to race, gender, religion, ethnic or cultural background, sexual preference, or other legally recognized, protected classification, in the provision of its services or use of funding provided hereunder.

9) Defense and Indemnification: PET shall defend, indemnify and hold harmless the Funders and their respective officers, employees, agents, officials, attorneys and representatives from any and all costs, expenses, damages, liabilities, losses and claims which may arise out of, or are related to PET's activities, the operation of the Theatre, or which may otherwise arise under this Agreement or which relate to this Agreement or the funding provided herein. PET agrees and acknowledges that the Funders are not in any way responsible for the conduct or provision of PET's programs or services, and is not responsible for the review, supervision or management of PET's personnel, volunteers, participants, programming or services.

10) Jurisdiction and Venue: Jurisdiction and venue for any dispute arising out of or relating to this Agreement shall be exclusively fixed in the Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit Court of DeKalb County, Illinois, and in the event of any litigation in which the Funders are prevailing parties, PET shall be responsible for all costs and expenses, including but not limited to attorneys' fees, incurred by either or both of the Funders.

11) Insurance: PET shall provide the Funders with a certificate of insurance evidencing worker's compensation insurance in at least minimum amounts as required by law. Further, PET shall provide the Funders with a certificate of insurance evidencing comprehensive general liability insurance coverage with minimum coverage limits of \$2,000,000 per occurrence, in form and content acceptable to Funders, and naming the County and City as additional primary insured without right of subrogation. Said certificates shall be provided prior to any funding being paid under this Agreement.

Entered into as of this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2015.

County of DeKalb

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City of DeKalb

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Preservation of the Egyptian Theatre, Inc.

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STATE OF ILLINOIS    )  
                                  )SS  
COUNTY OF DEKALB )

**\*\*\* DRAFT RESOLUTION as of 07/31/2015 \*\*\***  
**R2015-65**

WHEREAS, on February 20, 2008, the County Board approved of the Intergovernmental Agreement between the County and the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation and directed the Chairman to execute the same; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Agreement approved of the development of a class II gaming facility by the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation on a 128-acre tract identified in the Intergovernmental Agreement as the Tribal Project Lands; and

WHEREAS, in furtherance of the development of the class II gaming facility, the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation has requested that the United States acquire the 128-acre parcel in trust for the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, along with the one-acre parcel owned by the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation identified in the Intergovernmental Agreement as the Tribal Residential Lands; and

WHEREAS, the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation has requested that the County Board support the trust application; and

WHEREAS, the Economic Development Committee has reviewed the request of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation and concurs that the planned class II gaming facility will bring economic development to the County and recommends that the Board support the trust application;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the DeKalb County Board does support the request of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation to the United States Government to acquire the lands in trust located in DeKalb County and that the Board Chairman is hereby authorized to convey that support on behalf of the DeKalb County Board.

PASSED THIS 19<sup>th</sup> DAY OF AUGUST, 2015 AT SYCAMORE, ILLINOIS.

ATTEST:

SIGNED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Douglas J. Johnson  
DeKalb County Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark Pietrowski, Jr.  
County Board Chairman

## **For Economic Development Committee Consideration 08/04/2015**

### **Developing a DeKalb County Economic Development Vision and Strategic Framework**

**Prepared by Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies**

Representatives from NIU's Center for Governmental Studies met with DeKalb County Administrator Gary Hanson and DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Paul Borek to discuss how a shared economic development vision and strategic framework among DeKalb County municipalities might be developed. This vision and framework would have a two-fold focus: building a vibrant *countywide* economy and encouraging *community-level* economic development initiatives.

This vision and framework would:

- Represent the perspectives of the range of economic development stakeholders.
- Build on recent and ongoing economic development activities by communities throughout the county.
- Be based on current data describing relevant economic trends and characteristics.
- Recognize the needs and assets of all DeKalb communities large and small.
- Identify cross-cutting opportunities for the entire county as well as the unique strengths of individual communities.

This vision and framework could be used to guide economic development investments at the County and community levels and ensure that localities throughout DeKalb County are aligned in their strategic priorities and message points – an imperative when attempting to recruit and retain business and industry.

### **Three-Step Approach**

#### **Step 1: Convene County Stakeholders**

The launch of this initiative would be marked by an event to which stakeholders from throughout the county, including all DeKalb County municipalities, would be invited. In advance of this meeting a short survey could be designed and disseminated to all municipalities to identify economic development activities undertaken in the past three years and those planned for the next year or two. The results of this survey would be shared at this convening to begin documenting the county's economic development assets.

Two other agenda topics could include a presentation on “The State of DeKalb County’s Economy” and the proposed visioning process.

**“The State of DeKalb County’s Economy”:** Such a presentation could draw from available public and proprietary databases to provide an overview of economic, population, geographic, workforce development, transportation, environmental, and other information.

**Proposed Visioning Process:** Components of this process could include:

- a. Mapping and reviewing the economic development activities collected in the initial survey for completeness and to identify any patterns.
- b. Meeting with representatives in each DeKalb County community to better understand their economic development strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and desired outcomes.
- c. Analyzing the results of the community meetings to identify countywide themes as well as unique opportunities associated with individual communities.
- d. Developing a draft document with a vision statement drawn from the aspirations described by the community representatives and a set of strategic opportunities at the county and community levels.
- e. Presenting this draft for discussion by county stakeholders and making needed changes.
- f. Identifying resources that could be used to support implementation of both countywide and community-level economic development activities.

**Deliverables:** A survey on community-based economic development activities and analysis of the results; a PowerPoint presentation on “The State of DeKalb County’s Economy”; and agreement on a path forward.

#### Step 2: Conduct Community Listening Sessions

Small teams of researchers - with County and DCEDC representatives, if desired - would schedule listening sessions in each community to capture information and perceptions about past, present, and future economic development activities. Elected and appointed officials, business leadership, and other community leaders/representatives would be invited to participate. A list of key discussion questions would be posed at each session and the information recorded. The conversation would address each community’s perceived strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and desired economic development outcomes.

Information collected from these listening sessions would be analyzed to identify important themes or patterns that are shared across communities as well as unique economic development opportunities associated with individual communities.

**Deliverables:** A draft document proposing a countywide vision and strategic opportunities at both the county and community/multi-community levels. One of these strategic opportunities would be the creation of a countywide economic development marketing campaign. The document would also identify the types of resources needed to pursue these strategic economic development opportunities.

### Step 3: Hold a DeKalb County Economic Development Summit

A half-day summit could be convened to present the findings of the community listening sessions and the proposed economic development vision and strategic opportunities framework. The summit would focus on changes needed to make the framework one that all municipalities in the county could support. Information about a range of resources available to municipalities could also be provided. These could run the gamut from traditional economic development tools (e.g., TIFs) to new and innovative approaches (e.g., community-supported business) as well as funding for community economic development planning.

**Deliverables:** A consensus DeKalb County economic development vision, assets, strategic opportunities, and potential resources. Participating municipalities would be asked to commit to supporting this framework and participating in the countywide marketing campaign. This document and the process used to create it could fulfill many of the requirements associated with a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

### Cost and Timing

The total cost of this three-step approach would be \$25,125. That cost includes:

- preparing and presenting an analysis of “The State of DeKalb County’s Economy”;
- conducting 10 on-site visits with the leadership of various incorporated communities in DeKalb County and developing a summary of the results of those meetings;
- designing and facilitating two half-day meetings with County and local economic development stakeholders;
- preparing a document summarizing all of the preceding input and describing an economic development vision and strategic framework for DeKalb County.

Please note that this cost does not include food or space for bringing together participants.

**NIU is prepared to split the cost of this effort to demonstrate its commitment to building the economic development infrastructure of its home county.** Thus, the cost to the County would be \$12,562. The County should also consider asking participating communities to contribute a small amount to the effort to create a sense of ownership and investment in the process.

It is estimated that the three steps would take approximately 6-7 months from project start. Estimates by step follow:

- Convening county stakeholders (survey, PowerPoint, initial convening) – 8 weeks
- Community listening sessions – 3 months
- Summit – 6 weeks

### NIU Contacts

Please contact Diana Robinson at [drobinson@niu.edu](mailto:drobinson@niu.edu) or Norm Walzer at [nwalzer@niu.edu](mailto:nwalzer@niu.edu).