

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
February 7, 2017**

The DeKalb County Economic Development Committee met on Tuesday, February 7, 2017 at 7:00 p.m., in the Administrative Building's Conference Room East in Sycamore, Illinois. Chairman Bagby called the meeting to order. Those Members present were Mr. Brown, Mrs. Emmer, Mr. Faivre, Mrs. Haji-Sheikh, Mr. Osland, and Chairman Bagby. A quorum was established with all six Members present.

Others present were Gary Hanson, Derek Hiland, Paul Borek, and Jeremy Perrotta.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

It was moved by Mr. Osland, seconded by Mrs. Emmer, and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the January 10, 2017 meeting.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chairman Bagby made note that Chairman's comments should be Committee Member Comments.

It was moved by Mr. Brown, seconded by Mrs. Haji-Sheikh, and it was carried unanimously to approve the meeting agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no comments from the public.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR POSITION DESCRIPTION

Planning and Zoning Director Mr. Derek Hiland explained that he has had recently conversations with officials regarding planning out the next steps for the Business Incubator once Interim Coordinator Brad Burzynski leaves. The conversations brought to light the fact that there is not currently a description for the Economic Development Coordinator position. From Mr. Hiland's perspective he ideally thinks that the individual will have the ability to continue marketing for the County, work on some economic development initiatives, work with the website, and be involved with local chambers and act as a presence for the County at events Mr. Hiland is unable to attend. Mr. Hiland asked what the Committee Members want to see regarding economic development within the County so if or when hired, this individual will have more direction on what their goals are.

Mrs. Haji-Sheikh noted that she has lots of ideas and a coordinator would need to do things like but not limited to: working closely with surrounding municipalities and NIU, help coordinate brainstorming sessions with Incubator Clients, provide marketing for the County for economic

development, and be very familiar with code requirements in not only the County but in the Cities and Villages as well.

Mr. Osland suggested looking at other Counties that may have that position already and see how they structure the position and what the description and pay scale may be. He additionally added that he foresees this position juggling many different tasks.

Mr. Hanson noted that one thing to keep in mind is that the Business Incubator and this position are only on a three year trial basis and there is no funding after that three year period.

Chairman Bagby noted that he envisions this position being divided up between Planning & Zoning, the Business Incubator, providing programmatic emphasis for start-ups and other small business-related developments within the County, and also being a liaison for the Chambers and community relations County-wide.

The group discussed skills and potential educational backgrounds for the Economic Development Coordinator position.

Mr. Faivre asked DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Paul Borek where the gaps may be between what DCEDC does and what the County may do. Mr. Borek shared that the DCEDC focuses primarily on larger industrial development and expansion and identified that gaps may be in the small business and retail markets.

Mr. Osland also noted that it would be very beneficial to ensure anyone in the Coordinator position take the time to visit the smaller Townships and Villages and familiarize themselves with the whole County and not just focus on the City of Sycamore and the City of DeKalb.

Mr. Faivre added that when the Coordinator position was first talked about, the intent was to make sure the Coordinator was aware of any new businesses that are wanting to come into the County and to also make sure that if there are any hurdles to get across, those individuals are guided to the correct offices to get them resolved within reason ahead of time. Guiding individuals and providing them with responsive answers and resources are all ways to promote a more business friendly County.

Mr. Hiland thanked the Committee for their feedback and comments and he will take his notes to help develop a description.

SMALL BUSINESS EMPHASIS

Chairman Bagby noted that this item is just up for discussion and continued that as he talked with all of the Committee Members one item that was emphasize was that the County really should be looking into doing more for small businesses. Small businesses are generating a lot of jobs within the County and they don't ask for a whole lot from the County but he wants to find out what they may be lacking and what can be done for them. The Chairman shared that he wants to take it upon himself to get out and meet more small business owners and ask them some questions and patronize places he doesn't normally patronize.

Chairman Bagby also asked the Committee Members to think about some things that they can do for small businesses within the County. Some items that were identified had to do with more flexibility on the Government's behalf in working with individuals to try and get to a "yes" instead of just saying "no" on development issues. Also cutting down on processing time or paperwork by having fillable forms online and being able to email or electronically process paperwork whenever possible.

Mr. Brown expressed that he would like to find a way to somehow show the County's appreciation to the small business community for their contribution to the area's economic development. Chairman Bagby piggy-backed on Mr. Brown's comments and shared that something he thought about doing was establishing a "Business Spotlight" during the full County Board Meetings. He noted that he would like to provide a minute or two spotlight on a local small business to bring attention and appreciation to it during the Board Meetings.

Mr. Borek provided that this small business emphasis discussion has been very helpful and going back to the question about where the gaps are, he noted that one of the biggest gaps that any region in the State has right now is the lack of Small Business Development Centers. A Small Business Counselor consisted of a person with business experience who could knowledgeably guide start-ups and existing small businesses with expansion, marketing, and at the same time could interact with Chambers and other business associations throughout the County. Mr. Borek reiterated that this is the biggest gap right now and it would be extremely beneficial to the County to have a knowledgeable Small Business Development Counselor who could recognize and who could guide start-ups and small businesses with sorting out expansions, how to prepare for a loan, etc.

Mr. Faivre also noted that even mature small businesses could benefit from support in adapting to technologies and getting integrated into social media. He suggested looking into utilizing interns to take on specific projects or at least to the point where they can be taken over by business owners as well as help businesses realize they can utilize NIU and Kishwaukee College departments and resources.

2017 COMMITTEE PLANNING/GOALS

Chairman Bagby provided a handout he compiled of goals and items that were mentioned to him in conversations with Committee Members. In no particular order, the Committee reviewed the following Goals for the Economic Development Committee for 2017:

- Assist with CEDS Steering and Planning Committee in preparation and implementation of the CEDS Plan
- Increase marketing and awareness of DeKalb County Business Incubator
- Begin preliminary assessment of effectiveness of the DeKalb County Business Incubator
- Work with Planning Department, P&Z Committee, and Board, to seek permanent FT Economic Development Coordinator
- Increase efforts to mark remaining County Farm property
- Explore feasibility of encouraging small business loans for existing businesses looking to improve, renovate or enhance existing facilities

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- Work with P&Z Committee and DeKalb County Planning Director on exploring possible code or other exemptions for new and/or expanding businesses.
- Continue efforts to spread knowledge and awareness of Enterprise Zone and encourage applications for sales tax and other exemptions
- Evaluate efforts to extend remaining available areas for expansion of the Enterprise Zone
- Assist with facilitations of inter-local agreements as needed relative to the same
- Seek out “best practices” in economic development from surrounding communities (e.g. Rochelle)
- Investigate opportunities provided by partner institutions to enhance the economic development profile of the County (e.g. Clean Room at NIU) Included in this would be increasing visibility of untapped or underutilized community resources
- Re-develop connections with area Chambers of Commerce and local business associations
- Foster increased visibility of CVB and encourage county-wide approach to tourism

OLD BUSINESS / NEW BUSINESS

No additional items were discussed.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

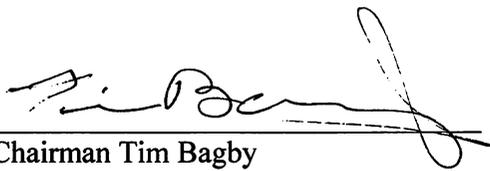
Mr. Osland shared that there is an industrial park in Somonauk, located off of Precision Drive, that is in need of help to get up and going. He noted that it is a prime piece of property that should be developed. One company is currently there, Precision Enterprises Ltd, who also have other factories elsewhere. There are some drainage tile issues there as well that need to be resolved, he explained. Mr. Osland questioned if it was possible to look into annexing this property into the Enterprise Zone or finding some way to help this property to entice more businesses to that area.

Other Committee Members provided their comments to the group, Mrs. Haji-Sheikh noted that the biggest thing she has heard from the public is how to bring jobs to the area and that is something they really need to look hard into. Mr. Brown, Mr. Faivre and Mrs. Emmer all noted that they thought the Committee was being very proactive with their listed goals and so far think they have a good foundation to work from going forward.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Faivre, seconded by Mrs. Emmer and it was carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,


Chairman Tim Bagby


Tasha Sims, Recording Secretary

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