

**DRAFT**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**  
**MARCH 1, 2005**

The Economic Development Committee of the DeKalb County Board met on Monday, March 1, 2005, @ 7:00p.m. in the Legislative Center's Freedom Room. Chairman Jeff Metzger called the meeting to order. Members present were Steve Slack, Frank Van Buer, Dennis Sands, Julia Fullerton, and Sally DeFauw. Mr. Steve Faivre was absent. Others present were Ray Bockman, Roger Hopkins, Doug Dashner, Bonnie Heimbach, Margaret Whitwell, Kim Kubiak, Sarah Sibert and Christine Johnson.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Moved by Mr. Van Buer, seconded by Ms. DeFauw, and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from February 1, 2005.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Moved by Mr. Sands, seconded by Ms. DeFauw, and it was carried unanimously to approve the agenda.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**PRESENTATION BY BONNIE HEIMBACH**

Ms. Bonnie Heimbach, Executive Director, of the Northern Illinois Tourism Development Office, gave a presentation to the committee regarding tourism in DeKalb and surrounding counties. She said that their office covers 14 counties for tourism. Their territory stretches from the Mississippi River all the way to the Indiana Border. She said that the hospitality industry is the fastest growing industry in the State of Illinois especially for jobs. In 2004 the majority of the new jobs created in the state of Illinois were for the hospitality industry. When visitors come into our communities in our State, they are spending about \$23 billion dollars, she said. Currently about 300,000 people are employed in the State of Illinois under tourism, that is directly, and indirectly - there is another 300,000 people. The payroll in the State of Illinois equals \$7 billion, said Ms. Heimbach.

DeKalb's Tourism Expenditures is a \$51 million dollar industry. This includes transportation, food service, auto transportation, lodging, retail and entertainment/recreation. It employs about 480 people with a payroll of \$10 million. It is a job that gives good advancements for women and minorities. Most importantly, she said, visitors that come to DeKalb County help generate \$4.2 million in taxes. These are taxes coming from services provided both State and local.

In 1994 the expenditures for DeKalb County were a little shy of \$31 million. Today they are at \$50 million. That is a \$20 million increase in ten (10) years. (See sheet attached to minutes.)

The International Farm Tour Program that started about 6 years ago, 112 international groups were on a tour for the agri-tour. We also have a scenic byway, the Lincoln Highway, (about 179 miles through the State of Illinois) which cuts through the heart of downtown DeKalb. Sycamore has a wonderful new museum called the Natural History Museum of Sycamore that has a partnership with the Field Museum in Chicago is great. There are scenic tour packages, great downtowns, sporting events at Northern Illinois University, etc.

Agritourism is having huge resurgence right now through an idea of the Department of Agriculture as a way to do value added dollars to family farms. There are going to be three workshops and one of them will be held in Kendall County on April 7, 2005. Agritourism is the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agri-business operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.

The committee discussed whether or not DeKalb County could benefit from a ½ day program like Kendall County is doing. Ms. Heimbach said that she is charging about \$20 for the fee and that includes breakfast. They provide these services at no cost through a grant from the Bureau of Tourism. Mr. Dashner, from the DeKalb County Farm Bureau, said that they would like to take part in the seminar too. Ms. Heimbach said that the training sessions would deal with agritourism and tourism for DeKalb County.

Chairman Metzger asked Ms. Heimbach if she contacts the various communities throughout the counties that they serve to ask for brochures and materials from the individual towns? Ms. Heimbach said yes, for their packets that they send out to people who inquire about DeKalb County. She said one problem that they have been experiencing is how late the tourism offices are opened to. In rural areas, inconsistent hours happen and that needs to be addressed. The State of Illinois requires that the offices be opened for 5 days a week and one of those days need to fall on the weekend.

Mr. Slack asked Ms. Kubiak, with the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, that at one time there was talk about having a moderate or smaller convention held here but it was prohibitive because of the number of hotel rooms here. Ms. Kubiak said, no we do not have enough full hotel services and that they had to turn down an event because of this problem.

The committee invited Ms. Kubiak and Ms. Siebert to come back to the committee to discuss the tourism information locally. Ms. Heimbach will be contacted about having a seminar here in DeKalb County for training sessions for late summer/early fall of 2005 by Mr. Sands who will also coordinate it with Ms. Supple from the county board office and Mr. Doug Dashner with the Farm Bureau Office. Chairman Metzger encouraged the committee to bring suggestions in April for what they would like to discuss at this session. Ms. Heimbach will begin emailing their monthly newsletter to the committee and the county board office. The committee thanked Ms. Heimbach for a very informative presentation.

**SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Fullerton began her research on small business development in DeKalb County per the direction of the committee and suggested that she would like to invite the Entrepreneurial Center representative from Rockford to one of our upcoming meetings. Chairman Metzger directed her to invite someone from the center and then to email him the information on the speaker and the date and time.

**PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENT**

Chairman Metzger reviewed the tax abatement proposal that Mr. Bockman approached the committee about last month with Fullco Industries and the City of Sycamore. He said last month the committee decided to wait a month in case anyone had any questions on the proposal. He said that they were supposed to call Mr. Bockman about the questions and then Mr. Bockman would try and get answers for them. Chairman Metzger stated that no one called Mr. Bockman with questions and so the question comes up again on whether or not the committee would like to forward the proposal to the full board for approval at the March County Board meeting? Mr. Bockman stated that all of the taxing bodies have acted favorably on the proposal already.

**Moved by Ms. Fullerton, seconded by Mr. Van Buer, and it was carried unanimously to forward the recommendation to the full board for approval.**

There was no discussion on goals this evening with the committee.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Moved by Ms. Fullerton, seconded by Ms. DeFauw, and it was carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.**

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeffery Metzger, Chairman

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Mary C. Supple, Secretary