

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
March 14, 2006**

The Economic Development Committee of the DeKalb County Board met on Tuesday, March 14, 2006, @ 7:00p.m. in the Legislative Center's Freedom Room. Chairman Julia Fullerton called the meeting to order. Members present were Jerry Augsburger, Sally DeFauw, Michael Haines, Jeff Metzger, Sr., and Mr. Slack. Mr. Sands was absent. Others present were Chuck Siebrasse, Alan Kraus, Joan Berkes-Hanson, Doug Dashner, Haley Murray, Roger Hopkins, Doug Power and Herb Kuryliw.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Moved by Ms. DeFauw, seconded by Mr. Augsburger, and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from January 2006.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Moved by Mr. Haines, seconded by Mr. Metzger, and it was carried unanimously to approve the amended agenda.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No one wanted to address the committee this evening.

**MR. ALAN KRAUS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT GROUP AT NIU REGARDING THE TECHNOLOGY TRIANGLE.**

Mr. Alan Kraus, Executive Director for the Broadband Development Group at NIU said that they are part of the Outreach program at NIU, which is part of the Regional Development Institute. He introduced Mr. Doug Power and Mr. Herb Kuryliw who are also from the same program. They are here this evening to look at what effect is communications having on attracting businesses. Mr. Power is currently working on a development project for the City of Rockford. They are looking at how to use broadband to attract businesses to Rockford, he thought that it would be a good thing to talk about. Mr. Kuryliw is the driving force behind NIU Net and he will let the committee know where that is going.

Mr. Doug Power said that he just started working with Rockford in January. Mayor Morrisey wanted to take some steps to help the Rockford area to both retain existing businesses and attract new businesses. Rockford has a lot of fine machine manufacturing and that a lot of it is part of international manufacturing cycles. They also have some smaller companies that are trying to interface with international

manufacturing cycles. In order to do that they have to have access to high-speed communications, he further explained.

The two main players in Rockford do not have much high-speed capability and a little bit of fiber. The problem is for businesses that want to be able to interface with international manufacturing you need at least 10 megabytes, if not 100 megabytes. The Mayor of Rockford met with SBC and he was told that Rockford is number 172 on their list, which is way down the road. The Mayor realized that he would need to take some steps to get high-speed communications for Rockford.

Some smaller towns and cities are buying their own power like electrical cooperatives and telecommunications cooperatives. They are talking to the city, county, colleges, schools, hospitals, and major private entities, etc., to gather the demand, establish a larger baseline, and put a Request for Proposals out, asking the companies how they would meet their (the public and private entities) demands for high-speed communications. They are finding resources that the City owns, like underground facilities. The telecommunication companies want to see how they can make money, how much can they spend, how much money do they have coming in, etc., said Mr. Power. So you provide ways that you can use resources and lower the vendors' costs. That way you have an attractive package that attracts a number of vendors. That's pretty much the concept that many cities and counties are doing, explained Mr. Power.

Mr. Herb Kuryliw talked about NIUNet that begins at NIU and goes to Naperville, over to Hoffman Estates and thus, making a loop. They have fairly good success rate right now, by getting to Fermi Lab and downtown Chicago. Currently they are working on getting the funding to go the rest of the way around. They have been successful in getting fiber down I-39 and they are on a schedule now. That introduces the Northern Illinois Technology Triangle now, he explained. They are working closely with DuPage National Tech Park and bringing in services there. They also have partnerships with TBC/DFO (DeKalb Fiber Optics), and many cities along the way. There are a group of cities that own their own power utilities as far west as Rock Falls and all the way east to Naperville. Currently there is now a Network that is up and running, consisting of the cities of Rock Falls, Rochelle, DeKalb, Batavia and it will eventually go a little bit east to the Oak Brook Toll Plaza.

They also have partners with the DeKalb School District, the City of DeKalb and the Park Districts, said Mr. Kuryliw. They are looking at trying to run the fiber out to Malta and Kishwaukee College. The fiber will cost \$170,000 to run down Route 38 to Malta. They are trying to get as many partners as possible for now. It is moving slowly now, hopefully

in a year to a year and half it will be done. They have a meeting at the end of March to find partners to run the fiber down Peace Road to the old Monsanto Building to make it available to the medical community.

Mr. Hopkins asked Mr. Kuryliw who is going to pay for the fiber? Mr. Kuryliw said that NIU is, the school districts, and we need to get more partners because it is more economical that way. They are seeking private partners, too.

Mr. Power pointed out that this does not cost the taxpayers anything. They try to get funding from state grants that are available. Mr. Kraus said that he recently read that the federal government is having serious discussions on offering federal grants for rural broadband capability.

The consultants said that the County could get involved by warehousing high-tech, attracting that type of business and develop it here. They said to look at what we have here in the County that is unique – the University. The County can also lay out the fiber and partner with DFO (DeKalb Fiber Optic), the Cities of DeKalb and Sycamore, Banks, NIU. This way they share the costs.

Mr. Slack asked the consultants what two or three impediments would be? Mr. Kraus said legacy of solutions regarding telephone service and the lack of recognizing that models are changing both in business and technology. Finally, recognizing change in how people are doing business today. He feels that it is a failure of imagination that would be an impediment.

The committee thanked Mr. Kraus, Mr. Power and Mr. Kuryliw for their very presentation.

**DEKALB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE – MR. CHUCK SIEBRASSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Chairman Fullerton introduced Mr. Chuck Siebrasse, Executive Director to the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Siebrasse said that he was just recently hired as the new Executive Director of the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce. They have approximately 580 companies as members of the Chamber currently. Target's leadership group is coming to DeKalb this weekend to begin their hiring process for their new distribution center that will be opening soon. They expect 10,000 applicants on Saturday.

He is working closely to repair relations with the Sycamore Chamber of Commerce and the City of Sycamore by holding a joint

meeting next week Tuesday with Sycamore and DeKalb to sit down and discuss an area-wide Convention and Visitors Bureau.

They will be holding an Agri-Tourism Business Seminar at the Farm Bureau soon.

They are working with the hospital to hold a seminar at the Farm Bureau to talk about the new hospital being built.

In April there will be a 1600-person square dancing festival that will be held at NIU's Convocation Center.

There is also interest being shown to hold a kite flying festival this year. There is no date that has been set just yet, but they are looking at three locations in and around the City of DeKalb.

The Business to Business book is done now and he is working on producing a Tourism Book currently. He would also like to produce a Restaurant Guide.

Mr. Haines asked Mr. Siebrasse how much is the budget for the Chamber currently? Mr. Siebrasse said about \$225,000. They are doing fundraising efforts right now.

The committee thanked Mr. Siebrasse for his very informative presentation.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Mr. Augsburg, seconded by Mr. Metzger, Sr., and it was carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting

Respectfully submitted,

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Chairman Julia Fullerton

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Mary C. Supple, Secretary