

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
August 12, 2009**

The Economic Development Committee of the DeKalb County Board met on Wednesday, August 12, 2009 @ 7:00p.m in the Administration Building's Conference Room East. Chairman Eileen Dubin called the meeting to order. Members present were Julia Fauci, Jeff Metzger, Sr., Riley Oncken, and Mark Todd. Ms. Vary and Ms. DeFauw were absent. Others present were Paul Borek, Donna Moulton, Margaret Whitwell, Christine Johnson and Aaron Ruder.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Moved by Mr. Todd, seconded by Mr. Oncken, and it was carried to approve the minutes from July, 2009.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments for the evening.

**CHAIR'S COMMENTS**

Chairman Dubin said that the Data Grant for the extension of fiber optics did get submitted. Congressman Foster and Senator Durbin did send out letters of approval. She received an email from Mr. Herb Kuriliw who said that "the State of Illinois has chosen this project to support a 10% match over \$1 million and this is the best news that we could have received." It will bring in many opportunities for small companies, both public and private enterprises to come together with costs being significantly lower, she explained.

Chairman Dubin also mentioned that Mr. Bob Gleeson updated her on the "Assessing Options to Support High-Wage Job Growth in DeKalb County" Grant. He stated that he has been compiling data that defines scale and growth patterns of the County's principle business clusters over the last two decades. He said that he is putting them in order of their capacity of growth and jobs that pay above average. He also been gathering data on the occupational profile of each sector. The next step is to organize a two-hour meeting with the County's Economic Development Committee and the Economic Development Corporation Committee to review these findings and to agree on the three specific clusters for the next step. The meeting should have a 30-minute review of the analytical findings followed by discussion and setting priorities for the next step. So this step will bring together leaders in those clusters to identify barriers that they may face with growth that can be addressed in the final

recommendations. Dr. Gleeson hopes that this will be ready by the end of September.

The committee discussed having the combined meeting with the Economic Development Corporation Committee held in early October in the evening if possible.

Mr. Metzger suggested that maybe we could hold this combined meeting with our regularly scheduled October committee meeting.

**UPDATE FROM THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION – MR. PAUL BOREK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Mr. Borek gave his monthly update on the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation.

He said that NIU has prepared some paperwork and a brochure that the Economic Development Corporation can use to help attract technology oriented, engineering and research and development types of industry and businesses.

Through the efforts of Jerry Kruzinski who is developing the proposed technology business park south of I-88 and east of Route 23, he and his real estate brokers have done an outstanding job in promoting the property for data centers and research and development projects to compliment the park. They have been able to gain some interest in the park because of it. We were asked to demonstrate how and why DeKalb County is an advantageous location for engineering. A couple of things that we needed to do was to illustrate the outstanding capabilities of the School of Engineering and Engineering Technology. Dr. Promod Vohra, the Dean of the School of Engineering at NIU, who has worked with Mary Supple and the Elegant Research Team and embraced them, has worked with Mr. Borek and his office too. Dr. Promod is willing to work with businesses so as to open the door to work with them in partnership to do primary research and prototypes, etc. In addition to being an outstanding engineer and educator, he is entrepreneurial and marketing oriented. Therefore, NIU and Dr. Vohra created a brochure highlighting various items that the School of Engineering can do, which can be used as a valuable tool for the Economic Development Corporation.

The second item is a brochure illustrating how and why DeKalb County, the City of DeKalb and Northern Illinois University represent an outstanding environment offering many quality of life opportunities for creative and technical professionals. Mr. Borek explained that it's been illustrated by planners and researchers that creative engineering professionals value the arts and creativity begets creativity be it technology or be it art, and we have put together, along with the University resources, a host of entertainment and cultural opportunities that are available here that may not be available in other locations that we compete with.

The third item in the packet is a study done by Dr. Robert Gleeson on "Residential and Commuting Trends of Highly Educated Workers in DeKalb County." Mr. Borek said, we have surmised through some of our earlier work

with Dr. Gleeson and felt that it would be especially useful with some of these recruiting tasks to uncover just what the current characteristics of the residents are of DeKalb County since 2000. There have been new subdivisions, new higher-end subdivisions and more people with varying occupations, higher level of education and higher level incomes living in the county than might have been here ten (10) years ago. They illustrate two things: highly educated, trained individuals, including engineers, who have moved to DeKalb County, and more high level professionals who are commuting to workplaces in DeKalb/Sycamore from places like DuPage and Kane County. The percentage increases helps the Economic Development Corporation make their point with engineering companies that are looking into moving here.

Mr. Borek then handed out a letter of endorsement to the committee that he wrote to Chairman Tobias and all County Board Members regarding the proposed Enterprise Zone.

Mr. Borek also spoke on the Recovery Zone Facilities Bond of which the allocation will amount to \$8 million. These funds can be used for private use in development, industry, office and commercial over the next 15 to 16 months. We are ready to promote that program, he said.

He is also working with Mr. Bockman to help set up a Foreign Trade Zone. Mr. Borek explained that the County is generally part of the Rockford Area Foreign Trade Zone through the Rockford Airport. Rockford is looking at establishing a foreign trade sub-zones status outside their prime area. By creating a foreign trade sub-zone it can help companies like those that use imported components in their packaging and distribution process. It could save them a considerable amount on tariffs and duties.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LOAN PROGRAM - COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT - MS. DONNA MOULTON, DIRECTOR**

Ms. Moulton, Director of the DeKalb County Community Services Department, explained to the committee the Economic Development Loan Program offered at her office. She said that the contract for the ARA funding for this program is in. She said that she met with Mr. Borek recently to talk about some ideas for marketing this revolving loan. She generally has \$12,000 that they are able to loan out to new businesses. That amount has been entirely paid back now from a Shabbona business. Her office has additionally received \$32,000 in funding for this program, which brings the total amount of about \$44,000 that she can use for loans in this program. They can put out what they call a junior loan of up to 49% of the loan value at hopefully a lower interest rate for small businesses provided they can employ someone who is eligible for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) guideline standards.

Chairman Dubin said that Mr. Ken Andersen, Chairman of the Planning & Zoning Committee had brought up at the Executive Committee the other evening that they would like to bring this issue for abatements for small businesses to our meeting next month. It sounds like we may be on the same wave-length in helping out small businesses.

**SUPERVISOR OF ASSESSMENTS ANNUAL REPORT – MS. MARGARET WHITWELL.**

Ms. Margaret Whitwell, Supervisor of Assessments for DeKalb County, presented her annual report for the committee (on file in the County Board Office and the Assessments Office).

Ms. Whitwell said that she had the same amount of complaints filed this year as last year. The equalization factors are not looking big. She feels that her board of review will be seeing more people this year.

Ms. Whitwell's report states that the real estate market, during the last months of 2007 showed a slowing of increasing values. For 2007, DeKalb County's sales did not equate to what the media was reporting for the rest of the country. Because assessments are calculated on three-year averages, 2008 assessments were still indicative of value during the peak years in the real estate market. The 2008 market reflects a slight reduction in value, with the number of arms length transactions greatly reduced from the prior year. New construction was greatly reduced, taking us to levels seen in the early 1990's.

The 2008 new construction assessed value of 43,738,734 (approximately \$130 million market value) is approximately 53% less than the 2007 figures of 82,992,884 and 64% less than the 2006 figures of 94,597,668. 2008 construction figures were equivalent to the 2000 and 2003 figures. 2008 construction figures reflect the completion of many buildings that were only partially assessed the year before and anything completed by December 31, 2007.

The median per acre sale price of bare farmland in DeKalb County in 2008 was \$8,729 (this value does not include farmland purchased for development). There were 431 new parcels created in 2008 compared to 1,381 new parcels in 2007.

The number of foreclosures in DeKalb County increased in 2008. The actual percentage of parcels foreclosed within our total number of parcels was less than 4 tenths of one percent. Foreclosures are not considered arms length transactions as the parties involved are usually under duress and the consideration is usually related to what is owed on a property, not its actual value.

The committee thanked Ms. Whitwell for her very informative Annual Report.

**TREASURER'S UPDATE: CHRISTINE JOHNSON**

Ms. Christine Johnson, DeKalb County Treasurer, presented an update on her office to the committee this evening.

She said that her office and the Assessor's Office work very well together along with the other departments in the County offices. She passed out a couple of one-page cards that are handouts for the public and also a brochure that she hands out to the public regarding a Guide on DeKalb County Property

Taxes (attached to these minutes and can be found in the Treasurer's Department).

Ms. Johnson said that all credit cards are accepted for payments except VISA. Visa had decided to discontinue their Master Service Agreement with the State Treasurer's Office. Visa said that they were doing it on a trial basis and this year they said that they would not continue. They want to redesign it. The State Treasurer's Office was taken aback by it because VISA is such a huge collector. VISA said that it would not have anything ready for the first installment payment on tax bills. Ms. Johnson said that she just received an email the other day from VISA stating that they might be starting a pilot program, but that they will need to test the program. It is not being accepted currently.

They were ready for many complaints about this from the public, but so far they have not received many. She has seen that the numbers have gone down drastically for credit card payments.

Ms. Johnson has been in office since 1994 and she has 3 full time employees and 3 part time employees. She has only added one new full-time position since being in office.

Ms. Johnson said that her office were development partners with DevNet for their tax collection program and saved the County some money by our County doing a lot of the testing for the program. Now DevNet is in 39 counties in the State of Illinois.

They use bar code readers to post tax payments and they accept credit card payments and direct debit payments. Many attorneys, accountants and appraisers use the tax info portal that IMO helped develop. Ms. Johnson said that she has heard from people over the years since this portal has been created that they have used other counties programs and that DeKalb County's is the best, which is many kuddo's to IMO for helping to develop the portal.

Ms. Johnson also said that they recently have started making tax distribution reports available on our website. This way the taxing body treasurer's can go on our website and look at them and anyone else that may need to view them. This will save her department approximately \$500.00 in postage and paperwork.

Ms. Johnson said that as the Treasurer for DeKalb County, she is also the County's Tax Collector. Outside of the County's budget 25% of that is derived by real estate taxes. All of the County's revenues come through their office. They invest all of the County's funds. In the 15 years that she has been the County Treasurer the County has made \$16 million dollars in interest.

In 1994 her office collected taxes in the amount of \$65 million. In the year 2009 they will be collecting taxes in the amount of \$183 million. They mail about 40,000 tax bills a year, she said.

Ms. Johnson stated that her office invited the State Treasurer's Office to come to our County and host the Cash Dash. This year \$272,000.00 was returned to DeKalb County citizens that day. Since that date her office has seen 10 people a day in assisting them with filing their claims. She estimates that our County currently has seen well over \$300,000 returned to our citizens.

The committee thanked Ms. Johnson for a very informative report.

**NEXT TOPIC FOR THE GO GREEN EVENT FOR FALL 2009**

The committee agreed that the next topic for the Go Green Fall 2009 Event would be on green careers. "Greenomics" is one of the names that they discussed calling the event. They will hold the half-day event on a Saturday in early November 2009 and work in collaboration with Mr. Paul Borek, Director of the Economic Development Corporation. Ms. Fauci, the committee and the County Board staff will help out with the event, too.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Ms. Fauci, seconded by Mr. Oncken, and it was carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectively submitted,

---

Eileen Dubin, Chairman

ED:mcs

G:EconomicDevelopmentCommittee/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE Minutes for 081209.doc