

DRAFT
Economic Development Committee
Minutes
April 14, 2010

The DeKalb County Economic Development Committee met on Wednesday, April 14, 2010 @ 7:00p.m., in the Legislative Center's Freedom Room. Chairman Eileen Dubin called the meeting to order. Members present were Sally DeFauw, Julia Fauci, Riley Oncken, Mark Todd and Pat Vary. Mr. Jeff Metzger, Sr., called in on the conference phone to take part in the meeting. Those present were Paul Borek, Susan Boyd, Vicki Torres, Bonnie Heimbach, Steve Brazier, Deb Armstrong, Rose Treml, Meghan Yackey and Doug Nelson.

Moved by Ms. Fauci, seconded by Ms. Vary, and it was carried unanimously to allow Mr. Metzger, Sr. to participate in the meeting via the conference phone.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Moved by Mr. Todd, seconded by Mr. Oncken, and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from March 2010.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by Ms. Vary, seconded by Ms. DeFauw, and it was carried unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chairman Dubin said that she and Ms. Jenny Tomkins, the freelance grant writer, will be attending a workshop on grant writing tomorrow. There is a breakout session for economic development, human resources and housing and she and Jenny will attend one of them.

Dr. Gleeson is working on the third part of our grant on the entertainment field.

Chairman Dubin said that if we go the entertainment route, that Dr. Gleeson said, it is the risky route, but possibly the most profitable one because it could develop tourism. Along with tourism, good restaurants with theater, etc., could attract people from the east and west.

Ms. Vary said that we should invite Mr. John Gordon from the NIU Convocation Center when we have this meeting.

DEKALB AREA CONVENTION AND VISITOR'S BUREAU REQUEST – MS. DEB ARMSTRONG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ms. Deb Armstrong, Executive Director, of the DeKalb Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau (DACVB) introduced herself and thanked the committee for the County's contribution of \$5,000 for last year's production of the Visitor's Guide. She introduced her team who are: Doug Nelson, Rose Treml, Mehan Yockey, Susan Boyd, Steve Brazier, Bonnie Heimbach and Vickie Torres.

Ms. Bonnie Heimbach, Director of the Northern Illinois Tourism Development Office, said that tourism is a \$30.8 billion industry that visitors are spending in our State. We rival states like New York, Florida and California. Those dollars that are coming in are being returned back to our communities. In 2008, Illinois welcomed 88 domestic million visitors. The State of Illinois did a study that says that travelers spent over \$84 million dollars on average every day in Illinois businesses. Those travelers support our infrastructure of over 303,000 State of Illinois employees with salaries totaling \$8.5 million. One in 10 jobs are directly or indirectly supported by the tourism industry. We have 3 wineries in DeKalb County and people love culinary tourism. As gas prices are going up, people are still traveling, said. Ms. Heimbach.

Ms. Heimbach continued by stating that in 2008, \$75.14 million came into this County through tourism. From 1999 to 2008 tourism to DeKalb County has risen from \$43 million to \$75 million (see materials attached to these minutes). She said, "you are sitting on an opportunity that can take you to the next level." Working with the DACVB gives you a tool to take what you have with a voice and a common message, Ms. Heimbach said.

Mr. Steve Brazier, Business Development Officer from Resource Bank, said that he works with DeKalb, Sycamore and Genoa Chambers, he is a member of the Waterman-Hinckley business association, and he works with the Kirkland and Malta Lions Club. Everyone is totally for promoting tourism and every community wants to promote their town but they can't do it alone. They love the program that we are doing here. The DACVB have secured 4 financial partners this year, DeKalb County Board, DeKalb County Economic Development Committee, Sycamore Chamber Tourism, DeKalb County Liner's Baseball. The baseball games have averaged 200 people at the low end at each event and up to 2,000 people at large events. The groups go all the way east to Pennsylvania and West Virginia with the teams and we are the farthest team in the Northwest. These are all collegiate baseball players and a lot of families will be coming into town to watch the games. The games will all be played in Sycamore Park.

Mr. Brazier said that they have added a new contributor to this group. Northern Illinois University (NIU) just signed a multi-year agreement that begins in July of this year.

Ms. Susan Boyd spoke about the hotel rooms that are available in DeKalb County. She said that there are 700 hotel rooms available in the DeKalb and Sycamore area. They contribute \$200,000 in hotel taxes a year. The Cities of DeKalb and

Sycamore bring in together \$400,000. The DACVB helps hotels stay profitable. Ms. Armstrong recommends the hotels to the visitors who call in for information. The hotels have been struggling in the last year due to the economic downturn, but the CVB has helped to increase our tourism. The CVB has been invaluable to us, said Ms. Boyd. Their goal is to raise \$100,000.00 for the DeKalb Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau through local partnerships to sustain the DACVB and take it to the next level towards Certification.

Ms. Torres said that the hotel business is coming back and that the Best Western, where she works in DeKalb, is now keeping pace with last year's numbers.

Ms. Armstrong said that the Stratford Inn in Sycamore is now reopened under new management, too.

The committee discussed the need to get several shuttle buses to go back and forth to the Elburn Train Station.

Ms. Armstrong said that with the money that they raise will enable them to develop the website further and produce the similar quality brochure that they did this year.

After a brief discussion among the committee members, it was **Moved by Mr. Oncken, seconded by Ms. Fauci, and it was carried unanimously to contribute \$5,000 dollars to the DeKalb Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau to continue to produce their Visitor's Guide.**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION UPDATE – MR. PAUL BOREK

Mr. Paul Borek, Executive Director of the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation updated the committee on what his corporation has been doing lately.

DCEDC has completed the Business Retention project. They met with 80 companies and conducted a detailed survey with 50 of them. He said that mid to large sized companies were included in this survey. The best news he said is that 59% of them hope to expand within the next three years, and that on a scale of 1 to 7, the likelihood of these companies expanding in DeKalb County is 6.5 percent. The County is a good place to do business in.

The committee discussed the manufacturing companies here in the County trying to attract students to work for them. They are concerned that their workforce is getting older and will need to replace them with younger employees shortly.

Mr. Todd said that these manufacturers are willing to train new employees, the trouble is to get the young people to come through the door that want to be trained. The

kids are not aware that these types of positions exist and that they pay well. It would stabilize the community to be able to fill these spots with local young people.

Mr. Borek said that we need to tell our young people about vibrant careers available and that it is no longer just assembly line work.

Mr. Todd said that maybe the high school advisors or counselors may not know about this need.

Ms. Supple suggested that possibly in the Fall, like September, this committee could hold an event at Kishwaukee College, along with the Economic Development Corporation, and invite high school students in the junior and senior years, local high school counselors and the KEC students at Kishwaukee, to listen to the leaders in the community and manufacturing companies to explain this problem to them. They could inform the students of the need in the community and that they are looking for this many young people to fill the need of the retiring older workforce. They could also explain what these positions pay. It could be like a career day, but that the County becomes involved through our committee to help these manufacturers and the students connect.

The committee thought that this was a great idea and agreed to have Ms. Supple and Mr. Borek work on this event.

SMALL BUSINESS INITIATIVE REVIEW

The committee, before adjourning, decided that they will bring back the Small Business Initiative by Julian Magdaleno back in May after they review his handouts and make suggestions.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Dubin, Chairman

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