

DRAFT
Economic Development Committee
Minutes
July 13, 2011

The DeKalb County Economic Development Committee met on Wednesday, July 13, 2011 @ 7:00p.m., in the Legislative Center's Gathertorium. Chairman Pat Vary called the meeting to order. Members present were Bob Brown, Julia Fauci, Jeff Metzger, Sr., Riley Oncken, and Mr. Jeff Whelan. Paul Miller was also present and a large group of business owners who are involved in the Arts and Entertainment sector of the County.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Moved by Mr. Oncken, seconded by Ms. Fauci, and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from June 2011.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chairman Vary mentioned to the committee that Mr. Borek was absent tonight due to another meeting that he was attending so she was removing his Economic Development Corporation update from the agenda.

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

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Ms. Vary, Chairman of the Economic Development Committee, said that the committee invited people who are involved with the Arts and Entertainment sector in the County to this committee meeting. She explained that two years ago the County was awarded a planning grant that helped the board identify areas that would help with economic growth. The three areas are: attracting manufacturing jobs, and knowledged-based companies, and to increase the arts and entertainment sector. She said that she hopes the County would act as part of a catalyst to help this group connect. There is also a possibility of creating a larger Arts Council for the entire County. She said that the County Board office has drawn up a contact list for the group to use, and there is a form for everyone to fill out before they leave tonight and to hand it back to the committee. If there are other people that we do not have on the current list, please place their contact information on the back of the sheet of paper. She then had everyone introduce themselves to the committee and group present this evening.

Chairman Vary said that she met with Alex Nerad personally since he could not make this meeting tonight. She will talk about this discussion as items come up.

After the introductions were made, Chairman Vary opened up the meeting to discussion on what the groups' individual needs are. Below are some of the suggestions that were made. Attached to these minutes is the entire list of suggestions made.

Fundraising was one of the problems because it's the same companies and same people. The group would also like to see more advertising of events in the area and have someone help to coordinate all of these events and place them on a website. Some other ideas that the group tossed out to the committee were having a cultural arts building, combining ticket sales and collaborative marketing efforts.

Ms. Sue Johnson, President of the Board for the Stage Coach Players said that they have a problem with storage for the props, equipment, etc. The same problem is also with the Egyptian Theater and the other smaller Independent Theater Companies. She thought that it would be nice to have a centralized facility that could store all of the theaters items in one storage facility.

Another problem is how do we get our story out to the community and the younger people, like getting 30 year olds to come to the theater, she said.

Ms. Deb Armstrong, Executive Director, said that she is trying to get tours that are needed in this area. She also said that this group could look for a grant (s), if possible, to help with the formation of an Arts and Entertainment Council. She said that if the group could get someone to write the grant then she could help spearhead that.

Mr. Shawn Lowe, President of Corn Fest Committee said that they would like to expand the festivals throughout the year. This would help them earn some extra money and help fund part of the actual Corn Fest. He said that the establishment of a county-wide Arts Council is a good idea because then we can help to promote each other's events.

Mr. Mike Mendoza, with M&A Productions would like to partner with the County and businesses in the County to promote concerts at the Sandwich Fairgrounds. They want to give back to the community and County through these various partnerships. Their concerts will draw people from a 100-mile radius. They will need security, parking, employing college students, etc.

Ms. Tamara Shriver suggested looking at a group called "The Next Picture Show" based in Dixon, Illinois, that has various levels of memberships that the group may want to take a look at. This organization acts as a center for all of the arts.

A member of the Kishwaukee Valley Arts League said that if there was a cultural center they could look at expanding and probably get a lot more members. They would like to have a place to hold meetings on a permanent basis.

Dr. Holly asked for a little bit more clarification on the grant that the study was conducted off of.

Chairman Vary explained that the grant was a planning grant that would identify areas that would help encourage economic development in the County. So this committee identified three of them and we are trying to start to act on those to build them up.

Dr. Holly said, so the actions that we choose should be pointed towards economic development.

Mr. Oncken said that one of the things that we identified is that if we are going to bring in major corporations and major executives who want to live in this community we have got to provide a vibrant art scene, good dining, etc., that would attract someone who comes from a big city. So if we want to attract businesses and grow this community then we need to provide that. He is a big proponent of the arts, but it's more about growing economically, at least that is his perspective.

Dr. Holly said that he was more in line with what Mr. Oncken just said. He said that we are really talking about a business model here –how are we going to get more people to come to our events so that we can bring the money in. What we should be looking at is identify the three areas, particularly in part, the marrying of the arts and entertainment sector and the manufacturing sector. We have three world class businesses in the arts in our County and they are employing DeKalb County citizens. If we can identify more companies that are art related, that need more employees - then we can build a stronger base of people who are able to come to our events. Once that happens then we can look at what we can do to support what we already have.

Chairman Vary said that one of the points that she would like to make is that you might have two theaters and you are competing for the same theater audience in some ways. But if you don't have the same theater on the same night, and that's the only night, then you may not be competing with them as much because they may go to both. There is plenty of audience here but getting the word out is one of the big problems.

One thing that Alex Nerad brought to her attention is central ticketing. He told her that in two or three years the Egyptian Theater could be the centralized place where everyone could go to get tickets for events in the County. Chairman Vary continued by stating that from the discussion she heard this evening we also need a central website.

She also heard the need for a centralized building where events could happen and with an area for storage in it.

Ms. Fauci made some suggestions to the group which were, sharing costumes, midnight bike ride for fundraising and there is a building off of 7th street that has a theater in it, with storage, retail and apartments for studios.

Chairman Vary then encouraged those people present at the meeting tonight to go forward with these ideas and suggestions. Maybe they could form a committee and possibly even sub-committees, she suggested.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Vary, Chairman

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