

Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the Economic Development Committee at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.

DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Economic Development Committee Minutes
January 6, 2015**

The DeKalb County Economic Development Committee met on Tuesday, January 6, 2015 @ 7:00p.m. in the Administration Building's Conference Room East. Chairman Brown called the meeting to order. Members present were Mr. Bassett, Ms. Leifheit, Mr. Pietrowski, Jr., Ms. Polanco and Mr. Whelan.

Others present were Mr. Gary Hanson, Mr. Paul Borek, Ms. Christine Johnson, and Mr. Greg Millburg.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

It was moved by Mr. Whelan, seconded by Mr. Pietrowski, Jr., and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from November 4, 2014.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chairman Brown said that he would like to have Public Comments added to our agenda from now on. It was moved by Ms. Polanco, seconded by Mr. Whelan, and it was carried unanimously to approve the amended agenda.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman Brown welcomed all new committee members to the meeting. He had all new committee members introduce themselves to the committee and tell a little bit about themselves.

FOREIGN TRADE ZONE – MS. CARRIE ZETHMAYR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chairman Brown pulled this item from the agenda since Ms. Zethmayr could not make the meeting this evening due to the bad weather.

DEKALB COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITOR'S BUREAU ANNUAL FUNDING

Ms. Supple informed the committee that the resolution and letter of support before them was an annual request from Ms. Debbie Armstrong, Ex. Director with the DeKalb County Convention and Visitor's Bureau. She said that the County gives \$15,000 a year to this agency and has for a while now. This letter and resolution need to be included in Ms. Armstrong's annual grant request that she sends to Springfield.

Mr. Bassett asked if anyone could explain what this agency does for the County. Ms. Supple and Mr. Pietrowski explained what events and money that the agency has brought into the county in the past and present, including the recent IHSA event.

It was moved by Ms. Leifheit, seconded by Mr. Whelan, and it was carried unanimously to approve this resolution and to forward it to the full board for approval.

DEKALB AREA ARTS COUNCIL UPDATE – MS. MARY SUPPLE

Ms. Supple gave a brief report to the committee regarding the DeKalb Area Arts Council. She said that in November the Arts Council was visited by the Rockford Area Arts Council Director, Ms. Anne O’Keefe. Ms. O’Keefe discussed the mission, funding, programing and administrative duties for the Rockford Area Arts Council. She said that the DeKalb Area Arts Council (DAAC) mission statement was very good. She advised them to stay away from including development in their statement.

The board then talked about doing a Gala/Event to announce the DAAC board and their mission to the area. She suggested that the DAAC might want to announce an initiative that they could get behind at the time. They also discussed a Mardi Gras event that will take place in February with DeKalb Dance Dimensions. They talked about possibly having a “soft” introduction done of the Arts Council’s board at that time. The board decided to discuss this further at their February meeting.

Ms. Supple then said that they discussed their collaboration with NIU on their website. It was agreed that Dr. Holly and Mr. Alex Nerad will meet with NIU’s Outreach Department to finalize this project. They are also looking at Ms. Erin Nolan’s artwork regarding their logo from OC IMageWorks. They were presented with six different logos and at their February meeting they would like to see one of the logos selected this evening done in horizontal and vertical presentations along with color.

BRAINSTORMING ON WAYS TO EXPAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTSB

Chairman Brown then explained to the committee how they could expand the economic development efforts in the County. From the 1980’s to 2007 he felt that DeKalb County was experiencing their boom years. But when he ran for county board in 2010 his constituents told him about foreclosures and voters were crying out for lower property taxes and good paying jobs. Mr. Brown said that in 2013, the last year that we did published statistics, he checked out the residential sector in DeKalb County, which represented 70% of the total Equalized Assessed Value. While commercial properties, including the wind turbines accounted for only 18%, and industrial sites, only 4%. During the holidays he had a chance to visit with Mr. Hanson and Chairman Pietrowski about what we might be able to do to address this issue. They thought about what could happen to speed up reducing the tax burden on taxpayers, as well as creating more living wage jobs. That was by recruiting more businesses and industry to DeKalb County, as well as growing and expanding existing businesses in the County. Could the County be doing more in this area to speed up what we might accomplish? As they talked they wanted to propose for the committee’s consideration, a new position as economic development director for DeKalb County. This position would be established for a 3-year trial period and funded through the Opportunity Fund, which has about \$3 million available. The director would work in close cooperation with Mr. Paul Borek, our Economic Development Corporation Executive Director. The primary focus of this position could be in four areas that he would suggest:

- 1.) Reach out and develop more economic development opportunities and activities in rural areas beyond DeKalb and Sycamore, including small towns and farms.
- 2.) Research and recruit more environmentally friendly companies in selected niche sectors, such as technology and data transfer industries.

- 3.) Promote and support more innovative small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures, including business incubator partnerships with Northern Illinois University and Kishwaukee College.
- 4.) Increase communication with existing small and large businesses to initiate and facilitate the expansion and retention of our county's workforce.

Mr. Pietrowski, Jr., said that we could have Mr. Borek help us brainstorm.

Mr. Borek said that there is always room to expand our businesses and more resources to help generate results. He would talk to his board about collaborating with the County.

The committee then discussed various ways to bring in business to the county. They talked about the County's strengths to attract companies here, like our fiber optics.

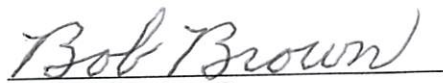
Mr. Bassett suggested two different books for the committee members and county board members to read regarding economic development. One of the books was titled "Start With Why" and the other book was titled "Start-Up EcoSystems."

Ms. Supple then passed out some work papers for the committee to work on until their next meeting in February. The paperwork was a draft for a job description for a new economic development person. The committee was told to please get these papers filled out and returned back to Ms. Supple in about two weeks so that she could compile the results and have the updated job description ready for the February meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Whelan, seconded by Ms. Polanco, and it was carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,


Chairman Robert Brown


Mary Supple, Recording Secretary