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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

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

The DeKalb County Economic Development Committee met on Tuesday, June 6, 2015 @ 7:00p.m. in the Administration Building's Conference Room East. Chairman Brown called the meeting to order. Members present were Ms. Leifheit, Mr. Pietrowski Jr., Ms. Polanco, Mr. Porterfield and Mr. Whelan. Mr. Bassett was absent. Others present were Ms. Christine Johnson, Ms. Robin Brunschon, Ms. Carrie Zethmayer and Ms. Debbie Armstrong.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

It was moved by Mr. Whelan, seconded by Ms. Polanco, and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from May 5, 2015.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

It was moved by Mr. Pietrowski, Jr., seconded by Ms. Leifheit, and it was carried unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

FOREIGN TRADE ZONE – MS. CARRIE ZETHMAYER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ms. Zethmayer, Executive Director, of the Foreign Trade Zone #176 gave a summary of what her office does. She said that she works with Mr. Paul Borek of the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation, too. She said that they try to attract new businesses to Rockford through the Foreign Trade Zone.

Ms. Zethmayer explained to the committee what a Foreign Trade Zone is. She said that it is an area that is considered outside of U.S. customs territory. Certain types of merchandise can be imported into a Zone without going through formal Customs entry procedures or paying import duties. Customs duties and excise taxes are due only at the time of transfer from the Foreign Trade Zone for U.S. consumption. No duties or taxes are paid on items that never enter U.S. Commerce. She also said that there are Federal Tax Incentives for companies to partake with foreign countries. It helps to make our companies more competitive internationally, she continued.

By becoming a member, she explained, it can help to reduce costs of products for companies. She said that it would cost a company around \$5,000 for actual costs to become a member.

DEKALB COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITOR'S BUREAU ANNUAL REPORT – MS. DEBBIE ARMSTRONG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ms. Armstrong said that the State of Illinois will be cutting grants to Tourism, which is bad news for her office. She said that this will mean that there will be no marketing partnership grants, no International grants and no T.A.P. grants. They could see a cut to their budget between 22% to 30%, which will be pretty devastating for her office. She will not get the numbers until the end of July.

Ms. Armstrong stated that the revenue generated from visitor spending in 2013 was \$81.58 million. This marks the 5th year in a row that our tourism revenue for DeKalb County has increased. Our hotel sales tax has increased significantly this year due to adding 80 more rooms and increased meeting/event activity. We still have two months to add to this fiscal year and we are already reporting in 40% over last year.

She said that they will host our 2nd IHSA State Football Championship on November 27-28th, which showcased DeKalb County in the best possible light. They broke attendance records at 30,000 plus visitors and generated an estimated economic impact of \$800,000 for the region. They had just over 200 volunteers last year and they are looking to get 300 this year.

She pointed out to the committee that she has placed ads in the Northwest Quarterly Magazine and has provided an Interactive Map on her home web page. They have highlighted over 600 attractions in our area and that 4200 people have already looked at the new Interactive Map.

Ms. Armstrong highlighted 2 charts that she passed out to the committee. One is the tourism revenue that has been generated over the last five years. It shows how it has increased each year, of these past 5 years. On the chart for the Hotel Sales Tax Revenue shows a 42.2% increase for the entire FY 2014-2015. These figures are just for Sycamore and DeKalb. This does not include the figures for May and June yet.

Both cities (DeKalb and Sycamore) are home-rule which means that they don't have to adhere to state statutes. So the funding that she receives is \$50,000 from DeKalb and \$5,000 from Sycamore. She said that we do have other towns that give lesser amounts of money, too.

Ms. Armstrong said that they are preparing themselves to not receive a check until December 2015 from the State.

She thanked the committee and the County Board for her annual funding of \$15,000 from the County. She said that they really do need the money that they receive from us and are very grateful for it.

The committee thanked Ms. Zethmayer and Ms. Armstrong for their very informative reports.

MONTHLY REPORT – MS. MARY SUPPLE

Ms. Supple gave a brief report to the committee regarding the DeKalb Area Arts Council meeting.

She said that Ms. Alex Nerad stated that the Big Arts Event for this weekend is the Northern Illinois Arts Show located on the DeKalb County Courthouse Lawn. This is held annually and is a big success. Ms. Giese of NIU Art Department explained how the ArtiGras Event came to be through NIU. Ms. Supple said that the Arts Council would like to see more students get involved in next year's event from the K-12 age group. They would also like to have church groups and student groups from NIU get involved.

Ms. Supple said that Mr. Nerad approached the Arts Council about the creation of an Arts, Culture & Entertaining Corridor (ACE Corridor) within the City of DeKalb. This corridor area would consist of high arts content/activity to engage the community and broaden arts events. The Council is working on a database of businesses and organizations to include in this corridor. There are no tax incentives being given to become part of the corridor. The Arts Council is advocating for this as a marketing tool.

The committee thanked Ms. Supple for her report.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS – MS. MARY SUPPLE

Ms. Mary Supple, DeKalb County Board Coordinator, explained to the committee the various special projects that she has been working on for economic development. She said that she has been working on securing retail and restaurant stores to locate on the DeKalb Market Square property that the County owns. Market Square is very important to the County as it is a part of a 40-year sales tax sharing agreement with the City of DeKalb and that the count-down clock is ticking.

She said that another project that she is working on is regarding the aerospace industry and trying to fill the voids that still need to be met in that industry's supply chain. She is attending the Rockford Area Aerospace Network meetings and hoping to gather information that would be important for our manufacturers in our County.

Another project that she is working on is researching various incubators that could be started here in DeKalb County, whether they are high tech, small businesses, or kitchen incubators.

She said that she also attends the DeKalb Area Arts Council meetings, the DeKalb County Convention and Visitor's Bureau meetings, RAAN meetings and others as they arise.

UPDATE ON THE ECONOMIC SUMMIT – MR MARK PIETROWSKI, JR.

Mr. Mark Pietrowski, Jr., DeKalb County Board Chairman, stated that he met with Mr. Paul Borek and Greg Millburg on May 4, 2015, about 3 proposals to choose from for the Economic Summit goals. He said that the submittal from the NIU Center for Governmental Studies was the best proposal and they mentioned that they would cut the costs in half to do this for the County. They will be meeting with the DeKalb County Community Foundation this coming week to discuss their contribution towards that. One proposal would take 6 to 7 months and would cost \$25,000. This could be cut in half and we would need to find funding for approximately \$12,562.00

Mr. Pietrowski, Jr., said that the second proposal was the summit only option, 1-day economic development summit, presentation and State of the County economy, a survey results, visioning exercise, preliminary discussion on identifying cost cutting themes. This total cost would be \$11,465.00 and cut in half it would equal \$5,732.00. We may be able to get all of the funding though the Community Foundation and look at ways of funding it with the EDC as well.

Mr. Pietrowski said that these are the two options that are out there now. We would start this in September and build from there he further commented.

RE-APPOINTMENT OF SUPERVISOR OF ASSESSMENTS

The committee briefly discussed the re-appointment of the Supervisor of Assessments. They said that this would be a 4-year appointment.

It was moved by Mr. Pietrowski, seconded by Ms. Polanco, and it was carried unanimously to recommend the re-appointment of the Supervisor of Assessments, Ms. Robin Brunschon for another 4-year term, and to forward this recommendation to the Executive Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,


Chairman Robert Brown


Mary Supple, Recording Secretary