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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Economic Development Committee Minutes
March 3, 2015**

The DeKalb County Economic Development Committee met on Tuesday, March 3, 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., Mr. Porterfield and Mr. Whelan.

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

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

It was moved by Ms. Leifheit, seconded by Mr. Pietrowski, Jr., and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from February 3, 2015.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

It was moved by Mr. Whelan, seconded by Mr. Porterfield, and it was carried unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

Ms. Polanco arrived at 7:03p.m.

Chairman Brown informed the committee about a couple articles that have appeared in the local newspaper. The first article is about 2 senior living projects that are in the works for the City of DeKalb. Oak Crest would like to build a nearly 70,000 sq. ft. addition to the north side of their existing building. Also, local developers Mark and Mike Carpenter would like to build upscale apartments for seniors at the southwest corner of Greenwood Acres Drive and Sycamore Road.

The second article is about Custom Aluminum who recently announced expansion plans in Genoa. They are going to add 37,500 square feet to their existing facility. He said that this is a nice addition to the northern part of the County.

CITY OF DEKALB COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR – MS. ELLEN DIVITA

Chairman Brown introduced Ms. Ellen Divita, City of DeKalb's Community Development Director, to the committee. Ms. Divita informed the committee about her background and said that she has been learning a lot since over the past few months. She said that the City of DeKalb has not had a department in over 5 years. They now have 2 part-time inspectors, they will be hiring 2 code enforcement officers, and they are using 3rd party plumbing inspectors. She said that she is going to be re-writing their

Comprehensive Plan this year and she just completed a housing study with NIU.

She said that the DeKalb City Manager has begun a strategic plan with the City Council members. They have started this now with NIU's Center for Governmental Studies.

Ms. Divita said that with regards to the City, she is trying to stabilize the housing in DeKalb regarding the rental units. She said that many of our people are shopping in Geneva because some of our stores here are class "B" stores, they are smaller. The sales tax numbers are up in the last nine months of the year. The hotel/motel taxes are very strong too. She also met with all taxing bodies and the chamber. They talked about creating the Downtown as an Arts and Culture Center.

Ms. Divita said that the City of DeKalb does have challenges with its downtown stores. The Arts and Culture is one thing that the City could look at. She said that the traffic counts in downtown DeKalb need to be above 25,000 cars a day for any major retailer to move downtown. Ms. Divita said that she is also working with Shodeen and she is trying to get him to bring in a new proposal and will try to incentivize the first 100 homes in his subdivision. He also owns the southeast corner of Peace Road and Route 38. We need \$1.5 million in infrastructure at that intersection before they could build anything. He doesn't have the money to do this now. She is trying to get him to bring in another proposal. The future of downtown DeKalb will be centered around the library, the Egyptian Theater and the Arts, she feels.

Mr. Pietrowski, Jr., mentioned a unified taxing code for the City would be good. There are different ones for the City of DeKalb and the City of Sycamore. Part of the issue is that if there is a taxi service in the City of DeKalb they can't necessarily serve the City of Sycamore as an example. A unified taxing code is an issue that was brought up at one of the DeKalb County Convention and Visitor's Bureau meetings. She said that if they are very different, that is, the codes, then this is a good point to look into.

Chairman Brown thanked Ms. Divita for coming and that the County is looking forward to working with her.

FOOD HUB STATUS – MR. DAN KENNEY

Mr. Dan Kenney gave a summary report about the creation of a Food Hub Center in DeKalb County. He said that about 25 to 30 people attended their first Food Hub meeting recently. He said that the creation of a Food Hub could amount to millions of dollars being brought into the County that could grow jobs. Food Hubs are a major connector between the public and the farmer. He said that they have been looking at the Quad Cities Food Hub as an example of a retail store. He mentioned that there is State law that was passed in 2010 that by 2020 all public schools and institutions in the State of Illinois would be locally sourced. He said that in the State of Illinois we spend \$48 million on food a year. Forty-six million of that money is spent out-of-State for food. Most of our food travels 1500 miles to get here, he further stated.

Mr. Kenney feels that there is an interest now in the community for a Food Hub. He did mention that the community could use a Local Foods Director/Grantwriter for the County. He said that maybe this employee could be shared by the County and the Community Foundation, he did not know. He said that this community needed to capture some of the grant funds that are available for development of future Food Hubs.

He would like to see a commercial and community kitchen in a facility for the public to use and a freezing option on-site. He said that they have been considering a facility located on South 7th Street in DeKalb. It is a warehouse and is an empty building currently.

Chairman Brown and the committee thanked Mr. Kenney for his report

FRIENDS OF SHABBONA LAKE – MS. DIANNE LEIFHEIT

Ms. Dianne Leifheit attended the Friends of Shabbona Lake Meeting. She said that they are trying to form a tax deductible 501 C 3 organization dedicated to helping, improving and growing Shabbona Lake State Park and raise money. The 501 C 3 has different rules and that they can apply for grants from the Department of Natural Resources, which run the parks. Parks have been cut for the last 15 years, she said. They also discussed drawing up bylaws and they have a board of directors now. They will meet again on April 2, 2015.

Mr. Borek said that last year the Shabbona Economic Development Group made a presentation to this committee about their plans for a trail to connect the Village with the Park. Monsanto contributed money to the Economic Development Corporation for the purposes of the Shabbona Economic Development Group to prepare an application for a grant to get the trail started.

DEKALB COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT – MR. MARK PIETROWSKI, JR.

Mr. Pietrowski, Jr., said that at our last meeting an idea of an Economic Development Summit was discussed. He said that Mr. Borek had just sent out an email to try to get together a conference call to finalize a location, date, etc. and to see if we want to work with the Center for Governmental Studies to facilitate this summit. He believed that we are looking at May to hold this summit.

Mr. Borek said that there will be a conference call to discuss format, facilitators, ideas, secure costs estimates and resources. He said that the Economic Development Corporation appreciates the fact that the County Board and the Economic Development Committee want to work together on this summit.

Chairman Brown said that from last month's meeting Mr. Borek thought that it would be beneficial to receive more input and broader input into what economic development opportunities may be out there and for people to buy into some of it.

Mr. Borek said that we also discussed where the County wanted to be in the next 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 years out there.

MONTHLY REPORT – MS. MARY SUPPLE

Ms. Supple gave a brief report to the committee regarding the DeKalb County Convention and Visitor's Bureau (DCCVB). She said that Ms. Debbie Armstrong stated that their website has seen 6,400 clicks from July 1, 2014 through January 23, 2015. They are averaging about 1,000 clicks a month. The three highest areas that people are looking for are: calendar events, dining and attractions. She also mentioned that the "March to Bourbon Street" at the Egyptian Theatre will be held in March so check out their website for the exact date.

The IHSA Destination DeKalb Project for 2015 will be starting very soon. Mr. Jay Vickers is the lead person at NIU for this project. In April 2015 they will start to push promotions and they hope to run the ads on Comcast Sports Net again. They will need to recruit volunteers for that weekend. There will be 3-hour shifts to fill on 11/27/15 and 11/28/15 and they will begin at 7:30a.m. They had 200 volunteers last year and that they will begin signing up volunteers in March. If anyone is interested in volunteering for this event to please let her know or Ms. Leifheit.

Ms. Supple said that Ms. Armstrong will be working with the IESA Wrestling group in March. She said that between 3,000 to 5,000 people should be attending that event that weekend in March.

She is also working with the Illinois Steppers who will be at the Egyptian Theatre on April 25, 2015 for competition. She said that there should be about 2,500 people in attendance for that weekend.

Ms. Supple said that NIU will be hosting a 50th Anniversary at Huskie Stadium for the 50 greatest player's event this year. They do not have a date yet.

She also mentioned that NIU will be holding 2-day orientation tours this summer for 14 days and that they will need volunteers for the bus tours. There will be an average of 55 to 80 people on the bus routes. If anyone is interested in volunteering for these tours to please let Dianne Leifheit or Ms. Supple know.

Ms. Supple then informed the committee briefly about the Arts Council. She said that they have approved their bylaws and conflict of interest statement. They are steps closer now to completing their 501 C 3 application to send in. NIU will be holding an event called "Artigras" which will be the largest art festival that DeKalb has ever seen. Thousands of people are expected to come together in the premier event for art, community and the individual spirit. NIU's School of Art and Design will be inviting everyone from the NIU and DeKalb communities to the event. There will be an art parade from downtown DeKalb to the NIU campus and then receptions will be of art student showcases and exhibitions on campus.

The committee thanked Ms. Supple for her report.

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NEXT MEETING DATE

Chairman Brown asked the committee if they still wanted to meet in April on the 7th since it is Election night. The committee agreed that they would keep the meeting on the 7th of April and not reschedule it.

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