

MINUTES

Jo Daviess County CEDS Committee

Tuesday, August 7, 5:00 p.m.
Highland College West, Elizabeth
Conference Room

IN ATTENDANCE: Members Dave Jansen, Vince Hasken, Pat Keleher, Elaine Klippert, Staff: Pat Leitzen Fye

ABSENT: Bill Wolter, Doug Riedl, Bridgette Stocks

GUESTS: Dan Reimer, County Administrator; Teresa Wittenauer, Blackhawk Hills R,C &D; Edward Sitar III, Commonwealth Edison; Terry Feinberg and Mark Maidak, University of Illinois Extension

MEETING CONVENED: 5:10 p.m. by Chairman Dave Jansen.

PRESENTATION: Both ComEd and University of Illinois were invited to present information on their Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) survey programs. Both entities provided background information on the importance of conducting BRE's, including the ability to uncover potential problems that negatively impact existing business expansion, fending off potential business downsizing or closures and assisting in "business to business" marketing. It also provides an opportunity to learn more about local businesses and develop relationships that can be mutually beneficial. Business is allowed an opportunity to voice their opinions and have "the ear" of government, which can be a critical point when deliberating expansion or considering closure.

Both quoted the statistic that it is easier and cheaper to maintain existing business than to attract new. Approximately 70-80% of new jobs come from existing business. Both emphasized the importance of government representation in the interview process, i.e., mayors, economic development professionals, county board chairs and members are integral to the process.

Both emphasized the importance of one-on-one interviews as opposed to telephone or mail surveys. While the questions asked are the same for each interview, the nuance is different, and the value comes from building the relationship.

Edward Sitar III from ComEd explained that the ComEd system is a tested method utilizing industry-specific software created just for this purpose (Synchronist, based in Wheaton, IL). It is both web-based and computer customizable, and offers the ability to analyze, aggregate, define and compare data in many ways. Two different tools can be utilized, dependent on the types of businesses to be interviewed. Copies of each survey tool were presented for committee review. All information gathered is confidential; reports are summarized and aggregated. The survey tool includes questions on demographic information as well as industry specific (non-proprietary) information and community and public service questions. The end result is a "risk score" for each business, as well as growth potential, value and satisfaction. The process is normally led by the economic development director with committee and/or volunteers who reports to mayor, county board chair, etc. He described three approaches: the "blitz" in which all the visits are made within a specified short period of time, or an ongoing effort with a weekly or monthly interview schedule, or a combination of an initial blitz followed by sustained

scheduling to complete the survey process. Typically a public meeting is held to report out the findings of the survey. ComEd would provide this service free in the communities they serve within the county; the other communities would be a negotiated item at the completion of the first phase of ComEd communities. Purchasing the software license is also an option for completion.

Terry Feinberg and Mark Maidak explained their program which offers the same end results with a different method of getting there. The survey tools would be customized to the county by a task force or committee who is charged with determining the goals and intentions of the BRE and developing the questions. This task force also would be responsible for conducting the survey, after completing training from Feinberg. They recommend 2 interviewers per visit – one to ask the questions, the second as a scribe, trading places at the next interview. Their method takes place over a two week period, followed by data entry, codification, formatting and reporting. The alternative is to hire Feinberg and her staff to develop surveys and conduct interviews on behalf of the county. The fees associated with the service vary depending on the level of volunteer activity vs. staff/consultant time. The U of I fee would probably range from \$2,500 to \$5,000 with up to 50% matched by the State of Illinois.

For either process, the CEDS committee would be responsible for careful consideration and determination of number and types of businesses to be surveyed and for the county-wide process. Both ComEd and U of I are available to consult and advise throughout the duration of the BRE process.

At 6:20 p.m., the committee returned to its regular agenda:

- I. Minutes of the June 5, 2007 meeting were approved with one amendment – to correct the spelling of Helen Schamberger's name - by unanimous vote on motion by Klippert, second by Keleher.
- II. Old Business:
 - a. BRE Survey: Considerable discussion took place regarding the presentations from each organization. By consensus, the committee favors the ComEd approach for its professionalism, proven tool and data reporting and comparison capabilities, however, at the next CEDS meeting in October, the committee will move to recommend a BRE provider to the Development & Planning committee of the county board for action in fiscal 2008. Before that meeting, each committee member will create a list of companies within their geographic location, defined by the following categories: manufacturing, service, agri-business, tourism. The questions also to be considered is in what direction would CEDS wish the county to go in terms of development? The answer directly affects how the BRE may be structured.
 - b. Data base upgrades: no change in status
 - c. Greenways & Trails Plan: The committee has been appointed and will begin meeting to develop the RFP for services.
 - d. CEDS regional meeting (Blackhawk Hills) is August 2, 2007, 9:30 a.m., in Milledgeville.
- III. New Business:

- a. As an “infrastructure” informational item, Leitzen Fye presented information on a propane distribution system that may be of benefit to Scales Mound, which is working to develop a residential TIF (such a distribution system may be a TIF eligible activity) and the county in general in developing residential or commercial subdivisions. The benefits include volume pricing, improved aesthetics and attraction of developers. Jansen discussed the cooperative propane buying venture at Galena Territory and Apple Canyon Lake properties which as served both very well. There were questions regarding the system, with potential pitfalls being administration, timing and regulations, competition and maintenance. It may be worthwhile for Scales Mound to consider the co-op model.
- b. The Economic Summit has been set for Wednesday, 3 October; location still to be determined. Leitzen Fye will email her information to the committee; committee will assist in preparation and the day of the summit.
- c. Member roundtable:
 - i. Pat Keleher reported that Scales Mound is progressing on its TIF district efforts.
 - ii. Vince Hasken reported on the announced closure of Vroom Auto Mall and that the City of East Dubuque has been working very hard on the TIF districts and on the new businesses they are trying to attract.
 - iii. Elaine Klippert noted that an Elizabeth icon, “Bishop’s Busy Big Store” is closed for good; also noted its historic significance and its ideal location and setting for a variety of businesses.
 - iv. Dave Jansen reported that the acquisition of the 140-acre property just east of Elizabeth is nearing completion; residential development is expected. Also noted that the water/sewer line issues have been settled and are in process of being installed to the new Galena hospital. He also reported on a new small business in Galena.

IV. Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 2, 2007, 5:00 p.m. at Highland College West Campus in Elizabeth. Adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Pat Leitzen Fye