? The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Wednesday, September 3 with all members present. The minutes of previous meetings and all claims were approved unanimously.

As part of a presentation intended to solicit additional funding, Washington County Economic Growth Partnership (WCEGP) Executive Director, Jerry Rose, gave the Commissioners a summary of the operating budgets for economic development agencies in other Southern Indiana counties.

“If we want to run with the big dogs, we need to put more money into our recruiting and marketing efforts.” said Rose.

According to information quoted by Rose, Washington County is spending, in some cases, only 25-30 percent of what other counties of similar size are allocating to economic development activities.

Rose went on to inform the Board that the WCEGP operating budget for 2008 is $158,000 but that it is only going to be able to fund $110,000. Rose explained that the 2008 funding breaks down across four sources:

* $30,000 from Washington County.
* $60,000 from City of Salem.
* $10,000 from farm rental in industrial park.
* $11,000 from membership dues.

Rose requested that the Commissioners increase the county funding by $45,000 in 2009. Rose suggested that the increase is equal to only 3/4 mile of paving for county roads. Over the last several years, the Commissioners have allocated nearly 95 percent of the entire County Economic Development Income Tax Fund plus other sizable funds for paving.

When asked what would WCEGP do with the additional funding, Rose was quick to cite a number of promotional and recruiting activities such as advertising in trade journals and recruiting visits to Louisville, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis. Rose likened Washington County to having a nice car that you want to sell but not being able or willing to advertise it or put a “for sale” sign on it in a prominent location.

The Commissioners replied to Rose’s comments by saying that there is only enough money in the 2009 budget to pave four miles of county roads and that Rose’s request would put additional strain on that fund.

Rose informed the Board that since the first of the year, the WCEGP has worked with 20 different companies looking to relocate or expand, of which 12 inquiries have been in the last five months. Of those perspective employers, five have toured the county and four are still active.

Commissioner Mike Goering said that in 2005, the Board allocated an additional $25,000 for the the WCEGP but that the funds were never requested. In addition, Goering said that Washington County has spent approximately $450,000 on the industrial park over the years.

Rose acknowledged the development money for the industrial park but emphasized that additional money is still

needed to promote the county as a good place for businesses to locate.

Commissioner Byron Green said, “We support your efforts; our problem is financial. We don’t know what the future holds. It would be premature for us to make that commitment (for next year). We have helped in the past with in-kind support.”

In other business, the Board unanimously passed a resolution giving themselves authority to make “small purchases” for supplies other than real property without obtaining competitive bids up to the state mandated limit of $50,000. The resolution does not apply to services.

The Board unanimously voted to appoint Jerry Short and William Smith to the Blue River Fire District Board.

In addition, Frank Sullivan and Jack Mahuron were appointed to the Hoosier Uplands Board unanimously.

With no further business to consider, the Board adjourned until its next regularly schedule meeting on Wednesday September 17.