

County Council calls for Strategic Economic Development Plan

Written by

Wednesday, 11 March 2009 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 11 March 2009 13:05

The Washington County Council met in regular session on March 2 with all members present. The minutes of previous meetings plus payroll and all claims were approved unanimously.

Hank Jacoby of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce (CC) made a presentation to the Council about Washington County's assets and opportunities for improvement based on criteria contained in the "CNN/Money Top 100 Places to Live" list. Jacoby focused on Hoosier cities and towns included in the list and compared the data from those communities with that of Washington County.

Emphasizing that Washington County must have a vision for competing in a global economy and a strategy to bring business revenue into the county by marketing worldwide, Jacoby said that the time is right to redefine economic development plans. He went on to point out the fact that new opportunities always seem to arise out of downward economic trends. Jacoby suggested that current efforts by the Chamber, the Washington County Economic Growth Partnership (WCEGP) and the Washington County Tourism Board (WCTB) to find common ground and to explore ways to work together for the good of the county could not be coming at a better time.

At the end of the presentation, Council members asked questions and engaged in discussion with not only Jacoby, but Jess Helsel of WCEGP and Chris Strange of the WCTB as well. Council President, Mark Manship told the representatives of the three organizations that the Council would like to see a proposal for a County Strategic Economic Development Plan that all three groups could sign off on. Manship said that the action taken by the Council and Commissioners last year to earmark 25% of the CEDIT money for non-road work economic development projects could make available as much as \$150,000 per year for those projects. Jacoby, Helsel and Strange all agreed to work toward developing such a plan with their respective memberships and report back to the Council.

In other business, the Council took the following action:

Unanimously voted to amend the salary ordinance to provide for combining the positions of Emergency Management Director and 911 Director.

Unanimously voted to approve tax abatements for Blue River Holdings.

Unanimously approved various additions and transfers within the 2009 budget.

With no additional business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned until the next regularly scheduled Council meeting on Monday, April 6, at 7pm. The location of the meeting will be the Pekin Park shelter house.