

**Minutes of the
Treasure Coast Economic Development District
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee Meeting**

Thursday, May 10, 2007

The following members and staff were present:

Martin County	Pauline Becker Kevin Powers
Palm Beach County	Paul Skyers Richard Staudinger Kathryn Schmidt
St. Lucie County	Larry Daum Candace Walker Karen Russell Gwenda Thompson
Visitors	Pablo Diaz Cesar Perez
Staff	Greg Vaday Trayce Jones

Roll was called and a quorum was present.

Motion was made by Richard Staudinger and seconded by Pauline Becker to approve the minutes from the last meeting, March 8, 2007. Motion was approved unanimously.

Motion was made by Pauline Becker and seconded by Richard Staudinger to approve the agenda for the meeting. Motion was approved unanimously.

Greg Vaday introduced Kevin Powers, new Martin County representative.

2007 CEDS Plan Rewrite – Progress Update

Greg Vaday reminded the CEDS members that the revision of the CEDS Plan has to be completed by September 30, 2007 to be submitted to the Economic Development Administration (EDA). He had asked members to think about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT Analysis), faced by the region and did receive some comments back since the last meeting. Mr. Vaday reminded the committee that EDA is concerned about regional issues, not local issues.

Strengths

The first strength discussed was the growing population and positive in-migration. Gwenda Thompson said that population growth has long been among retirees but now it is among the working population. A second strength, fast rate of job growth and job opportunity in the region was discussed. A third strength is the high regard for quality of life issues, including tourism and high-tech business moving in. Larry Daum mentioned the Atlantic Ocean, sports, and export capabilities because of the Fort Pierce and Palm Beach ports. Available raw land in the north of our region was also discussed.

Weaknesses

Greg Vaday mentioned the lack of industrial (economic) diversity and the need to bring this to the attention of elected officials, especially as they set policies that affect new businesses moving into the region. Greg Vaday said that more land needs to be rezoned for industrial/PDR land. Other weaknesses discussed were the lack of workforce housing and the skills are mismatched for the needs of industry. The problem of gang violence, the influx of other cultures, and an underfunded criminal justice system were also mentioned, particularly in regard to Palm Beach County. The structure of property taxes and insurance costs was discussed. Kathryn Schmidt said in Palm Beach County that the younger worker population seems to be declining and that insurance and taxes are causing younger and older people to leave the area.

Opportunities

Job growth, concentrated low wage sectors, and the need for research and development clusters was discussed. It was noted that additional resources for education are needed for more technical training for students. Regarding growing population, Greg Vaday emphasized that as we align our educational priorities and economic development priorities, we can start to develop more technical job opportunities for more people to participate in. The growing cultural diversity was discussed, as well as the need for more support and training for business entrepreneurs.

Threats

It was noted that infrastructure systems and resources are stretched by residential and economic growth. Much of the job growth has been concentrated in low-wage priorities. Greg Vaday said that a network in the public sector and a partner in the private sector is needed to help entrepreneurs develop. Richard Staudinger pointed out that this is a lack of understanding of the importance of entrepreneurs and it should be mentioned under the heading "Threats". There is a need to educate the entrepreneur on the process needed to manufacture and market their developed product, as well as in the development of a business plan. Intergovernmental coordination on a regional level is needed.

The effect of natural disasters and their disruption to economy and migration and the lack of an effective economic resiliency plan was discussed.

Staff would distribute the Regional SWOT Analysis prior to the next meeting.

Public Comment

None.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:46 p.m.