

## ***Pulaski County Economic Development***

Monterey Town Hall  
Monterey, Indiana  
7 August 2012

### **Guest Presentation**

PCED members present: Past President David Broad, Membership Officer Jamie Bales (Francesville); Medaryville Board-of-Trustees Vice-President Derrick Stalbaum, Monterey Board-of-Trustees President Jim Fleury; Becky Anspach, Dave Zeltwanger; Executive Director Nathan P. Origer (*ex-officio*). Secretary Andrew Fritz arrived at 6:55 p.m.

Guests: Lawrence Loehmer, Loehmer's Do it Best Hardware and Farm Supply; Mary Perren, Pulaski County *Journal*; Terry Young, candidate for Pulaski County Commissioner, District One.

Mr. Loehmer appeared before the Board, at 6:50 p.m., to discuss his downtown-Monterey business and the many services that it provides beyond hardware supply. He had been working in a factory since early 1984 when, in 1996, he purchased the store from the previous owners; he conceived of it as a "retirement project" and intended to continue at the factory. Following a change of ownership and lean times at the factory, he left and took the hardware on full-time. Suggesting that most failures in business occur because of a lack of confidence, Mr. Loehmer explained that rather than fail because of flat sales, he found opportunities to diversify the business, including irrigation and generator installation and service; small-scale drainage-tile sales; and, in the wake of the closure of the mini-mart in Monterey, bread, milk, and other basic groceries. His sales have increased every year, despite the flat hardware sales. In the winter, he also carries wood pellets for stoves. In addition to the store, Mr. Loehmer has mini-storage units in town, and he farms; he spoke of plans for agricultural innovations that he intends to implement on his land in 2013.

As Mr. Loehmer continued, discussion ensued regarding the deleterious effects of the closing of Monterey Elementary School on his business and the town generally, the 2012 drought and its ramifications for local agricultural, the irrigation/road-closure crisis that occurred earlier in the summer, and northern Indiana's underground-water wealth. At the end of his talk, Mr. Loehmer was thanked by Director Origer and the Board and then departed.

### **Regular Meeting Minutes**

PCED members present: As noted above. PCED members absent: President Rod Button, Vice-President Cheryl Stone; County Commissioner Ken Boswell, County Councilor Alex Haschel, Christy Perdue (Chamber); Bill Champion. Guests: Ms. Perren; Mr. Young.

### **Call to Order**

In the absence of the president and vice-president, and with Sec'y Fritz's deferring to experience, Mr. Broad called the meeting to order at 7:29 p.m.

### **Approval of Minutes**

After brief review, a motion to approve the minutes of the 5 June meeting was made by Mr. Zeltwanger. Trustee Stalbaum seconded, and all approved without further discussion.

### **Public Comment**

With Mr. Broad's consent, Director Origer acknowledged the guests. Mr. Young complimented Mr. Loehmer's talk and commented briefly on the irrigation/road-closure controversy.

### **Executive Director's Report**

*Strategic Relationships:* The director reported on various meetings attended and activities undertaken in June and July, including an open-house celebrating the new truck-parts store at Link Environmental. He attended the open-house dinner in Francesville hosted by Tate & Lyle (T&L), new owners of the Overmyer elevator. He noted that because the railroad on the west side is operated by CSX, T&L's Lafayette facilities are along NS lines, and the two rail companies rarely

cooperate easily, the company is not likely to rely on rail service unless they eventually ship cross-country in bulk tanks. Mr. Broad enquired as to why and how the company chose Francesville: they had already done business with the Overmyers in the past, and the site not far from their plants. The second quarterly newsletter was distributed in mid-July.

*Infrastructure:* In early June, negotiations with Plymouth Tube regarding the proposed substation continued; Hot Mill General Manager Gavin Ford and the Town were able to reach a tentative agreement, and Mr. Ford was to present the proposal to his superiors later in the summer for their approval before any official agreement could be made. Director Origer reported that if a formal agreement be reached amongst the Company, Town, and County, then the substation could be operational by spring of 2013, and then previously discussed expansions at Plymouth Tube would become feasible; the substation could also provide for additional future expansions.

The Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals would both be conducting public hearings later in the month. Director Origer reported having communicated frequently with Frank Patton, of Great Lakes Basin, LLC, regarding potential railroad development in northwestern Indiana. With \$51,000 awarded in grant money, Winamac would be paving the Panhandle Pathway from the southern corporate limits to the depot; if the Safe Routes to School grant were to be awarded in October, then some of that money would go toward further lengthening the trail, too.

*Business Retention/Expansion and Entrepreneurial Development:* The Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) committee unanimously recommended that the Commissioners approve a \$132,000 loan request to T&S Recycle, LLC; they did so, pending re-zoning of the property to be purchased. Would the loan be made, then the RLF's balance would be about \$26,500 at that point, with an estimated year-end balance of about \$70,000. Director Origer reported having had a productive, informative meeting with new GalFab President Greg Podell; he would have a follow-up meeting with Mr. Podell and Jan Bailey, of Ivy Tech Corporate College, regarding workforce development. Discussion ensued.

*Marketing:* The director attended the monthly Rural-and-Rustic meeting; met with Jim Walton, of Brand Acceleration, regarding the regional Website; and conducted a statewide mass distribution of local and regional tourism brochures.

*Professional Development:* Director Origer reported having attended the Indiana Economic Development Association's summer conference; Congressman Donnelly's non-profit workshop in South Bend with Jacki Frain, of Pulaski County Human Services; the Community-Foundation-/Extension-sponsored talk on agricultural land value at the county fair; and the "Supporting Healthy Downtowns" workshop hosted by the Indiana Municipal Power Agency (IMPA). Sec'y Fritz and Mr. Zeltwanger added their thoughts about the talk at the fair, praising speaker Chris Hurt, of Purdue, and elaborating on the information that he provided about land values and this year's drought. Mr. Zeltwanger explained that Mr. Hurt argued that the market's response to the drought is masking what will happen with commodity prices, and that land values will level off in response to commodity-price leveling.

Winamac Clerk-Treasurer Melanie Burger, and Francesville resident Darlene Mellon, who has expressed interest in establishing a Main Street, attended the IMPA event with the director; they and he all were pleased with the workshop. The director suggested the possibility of a countywide Main Street group better to leverage assets and volunteer efforts.

*Other:* The steering committee for the Hospital's community-health-needs assessment met to review draft survey, to schedule future meetings, and to brainstorm ideas for improved healthcare access in the county; the director would be compiling demographic data prior to the next meeting.

*Workforce Development:* Director Origer attended a forum focused on the development of the State's Five-Year Strategic Workforce Investment Plan, at the Center of Workforce Innovations in Valparaiso. Mrs. Anspach enquired about the status of WorkOne in Pulaski County, noting that after multiple phone calls to the Winamac and Knox offices, she received a response from someone in Gary; discussion ensued, and Mr. Broad, who serves on the regional workforce board, explained that, as he understands the plan, Winamac office hours would remain limited, but not vacated, as Mrs. Anspach had been led to believe. The director would look into the matter.

Pulaski County's unemployment rate was 7.0 percent in June, up from 6.2 percent in May, but still second-best in the region. The director estimated a real unemployment rate of 8.05 percent or 12.44 percent — between 550 and 845 out-of-work and underemployed potential workers —, depending on which calculation is employed.

*Financial Report:* At the end of May, \$62,883.83 remained in PCED's budget; the 2013 budget was briefly discussed. The entire CEDIT Fund had a balance of about \$1.965 million, about \$1.9 million of which was not appropriated. Discussion ensued regarding CEDIT expenditures for purposes other than direct economic-development operations and projects. The balance of the Donation Fund was \$2,333.56, and the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) had a balance of just more than \$150,000. All borrowers continue to repay on time.

*Priority List and Monthly Calendar:* Forthcoming events on the director's schedule for August were reviewed. Of note were those mentioned above; a welding-class-committee meeting; and a presentation to the Winamac Kiwanis by Ron Gifford, of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation and the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center, who was made a presentation earlier in the year as part of the Year-of-the-Entrepreneur programming. Mr. Fleury added that Monterey Days would be taking place over Labor-Day Weekend and provided some detail about the festivities.

On a call from Mr. Broad, Trustee Stalbaum moved to approve the Executive Director's and Financial Reports; Mr. Zeltwanger seconded. Without discussion, the Reports were approved by all.

### Old Business

*Ivy-Tech update:* The director reiterated that, for now, Ivy Tech has shelved plans for a satellite site in Winamac, citing statewide enrollment and fiscal issues, and significantly fewer Pulaski-County residents enrolled at Logansport than had applied for admission. Kokomo Vice-Chancellor/Logansport Dean Kevin Bostic had expressed belief that successfully holding a class in Winamac over a number of semesters could show that future investment would be worthwhile for Ivy Tech; currently, one freshman seminar would be held in Winamac in the fall term, and Director Origer would continue to work with Ivy Tech to find a suitable location, with the Pulaski Memorial Hospital board room being one option under consideration.

*2013 Budget Proposal:* The director was to appear before the County Council on Tuesday, 14 August, at 9:45 a.m.

*Brownfields Assessment (KIRPC):* The director reported that it seemed that this project would be moving forward and requested that members inform him of any locations that they would like to see be considered; the old service station at the curve on US-35 across from the Winamac Plaza was mentioned.

*2012: Year of the Entrepreneur:* Director Origer expressed his pleasure with the Summit and the run-up programming; he thanked the members who participated in the Summit and asked for reflections from the member. He further encouraged the Board to consider how PCED could build upon the successes and what programming could be repeated or added in the future. Mr. Zeltwanger encouraged "hav[ing] another excuse to have these events", remarking that they were beneficial and need to be promoted and repeated for the benefit of the small-business community.

*OSHA 30 training:* Discussion resumed regarding hosting OSHA 30 training, provided by Heritage Safety, in Pulaski County. It was the pleasure of the Board that PCED proceed with this project; on a motion from Trustee Fleury and a second from Trustee Stalbaum, the members voted unanimously that, pending approval of the County Commissioners, PCED subsidize the costs, as an incentive to local companies to take advantage of this opportunity, with PCED's contribution not to exceed 20% of total costs or \$2,000. It was expected that, for a twenty-person course, costs would be approximately \$10,000, though Heritage Safety had expressed willingness to work to keep costs low. The director would confirm dates with Heritage Safety and then work to find a location and to promote the opportunity to in-county businesses.

*Committees:* Director Origer reiterated his interest in the Tourism Committee's producing a new Pulaski-County tourism brochure. Discussion ensued regarding tourism attractions, particularly those in the vicinity of Monterey. Trustee Fleury mentioned logjams that had been limiting river access, as well as the National Register designation received for the bandstand at Kloeckner Park. The director mentioned inchoate plans to incorporate Woodruff's Bridge (former State Road 29's crossing of the Tippecanoe River, south of Winamac) into a short spur off of the Panhandle Pathway.

Regarding the Small-Business-/Entrepreneurial-Development Committee, Director Origer expressed his desire more actively to involve the members in any further Year-of-the-Entrepreneur programming; they and the Youth Retention should play a role in the proposed student-business-

plan competition, which he briefly discussed. He had nothing to report regarding the PC-CARE Committee; Mr. Zeltwanger mentioned the Illinois-based business that Director Origer was working to bring to the Francesville area. The director explained that he had been looking for a viable property, but had yet to find a workable location for the business; Mr. Zeltwanger suggested relying on a Francesville-area real-estate agent to help with any cold-calling. Discussion ensued.

*ITC (MidWest Indiana)/Northwest Indiana Forum:* Returning to this topic, the director noted that one source of frustration with current arrangements is that a good portion of ITC meetings is devoted to updates from the Lafayette-area workforce-development office and Small Business Development Center, whereas Pulaski County is part of the northwestern region for both entities. Although he sometimes obtains helpful insight or information, programming from these groups and certain workforce-development scholarships are not open to residents of Pulaski County. However, membership in the group does also permit for additional networking and marketing opportunities. Any decision regarding dual membership or picking one over the other could be delayed until after the County Council reviewed the proposed 2013 budget.

### New Business

*New Market Tax Credits for Northwest Indiana:* Director Origer explained that Frank Hoffman, a partner at Krieg DeVault and a leader in the field of New Market Tax Credits (NMTC) in Indiana, had contacted him about serving on the advisory board for a group he is attempting to establish to open the seven counties of northwestern Indiana (the six member-counties of the Northwest Indiana Forum, plus Pulaski) to NMTC. He provided a brief overview of how NMTC provide a federal-tax incentive to develop in qualifying low-income Census tracts that developers may otherwise neglect. The incentive can be as high as thirty-nine percent, and the success record and ability of the NMTC program to leverage private investment have been quite impressive nationwide. He noted that, per the 2010 Census, two Pulaski-County tracts qualify: that including and immediately surrounding Winamac, and that containing northwestern and north-central Pulaski County. Projects that could be eligible for NMTC incentives include industrial-land acquisition and industrial infrastructure, industrial development, and certain retail projects. He included a substantial appendix of NMTC information with the meeting packet. He encouraged the Board to review the materials and promised to report further once the group had first met.

*Great Lakes Basin, LLC/Future railroad development:* Director Origer reported on the conversations that he had had with Frank Patton, who has met with various railroad, financial, and state-government officials about building a “Chicago-bottleneck-bypass” rail line in tandem with the proposed Illiana Expressway, and then building farther east to provide rail linkage through northwestern Indiana that could include connections with existing rails in Starke, Pulaski, and LaPorte Counties. Discussion ensued.

*Welding class:* The director reported that the welding-class committee had met to discuss the future of the program, particularly *in re* fiscal sustainability; the primary question is whether the program is valuable *enough* to justify its costs. The position of that board was that continuing the program is worthwhile, but perhaps the curricula could be altered, with local-industry input, better to meet specific welding needs in the area, and that other skills-training could perhaps be provided.

### Community Reports

- Mr. Broad: Now a full-fledged ALS provider, Alliance EMS has added employees, expects to hire more, and has seen a 20-percent increase in profits. The southern storefront in the Market-Street building home to Miller’s is on the market for lease.
- Secretary Fritz: The 2012 drought is taking its toll. Only about one-quarter of corn nationwide has been judged to be good-to-excellent. This is having an effect on meat supply and prices; also, Secretary Fritz suggested, revoking the ethanol mandate will not have a meaningful impact, as some are urging, and that speculation is a much bigger problem.
- Mr. Bales: Bankers are making visits to area farmers, reassuring them of the Bank’s support in these trying times. Crops near Monterey look relatively good, as do plants in northwestern Indiana, but otherwise, inspections have revealed rough-looking fields. Fortunately, farmers, in general, have better cushions than during previous drought years. Pearlle Mae’s in

Francesville closed, and a religious group now has the building; the town would benefit from another restaurant. Loan rates remain low; home-buying has increased compared to renting.

- Mrs. Anspach: As a result of the conditions affecting farmers, Bonnell Grain Handling has seen a slowdown in business. A number of Star-City–sewer users have yet to tie in, despite the 1-August deadline. No decision had been made regarding how to address this situation.
- Trustee Stalbaum: The Peak Inn has reopened; its first weekend saw many patrons, especially over busy lunch hours. All that remains of the storm-sewer project is grass-seeding. The Decorating Committee’s fundraiser was successful, with a standing-room-only crowd at the bash at Peak.
- Mr. Zeltwanger: He has done no work for farmers of late, for the same reasons mentioned by Mrs. Anspach; the agricultural mindset is one of a “holding pattern” right now. He is working on the Catholic church in North Judson and encouraged anyone interested in the beauty of church architecture and stained-glass windows to visit it. Parkview Haven remains on the market, with the Board awaiting a decision from a potential buyer. Mr. Zeltwanger enquired about Historical-Society contacts, expressing an interest in more historic-preservation work. Names were provided.
- Trustee Fleury: Monterey Days run from Friday evening through Monday afternoon over Labor-Day Weekend.

#### Public Comment

- Mr. Young: When previously commissioner, Mr. Young served on the CDC; he professed never having “seen such proactivity” from the group as he witnessed at this meeting. He also expressed that the dealings with the logjams in the Tippecanoe seem to be being handled appropriately.

#### Adjournment

With no additional business, Director Origer asked that the Board adjourn. Trustee Fleury moved to do so, Mr. Zeltwanger seconded, and all approved to end the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrew Fritz, Secretary