

HARDEE COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (EDA)
(INDEPENDENT BOARD)
COUNTY COMMISSION CHAMBERS
412 WEST ORANGE STREET, ROOM 102
WAUCHULA, FLORIDA 33873
January 27, 2009 8:30 A.M.

MINUTES

Members:

David Royal, Vice-Chairman, P
Bill Beattie, P
Paul Samuels, P
Vanessa Hernandez, P
Roger Hood, P

Bridget Merrill, A
Perry Knight, P
Bill Lambert, Chairman, P
Bobby Smith, P

County Attorney Ken Evers, P
Office Manager Sandy Meeks, P

County Manager Lexton H. Albritton, Jr., P

Chairman Lambert called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

Chairman Lambert opened the meeting by welcoming new member Vanessa Hernandez to the Board.

MOTION by Royal, second by Samuels to approve the agenda with the addition of Item VI. Discussion on Job Retention Philosophy and moving Discuss next meeting date to Item VII. **Motion carried unanimously.**

MOTION by Knight, second by Hood to approve the September 29, 2008, regular meeting minutes. **Motion carried unanimously.**

- I. Welcome & Introduce new member Vanessa Hernandez representing the Chamber of Commerce.

Please see above.

- II. Elect new Officers.

County Attorney Evers explained to the Board they had a Chair & Vice-Chair they nominated and opened the floor for any nominations. **MOTION by Beattie, second by Smith** to nominate Bill Lambert as Chairman and David Royal as Vice-Chairman. **Motion carried unanimously.**

- III. Acknowledge receipt of the Clerk's Financial Report for periods ending 09/30/08, 10/31/08, 11/30/08, & 12/31/08.

MOTION by Royal, second by Knight to acknowledge receipt of the Clerk's Financial Report for periods ending 09/30/08, 10/31/08, 11/30/08, & 12/31/08. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Chairman Lambert did advise the Board that their interest income was down substantially and may require some budget adjustments in the future.

- IV. Acknowledge receipt of the Project Status Reports from the City of Wauchula, Industrial Development Authority, and the Hardee County Board of County Commissioners.

Chairman Lambert advised he thought the Harvest Aviation Project would be complete in April. He explained there were some problems with the building design and whether they should purchase septic tanks or run the water and sewer from the county. County Manager Albritton advised they were working on resolving the issues and would make it work.

Chairman Lambert advised the Industrial Development Authority received a grant from the Board in 2007 for Phase II of the Industrial Park and they have had some projects that they had been retarding the spending of the money on because they felt like they could appropriately spend the money if the projects materialized, but the economy had kept their decision making ability in a state of flux. He went on to explain how they did not really know when they may need the money and they may look at redirecting it if more pressing issues arose. He also advised he had spoken with Joe Albritton regarding the Heartland Property & Casualty Insurance Company project and they still had three or four viable options on making their project work, but did advise that if it looked liked their project was not going to materialize, they would let the Board know as soon as possible.

Park Winter, Hardee County Director of Utilities, advised all the engineers were here to meet with the County after the meeting regarding the County's project. He further advised they were looking at moving the project forward by early spring.

Royal advised the City of Wauchula's Electric Substation Project should be started by March and completed in November.

MOTION by Knight, second by Hood to acknowledge receipt of the Project Status Reports from the City of Wauchula, Industrial Development Authority, and the Hardee County Board of County Commissioners. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Chairman Lambert advised the Board they were trying to get an idea on what their receipts would be for the upcoming year, but had not received the information yet, but it appeared the total for the State was down by almost two million. County Manager Albritton stated they received information from C.F. Industries, but was waiting on further information from Hamilton County. After further discussion, Chairman Lambert advised he believed they should have between \$1.7 and \$2 million for disbursement. He further reminded the Board that they did ask the City of Bowling Green and the Town of Zolfo Springs to stand down last cycle on their request and they have been very patient in the process and did graciously stand down last cycle.

- V. Discussion on setting up internal fund for Economic Development Council to manage.

Chairman Lambert advised this was placed on the agenda from a discussion that had occurred with Merrill during one of the meetings where she had suggested they set up a quick closing account, so that they could work faster on helping small businesses. Chairman Lambert advised he was not sure how this could work with the rules, but wanted to place the discussion on the agenda, so they could ask the County Manager and County Attorney to begin looking at some feasibility on implementing this. He explained that Merrill had suggested they set up a fund for the Economic Development Council (EDC)

to administer and that they set up rules jointly and further advised they would be audited to ensure things were done properly, but the main objective was to get things done faster. He explained he was apprehensive on setting all this up since it had taken them two years to set the Board's rules up, but their progress with the money was slow. Commissioner Smith asked how much would be set aside. Chairman Lambert advised it would be up to the Board and depended on what the Board had. He further advised for everyone to contemplate that as they moved forward and if they agreed, he would ask the County Manager and County Attorney to communicate with Mr. Bradley on his role in the process and how much latitude he felt they had. Samuels asked if the EDC would submit an application to the Board. Chairman Lambert advised they would. Commissioner Smith asked if they could tweak it and make it to where they (EDA) had the final say. Chairman Lambert advised the problem was they tended to commit every dollar and in his position, when businesses came to town, all he could tell them was if you can wait until next April, there will be an EDA grant cycle opening up. He went on to explain how they would have to put their project on hold until the funds became available and then there was no guarantee they would receive the grant funds. **MOTION by Knight, second by Smith** to table the discussion until everyone was present to discuss. County Manager Albritton advised they could ask Representative Troutman and Senator Alexander to amend the local bill to meet their needs with the quick action fund. Chairman Lambert asked if they would amend their motion to include the County Manager looking into having the local bill amended. **MOTION by Knight, second by Smith** to table discussion and direct the County Manager to look into having the local bill amended to meet their needs. **Motion carried unanimously.**

VI. Discussion on Job Retention Philosophy.

Chairman Lambert began the discussion with stating he did not know if business closings were true job retention scenarios. He mentioned English Chevrolet closing and how there would be 25 to 40 good jobs lost and how they were the sole supplier of a service to our community. He went on to explain they may want to look into propping up some of the businesses that were closing in certain circumstances. He also advised he was not recommending they do it, but thought they should discuss the issue. He further explained that he had not had a request for this discussion from anyone, but in his duties as Economic Development Director he felt he should try to look at options and alternatives. He stated he just wanted to pose to them today if they should be considering job retention in conjunction with job creation. Hood stated he felt that job retention was very important and they should discuss it further and asked if it would require a legislative change. County Manager Albritton touched on the difficulty in making sure the business did not end up closing anyway after they received the grant funds. Commissioner Smith advised this needed to be looked at very carefully. Chairman Lambert touched on how they had only one job creation application and there was really no commitment from them beyond year two and with job retention they could get some historical information on the business and they could do an analysis on the business and see if they could be saved before they granted any funds to the business. Samuels advised he thought it was worth discussing, but needed to be looked at very carefully. Chairman Lambert stated the other side of the argument that the public would never understand...that they (the EDA) had power to save a business that was very much needed in the community and if they did not pursue it, they would be just as remiss if they threw money at a bad business and it closed. He also stated how the money would be escrowed and they would only receive the money if they stayed open. Commissioner Smith asked if they had the quick action fund, could it be used for job retention. Chairman Lambert advised he thought this Board (EDA) needed to deal with the

job retention requests. County Manager Albritton reminded the Board that if they helped businesses like that, the businesses would have to be willing to open their books up to public scrutiny. After further discussion, Chairman Lambert asked the Board if they felt there were circumstances where job retention was just as worthy as job creation. Everyone agreed. Chairman Lambert stated that everyone agreed that job retention could be a consideration, but they were not sure about the rules allowing them to do that. Knight advised that needed to be their first step. Hood asked why the EDC couldn't take the responsibility for those types of requests with the quick action fund. Hernandez asked if they could grant the EDC a grant and businesses could borrow against it. Chairman Lambert advised if that happened the EDC would make sure the business demonstrated to the EDA why they should be worthy for job retention. Chairman Lambert asked if they had enough information to add job retention to their rule making authority or expand job creation just to include retention. **MOTION by Knight, second by Smith** to direct County Manager and County Attorney to determine whether they could expand their rule making authority to include job retention and job creation or otherwise look at amending the local bill to define both. **Motion carried unanimously.**

VII. Discuss next meeting date.

Chairman Lambert advised the next meeting was set for March 24, 2009. He advised if the issues could be accelerated they would call and advertise a meeting earlier. He also explained if the meeting was on March 24, 2009, they would meet at the EDC office since they were having the school board election in the Board Room.

Meeting adjourned at 09:45 a.m.

William R. Lambert, Jr., Chairman