

# **Benton Development Group**

## **Board of Directors Meeting – January**

The monthly meeting of the Benton Development Group was held Wednesday, January 31, 2006, at the Newhall New Pavilion, Newhall, Iowa. The following directors, staff and visitors were present: Marty Junge – Benton County; Dave Vermedahl – Benton County; Rod Kubichek – Benton County; Dave Coulter – Benton County; Eldon Zumbach – Benton County; Dave Becker – Atkins; James Daily – Belle Plaine; Richard Grovert – Newhall; Jack Barnes - Norway; Jim Magdefrau – Van Horne; Frank Van Steenhuyse – Vinton Unlimited; Ranae Tharp – Executive Director; and advisory members/guests: Greg Pavelka – East Central Iowa REC and Kathy Daily – Belle Plaine.

- I. Dave Coulter called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
- II. Quorum determined.
- III. December 6, 2006 meeting minutes. Jim Daily made a motion to approve; Richard Grovert second. Unanimously approved.
- IV. The treasurer's financial report for November and December: Dave Becker made a motion to approve; Jim Daily second. Unanimously approved.
- V. ***Business / Committee Reports***

### **A. Internal Business**

Ranae provided the board with a copy of the 2006/2007 budget and explained that not much would change; possibly some line items but total operating expenses would not change. Dave Coulter told the board that looking at the Benton County Community Foundation for reimbursement would be a good idea; Ranae will bring a bill to the next meeting for review.

The 2007 fundraiser and industry survey was released January 29<sup>th</sup> to over 725 businesses. Ranae brought copies of the forms (press release, letter, fundraising levels and industry survey). In 2006 there was just over \$6,500 raised.

### **B. Community / County Projects**

Ranae attended the following community meetings:

Urbana Area Development Corp (UADC) on January 9<sup>th</sup> to update the group on the Iowa Connections partnership. The group talked about a brochure like business directory and Ranae explained how BDG could assist.

Benton/Iowa Realtors on January 9<sup>th</sup> to discuss zoning, GIS and LOIS.

Belle Plaine Development on January 18<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> to assist them in hiring a director.

Representative Dawn Pettengill at her small business forum on January 20<sup>th</sup> in Van Horne.

RC&D (Resource Conservation & Development) on January 25<sup>th</sup> to discuss Federal designation for the Iowa Valley Scenic Byway.

Vinton Unlimited annual meeting on January 29<sup>th</sup> at the IBSSS.

Ranae had no number for visitors to the [www.bentoncountyiowa.com](http://www.bentoncountyiowa.com) website but told the board she would like to see the website get a new look and told them to forward any changes.

Iowa Connections (the 5-county regional alliance) had their meeting January 19<sup>th</sup> with Strategic America (the marketing firm) who presented a marketing plan draft. To help in the marketing plan each county was asked to prioritize the target market list which included Specialty Food Processing/Renewable Fuel, Warehouse/Distribution/Plastic Products Manufacturing, Building/Home Products, Financial/Tourism/Hospitality/Retail, and Site Selectors. The regional group has started to discuss tradeshows and sell Iowa trips to attend. Iowa Connections just held their first joint workshop that had 20 in attendance and focused on eCommerce. Ranae also had a current map of the statewide regional groups for the BDG board to review. There were a few board members that expressed that they had not seen any benefits from the Iowa Connections group; Greg Pavelka encouraged everyone to attend a meeting to really see the work being done. Ranae agreed to host the next available regional meeting in Benton County and invite everyone to attend. The next regional meeting planned will be February 16<sup>th</sup> in Marshalltown.

The LOIS (Location One Information System) community updates are complete with the help of our high school intern (Blane Blackburn) and the regional state funds are being released which means we are finally in compliance with them.

The Highway 30 Coalition group had their legislative day on January 23<sup>rd</sup> and Temptation chocolates were handed out. BDG did write the check but was reimbursed by the coalition.

Ranae attended the first Economic Development Transportation Conference on January 18<sup>th</sup> in Des Moines which was interesting and she brought back great reference maps that were available.

USDA held their annual informational workshop on January 31<sup>st</sup> in Tipton; Ranae attended. One overviewed grant was the Rural Business Enterprise which helps build a revolving loan fund with as small as a \$10,000 starting match. SBA was also in attendance and gave an overview of programs.

#### **Small Business Projects / Grants / Marketing - (Commercial/Industrial)**

Small business packets and assistance was given to the following:

Benton County – a gentleman inquired on what county a potential gas station was in just east of Tama; just in starting stage.

Belle Plaine – a woman interested in the Ice House restaurant but needed an assessment.

Van Horne – the pharmacy is still looking at start up details.

Vinton – a new e-bay, consignment and wholesale resale business is looking to located and

is looking for start up financials.

- a gentleman is in the beginning stages of building a plant nursery and looking for financing.
- a small start up is looking for financial assistance as well as support; he does consulting with small businesses.
- a plumbing businesses not looking for finances but looking into who BDG is.

#### **C. Upcoming Events / Conferences / Workshops**

Legislative days coming up are tourism on February 6<sup>th</sup> and PDI (Professional Developers of Iowa) on February 8<sup>th</sup>; Iowa Connections will have a booth at PDI day.

The next BDG board meeting will be February 28<sup>th</sup> in Urbana.

#### **VI. Announcements**

Ranae had Jeff Seseck from a small photography business in Garrison ask if Benton County would like photos done; he charges \$35 per hour. The board decided to keep his card but not proceed with photos at this time.

Allan Enright with ESGR (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve) approached Ranae/BDG to be a partner in this group that brings together employers, unit commanders, ESGR members and community leaders to discuss issues relevant to National Guard and Reserve service. There is a training on April 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> in Des Moines but all fees will be reimbursed. This would be a resource Ranae/BDG could provide to our businesses and military residents with only a few hours served a year.

## VII. *Community Reports*

Benton County	The County is in the middle of budget work. The Supervisor meetings have changed to Tuesday/Thursday with an evening meeting a month. The Oak Grove Church road is to be seal coated and also the Shellsburg road by the fire department to the east is coming up in the next couple of years.
Atkins	There is a fourth addition planned one developer and possibly another which would be about 50 more residents. There is an empty pharmacy building. The well is complete.
Belle Plaine	Budget work is done. New businesses include Ice House, a guitar manufacturer, Lincoln Café and a flower shop. The development/chamber and police are hiring.
Blairstown	Budget work is done.
Garrison	No Report.
Keystone	The new Turner Hall is moving a head but still short on funds.
Luzerne	No Report.
Mt. Auburn	No Report.
Newhall	The new pavilion is open and the concession stand is in the final stages. The fire department received a new truck.
Norway	The sidewalks are getting done and still trying to lay curbs. The movie is looking for a distributor for spring release. Negotiations are happening regarding the old school building to be turned over to the city for demolition.
Shellsburg	No Report.
Urbana	A gentleman from Chicago is doing a storefront incubator that will be going downtown just west of the post office. Continuing to work on the budget and the library project (through the city) has been pushed to 2008 to 2010. Paltech is expanding to the south as REC extends Bing Miller Lane. A light manufacturer is also looking at the area.
Van Horne	Work has started on the park and diamonds. The water has been good but currently dealing with a leak somewhere. A new 12 lot housing development is happening with two sold and one pending.
Vinton	Next Thursday will be the Mini-golf Tournament with 19 businesses participating. There are great ideas coming in from the Vinnovation project. Planning for Party in the Park in June.
Walford	No Report.
Watkins	No Report.

VIII. *Adjournment* - Richard Grovert made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 pm; Jack Barnes second. Unanimously approved