

# Meriden/Ozawkie Area Chamber of Commerce Chamber Meeting Minutes – April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## Welcome

**Chamber President Scott Stanley** welcomed everyone to the meeting, including first-time guest Mike Roberts, a new loan officer at Denison State Bank.

## Special Guest

**County Commissioner Wayne Ledbetter** led the chamber in a discussion of economic development within Jefferson County. Wayne noted that the announced resignation of Economic Development Director Brittany Chaplin gave both opportunity and incentive for a full re-evaluation of development efforts in Jeff County over the last 15 years. He supplied the chamber with a handout that noted (among other things) ...

- Jeff Co ranks in the bottom three counties for per capita sales tax revenue
- Jeff Co has the 4<sup>th</sup> highest mill levy in Kansas for any county with more than 10,000 people, when adjusted for county/township road variations.
- Jeff Co's per capita valuation currently ranks 96<sup>th</sup> out of 105 counties.
- Jeff Co has the lowest 5-year increase in commercial valuation in the same group.
- Hospital health survey results showed economic development as the second most important concern among respondents for the past two consecutive surveys.

Wayne noted that one significant challenge for the EDC is funding. Initial county funding (in 2003) stood at \$75,000. Current funding tops out at less than \$37,000. By contrast, the average among area counties stands at \$55,000. Additionally, every county in northeast Kansas has a business incentive program of some kind except Jeff County.

Given those realities, Wayne raised 3 fundamental questions for discussion: (1) Does Jefferson County have a business-conducive environment? (2) Aware of past successes and failures, should we continue the fight? (3) Regarding incentive programs in particular, should we have them? What incentives would be effective ... and under what conditions?

The questions fueled honest and productive discussion regarding the challenges of economic development in Jefferson County. Wayne made note of several challenges and ideals for improvement. Before closing, Wayne noted his interest in having a representative from each area chamber appointed to work with the Economic Development Council on the process of answering these questions.

## Announcements and Updates

**Chamber Golf Tournament** – The 2017 golf tournament is set for June 16<sup>th</sup> at Lake Perry Country Club. Scott announced that the Jefferson West Cheer Squad has been named as this year's benefitting partner. The intentions of the squad are that any funds raised go toward (1) replacement of the JW mascot uniform, (2) the purchase of "cup-style" letters for creating displays in the fences at both the football and baseball stadiums. If those goals are met, the squad plans to purchase promotional footballs to toss to the crowd.

**Jeff West Booster Club Carnival** – was held on April 8th. Lexie Surritt prepared a Chamber basket for the auction (including two \$25 chamber certificates)—basket won by John Thelen—and the chamber also donated (5) \$20 gift certificates to the raffle giveaway.

**Meriden Pride Easter Egg Hunt** – The Chamber also donated (4) bicycles to the egg hunt at a cost to the chamber of \$269.39. While well-received, both the chamber and the Pride committee are looking at new possibilities for improving the egg hunt in 2018.

**“Welcome to Meriden” Sign Landscaping** – improvements are underway, both with the lighting of the signs and the landscaping around them.

**The Carole Hendrix Memorial Scholarship** – is being offered by Friends of Hospice of Jefferson County for the 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year. This scholarship will be awarded to an adult Jefferson County resident pursuing education related to an existing nursing career. Interested parties are encouraged to contact any member of the Friends of Hospice of Jefferson County to complete an application

**Community Easter Egg Hunt** –Meriden Pride will be hosting an Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 PM, at the Meriden City Park. As we’ve done in previous years, the Chamber will be providing bicycles for each “age division” planned for at the egg hunt as prizes. Participants are strongly urged to arrive early.

**Junior Achievement** – Jim McGrath noted that the Junior Achievement program is back underway in the USD 340 schools. In addition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade levels who participated last year, this year the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders have been included.

**Annual Tulip Party** – Due to multiple scheduling conflicts, Jim McGrath announced that they would not host their annual “tulip party” this year. Guests are welcome to come by and view the tulips, which are doing well, but a formal event will not be held this year. Jim fully expects regular activities to resume in 2018.

**Country Harvest Apple Market** – Scott noted that, though they are a week or two from completion, almost every refrigerated case in the store is being replaced. In the interest of energy efficiency, every open case is being exchanged for an enclosed case.

### Upcoming Meetings

Chamber – Thursday, May 18<sup>th</sup> – Gambino’s Community Room – Meriden