

OneAthens - Regional Economic Development Meeting
Friday, June 1, 2007

10:00am
Athens Chamber of Commerce

In Attendance: Ed Graham (Team Chair), Marvin White (Madison County Chamber), Dennis Ashworth (Athens Tech), Kenny Beck (Jackson EMC), Jim Sykes (Georgia Power), Amrey Hardin (Oconee State Bank), Ivery Clifton (UGA-Retired), Ed Perkins (Noramco), Doug Lowery (ACC Commission), Jim Jones (Wachovia Bank), Don Sumner (Sumner Properties), Grant Tribble (ARMC), Jim Dove (Northeast Georgia RDC), Laura Meadows (UGA), Tommy Jennings (Barrow County Chamber), Brian Brodrick (Jackson Spalding), Doc Eldridge (Athens Area Chamber), Georgia Israel (Georgia Chamber), Joe Whorton (Team Staff), Delene Porter (OneAthens Staff), Loraine Edwards (AAC Chamber- Communications)

Ed Graham convened the meeting and asked group for introductions. Ed restated that the goal of the RED Team was to create a regional economic development organization by July 2008 that could represent the region to new industry as well as help expand existing businesses and support the development of our workforce. The intent is not to replace local chambers or EcD groups, but to provide a regional organization dedicated to an overall regional initiative.

Ed reiterated that these meetings are open to the public and that notes will be posted at www.prosperousathens.org.

Ed gave an update on a meeting he attended with Doc and other area Chamber directors. Deborah Lyons spoke about the Work Ready program. Ed gave an update on OneAthens's regional efforts and the group seemed open and interested.

Ed then introduced guest speaker, George Israel, President, Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

George Israel:

- The key to success in regional economic development is having a vision for the community. The vision should drive the strategy and tactics.
- This vision must be informed by a S.W.O.T. analysis- looking at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the region.
- The SWOT analysis will also help you determine what kind of organization you'll need.
- Structure Option- 14 Member Board of Directors- 7 County Commission Representatives, 7 Chamber of Commerce Representatives
 - Staff
 - 1 Economic Development \$130,000 and 1 Assistant \$50,000 would need \$180,000
 - A Commission is loose, an Authority has the backing of local legislation, etc.
- Structure Option- Economic Development Commission- Legal requirements
 - Bylaws and articles of incorporation
 - Resolutions by all member governments and chambers
 - Note: member government pledge of use of eminent domain and annual support via contract
- Structure Option- Multi County Authority
 - Can be created by Act of the General Assembly
 - Act of GA via Constitutional Amendment
 - Can issue tax exempt bonds and provide financing
 - Can provide tax incentives/tax increment financing or collect payment in lieu of taxes

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- Can issue revenue bonds backed by rent income or rent and payment income to amortize payoff bonds, but needs backing from local government revenues
- It is critical that you get legal counsel in determining what type of entity to form.
- Where should you draw the boundaries of your “region”? Look at the MSA and get close to 400,000 in population size- this is a tipping point for developers. The populations of Clarke, Oconee, Oglethorpe, Walton, Jackson, Madison, and Barrow total 384,347,
- Who you put on a board is flexible- public officials, executives of chambers, business leadership
- In defining the vision, you also need to know what this Economic Development will mean, in dollars, to all businesses (small grocery stores and up)
- There is a push for the Life Sciences sector happening through the Innovation Crescent initiative
- The Governor’s workforce initiative is also a tool you should take advantage of
- Other examples: Tampa/St. Pete 20 years ago, Research Triangle, Valley Partnership in Columbus, Piedmont Triangle Partnership- Brand
- Georgia Chamber is looking at a study with econometrics to measure Georgia as a place to do business- don’t need to give away the store to sell this area- when there is a good tax package and favorable legal environment- need to know
- Ken Stewart has set a goal to move from 8th to 5th state for bio and life sciences
- The Athens region has had success- the reservoir, solid waste, arts development- we have business leadership
- What is the perception of Athens in the rest of the state: It is seen with potential, but not measuring up because of a divided business community, and in the Chambers “they eat their young”- so much turn-over, and a leadership that does not understand, UGA is a huge resource, but community does not want growth that negatively affects the environment
- The main lesson is- where people come together around a vision, this region can make things happen (the Athens loop)
- We can learn from successful partnerships that plan 10 years out- look at Charlotte and its banking laws. The business community in Atlanta should have been more alarmed- now only have SunTrust left
- A similar issue on the horizon is Hartsfield International will be at capacity in 2013. UPS is concerned and we need to make plans today to build an airport- business leadership is key because it is more stable than government office terms
- Need to do a SWOT so you don’t get pushed into just the Bio-tech box- determine 3 to 5 industries your region will work on- create bench marks for each industry and figure out how to differentiate your region from others and market the advantages to those 3-5
- Health Care is going to change face of region- 2 hospitals, Veterans clinic in Madison, MCG
- Industries want to see community and regulatory support- most be an element of goodwill
- More successful if you control property for industry
- Leverage the University to get players like Jackson and Barrow with their 85 access interested in coming to the table
- In the end, a region prospers on its existing base- have to take care of existing businesses through utilities, taxes, and zoning
- Need a group that can seize opportunities- still have the 10 county Northeast Georgia Air and Transportation Commission- unsure of name, hasn’t been used
- John Cassandra is an Airport designer from UNC who could be brought in
- The future is getting incubator industries to start here and stay here- Life Sciences Incubators’ are low polluters and consume very little water, but high value

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- Need to look at tax policy- currently businesses pay 4.2% of State, now they're considering changing this, need to look at other countries and how much they tax investment- US 40%, Ireland 10%, and Switzerland 0%
- All comes back to vision- educational attainment and job readiness included

RED Team took lunch and returned to discuss:

Ivery Clifton pointed out that the vision needed wasn't just one of Economic Development but of improving quality of life for people- building human capital.

- Do we have a balanced approach to this?
- Need to look at educational attainment, need to look at infrastructure including recreational and educational facilities.
- Family Connection pulls statistics from the region and shows deficits in health care, infant mortality, etc.
- Gainesville City Schools are an example of good leadership- No Excuses.
- Need to restate the core principals of this Team and have decision makers say what they will commit to in terms of improving quality of life.

Jim Sykes and Flora Tydings will be working on a definition of Economic Development for the committee.

Team was not ready to consider a working title for the "Economic Development entity."

Team would like to hear more about:

- SWOT analysis
- Ed will work on re-cap of Novartis
- Other Regional efforts- best practices
- Define what this Economic Development entity would look like so we have something to sell to others
- Jim Dove will investigate the Northeast Georgia Authority and other structures/functions

Team agreed to meet June 15th, at the Athens Chamber of Commerce, 10:00am-12:00pm.