



Welcome to the Organizational Meeting of the Benton Economic Partnership

Jake Bauerly
Benton County Commissioner and
Chair of the Benton Economic Partnership Formation Committee





Our agenda this morning:

1. Overview of the Benton Economic Partnership
2. Question and answer session
3. Report of the Board of Directors Nominating Committee/Election of the Board
4. Convene a meeting of the Board of Directors and the selection of Board officers





We want to acknowledge the contributions of the following members of our formation committee:

- John Herges, Falcon National Bank
- Sandy Saldana, Saldana Excavating and Aggregates, Inc.
- Jonathan Brenny, Godzala Brenny Real Estate – Edina Realty
- Cheryl Scapanski, Benton Teleco
- Craig Hanson, Hanson Law Office
- Jane DeAustin, Central MN Builders Association
- Greg Bruestle, Langola Township
- Duane Cekalla, Rice Economic Development
- Mayor Dale Rogholt, City of Rice
- Don Hickman, The Initiative Foundation
- Diane Wojtanowicz, Prairie Farms, Rice
- Todd Schultz, City of Sauk Rapids
- Rodney Dufouw, East Central Energy
- Mark Osendorf, Xcel Energy
- Brian Laverdiere, Foley Chamber/W3 Web Design and Hosting
- Benton County Board of Commissioners





Why Create a Benton Economic Partnership?

- We need a sustainable, long-term economic development program with broad support from the business community and the public sector
- Remove economic development from the political realm and the effect of election cycles
- Create a 501(c)(3) corporation; majority-led by businesses; able to react more quickly to business needs; offering businesses a confidential environment to assist with their location or expansion plans
- Provide a single economic development point of contact for every community in Benton County
- Need to market our assets (tell our story) and grow our tax base
- A better tax base helps our cities, townships, schools and the County fund vital services for our residents
- Together we are stronger and can pool our resources to do more collectively than we can do separately



Why Create a Benton Economic Partnership?

- The best long-term strategy focuses on helping local entrepreneurs start a business and helping your existing businesses grow
- As noted in a June 25th St. Cloud Times editorial, the St. Cloud area lost 42 businesses between 2010 and 2014
- To quote the editorial, “the area’s government and economic organizations, including the St. Cloud Economic Development Authority, Greater St. Cloud Development Corp and the St. Cloud Chamber – need to explore ways to create business incubators or enterprise zones to nurture new business ventures.”



How Did We Get to This Point Today?

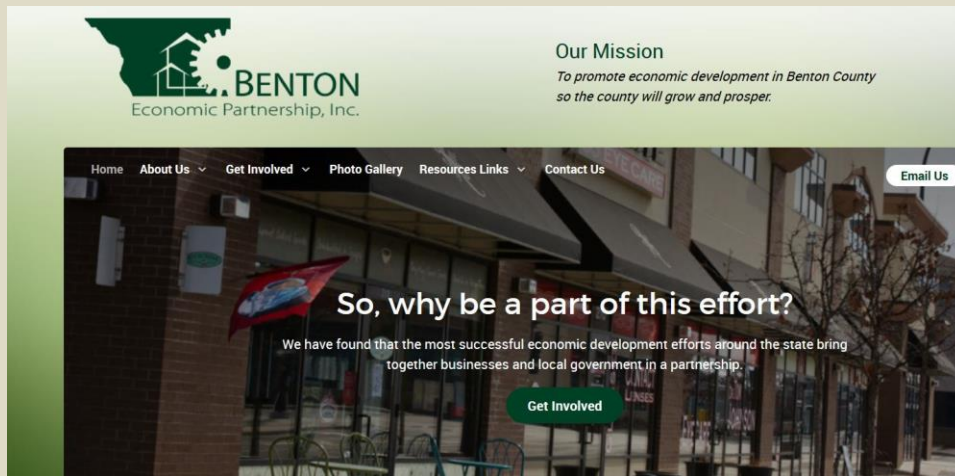
- Until 2012, Benton County had a full-time economic development director
- For the next two years the County had a consultant for 10 hours per week, focusing on communities that didn't have economic development staff
- In November 2014, the County convened a meeting of community leaders to assess our economic development program; the message from that meeting was clear – we needed a full-time effort, a single point of contact working aggressively for every business, every city and town in Benton County
- The County Board took this message and began exploring various models for economic development
- After meeting with Carol Anderson, Morrison Community Development in early 2015, the County Board decided to launch an effort to create a similar organization for Benton County
- We also took inspiration from the Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation's emphasis on private sector leadership





How Did We Get to This Point Today?

- In the Spring of 2015, the County organized a workgroup to help it create this new organization, soon named the Benton Economic Partnership
- Subcommittees were created to draft Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws; another subcommittee was formed to recruit members
- A website was created by Brian Laverdiere, W3 Web Design and Hosting (www.bentonpartnership.org)





How Did We Get to This Point Today?

- We have finalized bylaws that establish a nine-member Board of Directors – five from businesses, one from founding members, one from member Townships, one from member Cities, and one from the County Board
- The past six months have been devoted to recruiting members; we've done mass mailings to Benton County businesses; committee members have spent many hours making direct contacts with businesses
- Currently, we have 40 businesses and public entities that have pledged to join the BEP
- We have reached approximately 97% of our \$150,000 funding goal; 17 organizations have joined as “founding members,” contributing at least \$2,500 each
- Benton County solidly supports this organization and has pledged \$75,000 annually





What Will This Organization Do for Benton County?

- As a partnership among businesses, cities, townships and the County, it will coordinate our efforts
- It will market the assets of the County and the region (abundant land, industrial parks, labor force, schools, higher education institutions, health care, transportation infrastructure, lower cost of living)
- Through an executive director, the BEP will help our businesses expand by consulting on their business plans, connecting them with financial resources and helping them through regulatory processes
- The BEP will maintain a website serving as a one-stop shop for any business interested in expanding or locating in Benton County (with features such as available buildings and land, or financing sources)



What's Next for the Benton Economic Partnership?

- Continue recruiting founding and contributing members
- Seek grants to help with specific projects (we have a grant-writer working on possible opportunities)
- Recruit and hire an executive director
- Set up offices at the Falcon National Bank building in Foley
- Conduct strategic planning; develop goals and a work plan
- Board of Directors will meet regularly
- Potentially have quarterly meetings of the full membership





Question and Answer Session

Any questions for members of the BEP Formation Committee?





Report of the Benton Economic Partnership Board Nominating Committee

John Herges, Falcon National Bank





Convene First Meeting of the Benton Economic Partnership Board of Directors

1. Call to Order; Craig Hanson, Attorney – Hanson Law Office, PA
2. Selection of President; led by Craig Hanson
3. Selection of Vice President; led by BEP President
4. Selection of Secretary/Treasurer; led by BEP President
5. Review BEP Bylaws, Craig Hanson
6. Board meeting schedule
7. Other Business
8. Adjourn





Thank you for attending!

Questions? Please contact
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