

Government: Community Development: Economic Development Corp. awaits new plan

By TIM STANLEY World Staff Writer
11/1/2006

City hiring Channels consultant to complete report.

Now that the independent body overseeing Broken Arrow's economic development is up and running, the community will be asked for input about its role, officials said last week.

Established through the joint efforts of the city, chamber and Broken Arrow Public Schools, the Broken Arrow Economic Development Corp. recently incorporated as a private nonprofit.

'They are now an actual legal entity with the ability to contract and do anything a corporation can do,' City Manager Jim Twombly said.

He said a consulting firm will be hired to help complete the next step: preparing a strategic plan.

Twombly said the city is close to inking a contract with Angelou Economics of Austin, Texas, to handle the task. Angelou recently completed an economic impact study for The Channels, a proposed river development project, in Tulsa. The final report should be ready by March.

Beginning this month, meetings will be organized for community input, Twombly said.

'We want to get the pulse of the community, what direction our residents want to go,' he said.

The city budgeted \$200,000 this fiscal year for the BAEDC's expenditures.

The body was proposed in 2005, after the city and school district locked horns over a now-shelved economic stimulus plan.

Having an independent board oversee economic development will ensure more harmony and teamwork, proponents said.

The members, local business leaders with Broken Arrow ties, include Narissa Rampey, Bruce Binkley, Joe Robson, Rick Hudson and Jack Ross. A replacement for former member Jim Dawson, who died, has not yet been named.

Robson, the organization's chairman, said the group will work well together.

'It's taken us a little while to get this running and I know a lot of people are anxious to see how it's going to work,' Robson said. 'It's a good mix of real knowledgeable people and they're all dedicated to the task. We're all excited to get started.'

The board will also take over the city's service contract with the Broken Arrow Chamber of Commerce, which covers several economic development- and tourism-related tasks the chamber performs annually for the city.

Twombly said BAEDC members will use the strategic plan as a foundation to build on.

'It will give them a good grasp of where we need to be headed and the steps we need to get there,' he said.

Broken Arrow Public Schools Superintendent Jim Sisney said the district, the city and chamber will each submit reports addressing their own needs, to be incorporated into the overall plan.

'We feel confident the plan will work to take the aggregated needs developed by the entities themselves and use the expertise and leadership of the (BAEDC) to broker for the big-picture betterment of our community,' Sisney said.

Twombly said the announcement last week of chamber president Ted Allison's resignation would not slow the process.

Along with Twombly and Sisney, the chamber president is an ex officio member of the development corporation.

Copyright © 2006, World Publishing Co. All rights reserved.