



Council gets Quality Jobs update from Ames, Lauver

By Rachel Fredericksen
Herald Staff Writer

— CLINTON — According to top officials, the Quality Jobs 4A Strong Future initiative is living up to its promise. Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce President Dennis Lauver and Clinton Regional Development Corp. President/ CEO Steven Ames updated the Clinton City Council Tuesday on the program's progress.

The plan's objectives are:

- Promote the creation of 1,250 jobs paying at least 20 percent more than the area median wage of \$13.41 per hour;
- Significantly increase business relocation inquiries and the identification of qualified prospects;
- Realize \$130 million in private sector capital investment and new business development; and
- Expand the employer expansion/retention contact program conducted by CRDC by doubling employer contacts and ensuring at least bi-annual contacts with manufacturers.

Bit-by-bit these goals are coming to fruition, Ames and Lauver said.

The "regional product" has been identified as Clinton, Camanche and Low Moor in Iowa and Fulton, Thomson and Albany in Illinois, said Ames. Services, heavy rail/barge/gas/ electric users and value-added agriculture/bio-life sciences are the industries being targeted as prospects.

The CRDC Web site should be online next month, Ames said, and will be a very important tool in attracting businesses, as prospects must be able to quickly and easily view what the region has to offer.

"A lot of investment is on the horizon" from existing industries, said Ames.

The primary focus is to develop the necessary physical infrastructure, Ames said, by first identifying the challenges and priorities.

The CRDC owns approximately 17 acres of the Chewton Glen site in Fulton, and the city owns about 11. An additional 18.5 acres between the two is being targeted, and a plan is in the works to fully develop and market the property when it is acquired.

A rail spur to the Lincolnway Railport industrial park, where the CRDC owns 230 acres, is a top priority. The mainline of the Union Pacific Railroad is adjacent to the park, and a parcel of land has been acquired to accommodate the spur. Local, state and federal funding is being pursued to make the rail spur and other infrastructure developments happen.

"The streets in the city of Clinton need to be improved," said Lauver, and the city has the support of the business community. The planned federal, state and city projects are "a great start," he said, but road improvements are "critical... and long overdue."

The Clinton City Council in early 2005 pledged to contribute \$250,000 to the QJ4ASF effort in five annual installments of \$50,000. Each annual installment is to approved independent of the other contributions.

At-large Councilman Ron Mallicoat questioned whether financial support is being received from other communities in the region.

Contributions have been made from the public and private sector on both sides of the river, said Lauver, including an unprecedented show of support from the city of Fulton.

Top projects

The Quality Jobs 4A Strong Future investors group has identified the top regional infrastructure development projects, in alphabetical order:

- Chewton Glen site in Fulton, Ill.
- Lincolnway Railport site in Clinton's west end.
- Multi-jurisdictional and multi-modal industrial facility.

- Municipal street improvement and development.
- State-of-the-art telecommunications.
- U.S. 30, section 2, Liberty Square Redevelopment.
- 19th Avenue North extension.

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