
City refines economic development apparatus

By VACANT, Economi...

Published: 07/29/2009 - 11:06

The vision for local economic development is getting clearer.

It includes the elimination of duplication of services between local development groups, developing a Business Resource Center to house several local economic development entities in one location, and increase accountability from those entities to the City Council.

Those points, as well as the responsibilities of the economic director for the San Angelo Economic Development Corporation, came out of Tuesday's special meeting between the development corporation and San Angelo City Council.

Nothing was voted on or approved Tuesday, but most people at the meeting seemed willing to support the concept of Business Resource Center.

"I think the council is in agreement on it, in concept," said Jon Mark Hogg, Mayor Pro Tem. "I think there are still a lot of details and questions that have to be answered, most importantly of which, is — what are the dollars and how does it affect the budget and affect the half-cent sales tax dollars?"

Based on discussion, the new Business Resource Center would house the economic development corporation, Angelo State University Small Business Development Center, Concho Valley Center for Entrepreneurial Development. That building also would have part-time offices for the San Angelo Chamber of Commerce and the Workforce Development Board.

Initial discussions in May indicated the resource center would be housed at the entrepreneurial development building at 2009 W. Beauregard Ave. However, city officials said Tuesday a different location had been identified as perhaps a better fit for the proposed resource center because it was close enough to City Hall Plaza that it could be tied into the city's mechanical system, which will have green, money-saving technology and thus would save money.

The exact location was not disclosed because the city could at some time enter into negotiations for the facility and so far no decision has been made on the location.

Several people at the meeting said the trend across Texas is to house development groups in one location to make it easier for business leaders to get information about the community and other issues.

"We need to meet the expectations of businesses that are looking to locate here," said Joseph C. Rallo, Angelo State University president and member of the development corporation.

"That comes down to agility and responsiveness. They want all their needs met in one place," he said.

The two groups also discussed the executive director position recently vacated when Kathy Keane left in June after 31 years of working for the city.

Keane was paid \$63,371 as executive director of COSADC.

Council member Dwain Morrison said he doesn't think there should be a executive director hired for COSADC and said that spending money on administrative salaries was not what the half-cent sales tax was designed for.

However, most of the council seemed to agree the position needed to be filled, and city officials said the money could be spent on salaries for economic development.

Between 60 and 80 percent of new jobs come from existing businesses, said Tommy Hiebert, SADC president. The person who is hired in the new position should help bring the Business Retention and Expansion Program to fruition to help increase jobs, he said.

That person also will be the face of economic development in San Angelo and be accountable to the City Council, he said.

"We are looking for someone that is an industry professional," Hiebert said. "That means experience in the field of economic development. And someone who can bring several components together that we have talked about over time."