



Jobs Meeting

Wednesday, March 31, 2010
Benkelman Community Building

The meeting was held at the Benkelman Community Building, 809 Huron Street, Benkelman, NE. Members present: Ben Blecha, Melissa Jacobitz, Ann Burge, Nickole Sis, John Lemon, Harlan Cansler, Kacey Harper, Dallas Watkins and Pat Rotherham.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by President Ben Blecha. Ben discussed the goal of this meeting is to identify the main goal of the meeting with Adrian Smith. Harlan mentioned the meeting on Thursday April 1st pertaining to the Chambers focus groups.

Ben discussed his Facebook page of "I'd move back to Benkelman if..." and how the most prevalent post was a lack of jobs in Benkelman and the county. The site also reaffirmed that there are many people that want to return to Dundy County if they had a job.

The two main focuses that Adrian Smith has are: energy and brain drain in small towns. Adrian Smith wanted to speak with us about what we are doing for brain drain.

Ann, of Southwest NE Community Betterment Corp, discussed her pilot project in Perkins County in conjunction with the University of Nebraska. The project which employs one person to match high school students with local business owners that want to retire in the next 5-10 years in a mentoring program. It also teaches the children about entrepreneurship so these children will return from college to the community to be business owners. This project also promotes the quality of life of a small town and the low cost of living. Ann said how important it is to promote to the children that they are important, there is a place for them here, and that it's not all bad living here.

Ben asked how we get businesses in town to be able to match kids up with. He read the main page of the website, Paint Our Town.

****Paint Our Town is a Web Site in progress. We have not contacted building owners or finished our concept yet. Please do not forward it to people outside our community until we have built the project. The rough draft can be seen at www.prairiebell.com/paint

He said that we've got what we want already, we don't want to be urbanized, we want to stay a small town but first we need to choose an identity to set us apart from our neighbors. We need to recruit business and have business owners mentor our children so they will keep coming back here to live. Second is determining a marketing plan to find the right people to come to Benkelman and invest in the community and open a business. Ben said it would be possible to get funding to develop a marketing plan for Benkelman. Ben discussed the idea of partnering with Perkins County. Dundy County would develop the Paint our Town concept and Perkins County would develop the Mentoring concept. When we were ready we could exchange ideas on each of our projects. Ann mentioned adding to the website that Benkelman is a small town that is proud of being a small town that focuses on the school system, sports, safety, low cost of living as well as being only 2 ½ hours from DIA and Denver. Pat mentioned that there needs be incentives for potential business owners. He also mentioned

trying to get a bond passed to fund a new architectural theme. Each business can use the bond money but would have to pay it back over time.

Nickole mentioned buying all of the buildings downtown, secure and refurbish them, then rent them out to new businesses. Ann and Harlan discussed the possibilities of utilizing sales or property tax revenue. All of these issues will be discussed further at upcoming meetings

We decided to present our idea to Congressman Adrian Smith in a format similar to this meeting. We will ask him for input and if there are resources he has that would help.

Next Meeting: TBD

8. Adjournment 7:00

/s/ Melissa Jacobitz, Secretary DCCCD