

MSDC official recaps 2012 economic progress in county

By Eric Crump. The Marshall Democrat-News: January 8, 2013.

One challenge for economic development officials is the apparent gap between what they do and what they can say about what they do.

Companies generally forbid public disclosure about exploratory projects, so even as officials work hard to make those projects a reality, they rarely are allowed to tell the world about them.

To address that gap between what they do and what they can say, Marshall-Saline Development Corporation Director Bill Riggins offered the MSDC board of directors a summary of the results he and his staff have achieved during 2012.

MSDC has applied and been approved for \$1.8 million in tax and training credits, he said. The credits will be applied after companies involved have complied with program requirements.

Those projects involve the addition of 169 jobs, although Riggins said the number of jobs actually added to the local economy was more than 230.

"I know a lot of times it doesn't look like we're doing a lot," he said. "We've worked on 50 different projects this year."

The value of the expansion projects MSDC has been involved in exceeds \$58 million, he said.

Of 16 current projects, Riggins reported there had been recent activity on nine. He also said MSDC is working on a financing package for a potential redevelopment of the Old Fitzgibbon Hospital.

At the board's December meeting, MSDC official Stan Moore noted that a number of the projects in the works have come about as a result of the planning process led by Zimmer Real Estate.

Zimmer was hired last year to help the MSDC develop a new comprehensive economic development plan. Local governments and private investors pitched in to pay for the project.

Riggins said the final report is essentially complete. The next step in the process will be to ask the MSDC board to sign off on the plan, then seek the endorsement of the local government agencies that contributed to it -- Saline County Commission and the city councils of Marshall, Slater and Sweet Springs.

Riggins said the public unveiling of the plan has been delayed a bit more, but he expects it will take place in February.

In his financial report, board member Gene Fangmann said the final payment had been made to Zimmer for the planning process. MSDC has a new contract with Zimmer and one with Sterling Consulting to continue implementing the new economic development plan.

In other business, the board approved the organization's 2013 budget. On paper, the budget has a \$39,555 deficit, with expenses of more than \$286,000 exceeding projected revenues of \$246,540.

But Riggins said he's confident the shortfall will be more than made up over the course of the year.

The board also reappointed the current slate of officers.

Jene Crook will remain president, Larry Holland will continue as vice president and Gene Fangmann will continue as secretary/treasurer.

The MSDC committee structure was also clarified.

The finance committee includes Fangmann, Crook and board member Greg Swift. The personnel committee includes Swift, Holland and board member Scott Hartwig. The infrastructure committee includes Fangmann, Holland and board member Kyle Gibbs.

The board also heard a report from Jack Lenz, one of Saline County's representatives on the Western District Work Force Development Council.

Lenz will serve as liaison between that group and MSDC. Moore encouraged Lenz to keep MSDC informed about WFDC activities and meetings and to let MSDC know how it can support those efforts.