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Carpentersville Business Development Commission to survey village businesses

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February 26, 2010

By **EMILY McFARLAN** emcfarlan@stmedianetwork.com

CARPENTERSVILLE – If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

But the overwhelming feeling at Thursday night's first Business Development Commission meeting was that the process for opening a business in the village is broken. Or at least it needs a second look.

"It's never too late to make positive changes," said Village Trustee Kay Teeter, who chairs the committee.

Other commission members include Jim Krenz, Realtor and owner of Amy Home Services; Sign-A-Rama owner Michael Armato; retired businessman Tony Schreiber; and Jessica Lee, the commission's "token resident." Other commission members are Doug Milliman, administrator at Professional Consultations, Inc. in West Dundee and Richard Jarboe, manager of product development at Buffalo Grove-based Indeck Energy Services, Inc.

Village President Ed Ritter, Economic Development and Special Projects Coordinator Janice Murphy, Village Trustee Pat Schultz and Tom Roeser of Otto Engineering also sat in on the meeting.

"To me, basically, it's this unknown elephant out there," Teeter said. "What are the steps? We do need to bring the pieces together. Maybe the pieces we think are broken are not."

To do that, the commission decided to conduct a survey of village business owners, based on business data collected by Murphy over the summer with two interns and a grant from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

According to that data, there are 417 business addresses in Carpentersville. Nearly 20 percent of those businesses are vacant.

Roeser, who has rehabilitated many buildings in the Old Town neighborhood of Carpentersville, said he has had a difficult time working with the village.

"I don't see any improvement, and I don't see a city that's at all friendly to businesses," he said.

Lee responded, "I really feel uncomfortable trying to bring new businesses into a village that isn't going to work with them."

"You need to start at the foundation. If that foundation is faulty, why would you invite people over?"

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Commission members will hold a special meeting to discuss a survey for business owners Murphy compiled after the data was collected. Each will call businesses similar to their own to discuss the business, its employees and how it and the village can work together more effectively.

The commission also had discussed conducting exit surveys for businesses that left the village to find out what caused them to leave and what the village could have done to keep them there. But, Milliman said, "The people who are in town now doing business will be your best indicator."

And to do an exit interview, the village really needs to first have a relationship with the business, Krenz noted.

"I have never had anyone step across my doorstep except code enforcement," he said.

Commission members also discussed following one small business owner's process moving from one location within the village to another to get a feel for that process. Schultz also suggested they invite representatives from the Carpentersville Code Enforcement Department to discuss that process.

Murphy planned to e-mail the survey she's drafted for business owners to commission members to discuss at their next meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 9, at Carpentersville Village Hall, 1200 L.W. Besinger Drive.

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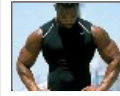
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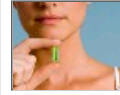
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