

Golden Triangle Business Roundtable (GTBR)

Minutes

February 17, 2004

Walter Almon called the meeting to order and welcomed the 68 members, subscribers and guests in attendance. Walter also recognized plant managers and distinguished guests.

Committee Reports:

Walter Almon – Construction Industry Institute (CII)

Walter reported that skills assessments are in good shape. Written skills assessments are set in place throughout Southeast Texas following the Department of Labor and NCCER approved curriculums. Hands on skills assessments by NCCER are now being set in place.

John Durkay – Legal

John reported on the legal climate in the area. The legal climate has been a concern for some time. The 9th Court of Appeals has developed a reputation and for the first time in the history of the court there will not be a Democrat seeking office. John thinks this will have a dramatic impact on the court. The last three Eastern District judges have come from Houston or Dallas not the eastern district of Texas. One of the judges stated that he was here to get Beaumont straightened out. John thinks that when a community has problems they are better at solving them than bringing in outsiders. Outsiders tend to take the business back to their areas and local communities lose as a result. Our new federal judge will be a fine judge because she doesn't know the communities good guys or the bad guys and the chances of it working out is problematic. There will come a time when Jefferson County won't have a nationally elected candidate from the community.

John asked, "What are the answers?" The area must grow together as a community telling the outsiders to go back home and stay out of our business and let us do things our way. Solving our air quality and highway system problems is our responsibility and until the area takes control of elected officials and insists that elected officials have high integrity, and capability we won't be successful. It's one vote at a time that makes a difference. The area needs to get its judicial system back. and find within our own community enough leadership, honor, integrity and honesty to run our area business.

Program:

Dr. Robert Krienke the President of Lamar Institute of Technology (LIT) addressed the group. It was made known that (LIT) is one of the fastest growing of the one hundred and forty established Texas colleges and universities. Enrollment has increased 96% since 1995. Dr. Krienke has lead the Institute in this growth period by meeting with business and industry to determine their needs and adjusting curriculum to fit the needs of the community. The Institute's mission is to provide the programs, training and education needed for Southeast Texas. By providing programs for individuals and students the institute fulfills the needs of area industry and business. The Institute works closely with economic development organizations. Industry and businesses need a trained workforce to entice companies to the area. Fall enrollment is the gage for the size of an institution. The 1995 enrollment was 1294 and currently it is 2539. The Institute is sitting at an all time high this spring. Minority growth is up. Hispanic growth is still low but the institute is focusing growth efforts on this community. The Institute's student enrollment comes primarily from Southeast Texas and the Institute is funded by

the state. Most of the higher education growth is expected to be in two- year colleges. The Lamar Institute of Technology tripled the number of graduates in the past ten years and has a 98% placement rate. Dr. Krienke attributes their success to being aggressive and promoting new opportunities.

New programs include working with BASF on a twelve-week course for new employees, Homeland Security, Cyber Security, Community Emergency Response Training (CERT), Home Technology Integration, Oil and Gas Production, Fuel Cells, as well as others. The Institute is the top producer of Corrections graduates in the state. They are building a multi-purpose center and establishing a lecture series. Dr. Krienke fielded questions from the group.

Meeting adjourned.