

Golden Triangle Business Roundtable

Minutes

April 20, 2004

Walter Almon welcomed members, plant managers and special guests.

CII Report: Walter reported that they have a good skills assessment program in place.

Program:

Betty Harmon, President of the Orange Chamber of Commerce informed the members that she and the other chambers of commerce work as a team on many projects in the area. They review employment, projects, environment, technology, and growth and development for the triangle area, not just their respective cities. Betty said their job is to deal with economic growth and development and to make sure that the communities grow and prosper in order to keep our people and jobs in the area.

Betty spent so much time begging for work on highways and roads that now everywhere you look you see road construction going on. In fact you can hardly travel because of so much road construction.

Betty discussed the cut backs that have occurred at many of the companies in Orange. Some of the companies have had to close their doors but other businesses are opening to offset some of the job loss. She stated that Home Depot opens a store in May. Signal International has some business going on again. Akrotex is building a warehouse and warehousing in Orange is a premium industry. Restaurants are booming and there is growth in every direction.

Jim Rich, President and CEO of the Beaumont Chamber of Commerce mentioned the Delta Airlines project and stated that Verna Rutherford would elaborate on it later.

The Beaumont and Port Arthur Chambers will host their second annual Southeast Texas Business Expo this year and they are hoping Orange will join them in 2005. They are aggressively working on Small Business Financing. Betty and Verna both work on a Board that could assist with this effort.

Jim looks at the chamber as a business because they hire employees and try to retain them. Economic development for Beaumont is good for the following reasons:

A ten million dollar reinvestment project at Parkdale Mall

Retail growth on Dowlen Road,

Record growth at the Port of Beaumont Lamar University and the Lamar Institute of Technology

Healthcare projects.

ExxonMobil has invested big in the area

While natural gas projects may be on the horizon, manufacturing has declined.

TIP Strategies was hired to design a marketing plan and the following things were learned. There are some areas where economic growth is possible where medical devices, plastics, polymers, and logistics were targeted. Dr. Hopper of Lamar University will be speaking to the GTBR membership about this subject at the May meeting. One challenge for this area is the judicial system. The area has become less attractive to new businesses because of lawsuits. This area is known as a judicial hellhole and we have to decide what can be done to change that perception.

Jim stated that the political climate is changing in the Golden Triangle. He and Verna are working on the river dredging problem and are going to Washington, D.C. and they are going as a region not as individual cities.

Verna Rutherford, President of the Port Arthur Chamber of Commerce. Verna confirmed that the three chambers are working together as friends.

Verna discussed the new airline company and how it has taken a community wide effort to make it happen. Jim, Betty and she have worked together with marketing representatives. There is still work to be done but the project is looking good. There will be a lot of advertising to get information out to the public in the near future.

TX Dot and transportation in the area is progressing well.

The three liquefied natural gas plant projects are progressing well. They are working on permits and approvals. There are some problems with the ExxonMobil Project but information is being shared to get the public informed.

It is necessary for us to work together as a team and strengthen our workforce and the quality of the workers who are available in Southeast Texas. It is important for companies in the area to share information with leaders so that everybody can work together.

Meeting Adjourned