



# Economic Development Committee

215 S. East Street

Carlinville, IL 62626

<http://www.macoupincountyil.gov/>

## Regular Meeting

### ~ Minutes ~

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Tuesday, December 6, 2016

5:30 PM

County Board Room

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#### I. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Wiggins, Armour, Lewis, Long, Starr, Duncan, Baker, Kelly, Duncan, Gray, Cerar, Toon, Brianza

ABSENT: Pomatto

#### II. AGENDA ITEMS

##### 1. Rt. 66 Blue Carpet Corridor - Tourism

Starr stated that he approached Tony about having a meeting so we could hear from the Blue Corridor group, so we are here tonight to listen to the group and see what their needs are and hopefully all work together and expand and improve the program.

Sherry Brianza introduced the guests to committee members. She explained that they will talk about Blue Corridor, but all of them are working on programs to support opening the old jail into a county tourism center, which in turn will support the whole county. Currently they are \$15,000 away from getting the old jail opened and they will make some suggestions on how to raise funds to get the old jail opened. Brianza introduced Bill Kelly who is the executive director with the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Highway to speak to the committee about Blue Carpet Corridor program.

Kelly stated that they have 90 communities in the Blue Carpet Corridor and a number of communities are in Macoupin; their mission is to get people off of Interstate 55 and spend money. What they do is promote the things that you can do and see and spend time on Route 66 from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi river. Macoupin County has a lot of cool Route 66 stuff but we have at least one major structural challenge; we are not a member of a major convention and visitor bureau. Kelly is trying to work on that, each convention and visitors bureau have resources and focus to help you attract tourism. Kelly stated that once the jail is opened, it's a top ten attraction in Illinois and it instantly becomes a crown jewel in Macoupin County. The key to the Route 66 traveler is looking for authentic experience. The first thing we have to do is to get the traveler to stop and out of car and they spend time in Carlinville and we want them to come back. We have a nice problem in that people are coming thru town and they know about some things, but the one absolute to getting people to stop is the old jail once that is promoted.

Discussion about any grants available for tourism, Kelly stated that currently there are none available. Kelly stated the only entity is the Transportation and

Enhancement Grant used for street scape, bike trails. He encouraged creativity when apply for that grant. We can apply in about 10 months from now in 2018.

Frank Long stated that he was in the Pittsfield area, and when you pull up in front of the courthouse over there and turn your radio on and it will tell you about it and old houses, if we had something like that here to tell about the courthouse and the old jail. Sherry said that they are doing that in all the state parks and people who struggle with walking you can do tours all over town. Kelly said that once we get the tourism stop opened tourist can get an itinerary of what the town has available or we can develop an app for the smart phones that will provide points of interest.

Blue Carpet Corridor - Andrea Duncan stated that it is basically is Route 4, there is 8 towns-Virden, Girard, Nilwood, Carlinville, Gillespie, Benld, Staunton. That's the originally alignment of 1926-1930 then you go over to Mt. Olive. So we are only talking eight towns, right now there are two towns that are not involved, Nilwood and Mt. Olive.

Andrea stated that we need to stress the whole county not just Carlinville. There is so much in Macoupin County that could be toured in a whole weekend. She wants to see Macoupin County tourism built up and the Blue Carpet is the place to start. The membership dues for the Blue Carpet is \$300 a year, some of the towns don't see any benefits from this. Suzanne stated that Virden is part of the Blue Carpet and they have taken the theme of Miners, Monsters, and Mother Road which has been well received.

Kelly said about the Blue Carpet, each year they have created a passport theme, where the tourists goes from town to town but they don't actually spend a lot of time visiting sites in the town. Kelly said signage issue is interesting, you will not get any help from the state to put signs on Interstate 55; they have never considered a scenic sign for Route 66. Staunton came up with three different alignments of the road during different periods of construction; we have that in four places in the State; Bloomington, Lincoln, Springfield and Staunton. Staunton has turned it into a plus, they created a beautiful mural on one of the walls and that have become their identity.

Brianza - suggested that the county have a core mission for the Blue Carpet Corridor group, and propose a budget not only for the Blue Carpet but for tourism. Starr noted that the county has a budget for tourism, not sure of the amount.

Group discussed the tourism fund and how it can be used; Brianza stated that they would like to get all the towns involved in the Blue Carpet by possible paying the membership fees.

Kelly stated there are two events that someone from Macoupin County should be at, the Annual Route 66 Conference and the Governor's conference on tourism in March, it cost \$290.00 and it's a great networking opportunity.

Beth Toon-Shop Local came up with the plan for the parade of chairs, and sold chairs to raise money for the restoration of the jail to be used as a tourism center. They sold 6 chairs and raised \$5,100 for the jail restoration; she asked to those out of town to please spread the word about raising funds to get the jail opened.

Motion made by Lewis and seconded by Armour to adjourn at 6:50 p.m. Motion carried.