

Counties approve Regional Development Authority

Written by Administrator
Wednesday, 20 December 2017 10:32 -

The Boards of Commissioners of Clark, Floyd, Jefferson, Scott and Washington counties have selected the regional leaders who will serve as the Board of Directors for the Our Southern Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA). The five individuals who make up the Board of the new organization are:

Dana Huber, vice president of marketing and public relations, Huber's Orchard, Winery, & Vineyards and the Starlight Distillery, Floyd County

John Jones, founder of the John Jones Automotive Group, Washington County

Kevin Kellems, businessman and manager of his family's 5th-generation farm, Jefferson County

Steve Meyer, retired, Scottsburg High School, Scott County

Kenny Rush, independent consultant in business development, Illini Precast LLC, Clark County

"These five directors possess a regional vision. They understand the interdependence between the communities in Southern Indiana and its impact on economic development, as well as talent attraction and retention," said Wendy Dant Chesser, President and CEO of One Southern Indiana (1si).

The five members of this board were approved unanimously by the commissioners of all five counties. State statute on the formation of an RDA (IC 36-7.6) requires the representatives to have at least five years professional work experience in business, economic development, academia, private non-profit or transportation. In addition, representatives can neither be an elected official nor a member of staff from any of the member counties. For a full biography of the representatives, please see attached.

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The Our Southern Indiana RDA is now the eighth established RDA in the State of Indiana, and the first to be formed since 2015. By state statute, the group is required to meet quarterly and, as a separate body politic, will comply with Indiana's Open Door Law (IC 5-14-1.5-1) with public meetings.

During the 2015-2016 budget session, the Indiana General Assembly allocated \$126.6 million for this purpose under the Regional Cities Initiative program, with \$126 million going to RDAs centered around Evansville, Fort Wayne and South Bend, Ind. The current state budget has a smaller allocation of funds to the IEDC to be used on regional development or other "quality of place" projects. It is anticipated the IEDC will be taking application during the first quarter of 2018 for this funding.

A proposal with project plans was conceived in 2015 for the initial allocation but the region was unable to garner the participation needed to form an RDA. While some of the project plans could be considered by the newly formed RDA board, adjustments will need to be made for Jefferson County, which was not formally a part of the 2015 planning process. Initial concepts that could be revived include waterfront development initiatives, expansion of telecommunications and high-speed internet in rural areas, projects that could work to attract and retain a skilled labor pool and the creation and implementation of a water resource management plan.

"The RDA is a necessary step in gaining access to funding through the Regional Cities Initiative. The initiative is an incredible economic development tool that can be used to strength local businesses through workforce development, attraction and retention. It is also an incentive for private developers to invest in projects that would benefit the citizens of all five counties," Chesser said. "As the chamber and economic development organization for two of the five counties involved, 1si stands ready to assist the RDA board in any compacity they request."

About One Southern Indiana:

One Southern Indiana (1si) was formed in July of 2006 as the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development organization serving Clark and Floyd Counties. 1si's mission is to provide the connections, resources and services that help businesses innovate and thrive in the Southern Indiana/Louisville metro area.

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Since its inception, the organization has evolved to include a three-prong approach to serve its members and investors. Business Resources, as the chamber side of the organization, encompasses membership, signature events and programs which support and encourage business growth; Economic Development works to grow the regional economy through the attraction of new commerce and assists with retention and expansion of existing businesses; Advocacy supports businesses at the government level by engaging in initiatives to preserve, protect and promote a business friendly environment free of obstacles to growth and development of commerce.