

Notes November 2004

Dear Hearts,

Following are notes from November 18, 2004, Fort Atkinson Chamber Of Commerce.

The next Heart Of The City Meeting is Thursday, December 16, 6:00 at the Library

Mission: Citizens for a pro-active process for community vision and planning.

Highlights:

1) Dianne Hrobsky hosted Hearts at the Fort Chamber. We had the opportunity to hear about Chamber priorities and projects. Our groups share similar concerns and interests. The Chamber has a new Web site. Check it out. The link is: www.fortchamber.com There are also terrific new print materials available.

2) Jill Kessenich presented one concept for the greenbelt. Ironically there is very little land needed to complete a route around the city. The next step will be to request input and guidance from the city about the realities of the plan.

Please note:

1) Hearts are discussing the need for more focus. Please send ideas and suggestions.

2) David Ward, in a Daily Union column, invites you to let him know your concerns. His contact information is: David Ward, P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53707, phone numbers are: 608-266-3790, 888-534-0037, District Office, N3401 Highway G, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538, 920-563-2769. E-mail: Rep.Ward@legis.state.wi.us.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Since we were homeless this month we would like to thank Dianne Hrobsky for inviting us to meet in their conference room. The mission of the Chamber is: To promote and maintain a strong business community in the Fort Atkinson area through active leadership, programming and social/political action; which will result in a better quality of life for all the members of the community.

The priority is to increase members by growing the business base, helping businesses be successful and provide entrepreneurial and small business development and support. The Chamber Board is made up of a wide representation of Fort businesses including: retail, professional, service and industrial. Large and small businesses are represented, all working for the whole. She noted that most groups in Fort Atkinson work well with each other keeping the interests of Fort Atkinson as the focus.

The Chamber has started a gift certificate program. One example of how industry and retail work together is that local industries are purchasing Chamber gift certificates for their employees. These certificates must be spent at Chamber Member businesses in Fort. Dianne indicated that currently \$70,000 of these certificates will help support retail businesses. Her goal is to reach \$100,000 by the end of the year. Employers tell Dianne that their employees are now asking for these certificates instead of a turkey or a gift certificate from one particular place. They help promote business and keep dollars in the community.

Dianne talked about the importance of a strong business community and how potentially fragile a downward spiral can be. There is a sense of support for business in Fort. There are Six Topic Priorities: Community Development, Economic Development, Tourism Development, Government Relations, Workforce Development and Membership Services.

She also said that managed growth is important to the Chamber and expressed the constant need to monitor for balance in the community. Covenants for a business park are one example of a way the community controls development. If a business invests money to build in the park, the

covenants assure that standards for other buildings are maintained. She also feels we are very lucky to have strong, professional city management staff and a Master Plan.

A variety of questions were discussed:

- How does the Chamber encourage community participation? How can we all protect our economic viability?
- How can we best be aware of issues that come up and have a chance to think about them and provide input? How can we best be partners and not reacting adversaries ?
- What kind of business are we inviting here?
- How do we keep dollars in the community and continue to grow here?
- What do we offer to businesses wanting to come here?

JILL KESSENICH PRESENTED ONE CONCEPT FOR THE GREENBELT MAP

- Ironically, there is very little land needed to create a route around the city, as much of the surrounding lands are already wetlands, rural, or Rural Preservation areas. (We need to find out what the definition of Rural Preservation is, and how it differs from just "rural".) Jill connected these areas with a path approximating the width of the Rock River. This path could incorporate biking/walking/skiing, prairie, or forest, and possibly even camping or limited hunting.
- New residential developments are creating pocket parks that are easements on the backs of lots. Fort has one of these already! We need to encourage more of these with new developments.
- As concepts only, how do we proceed? How can we encourage development to build high density residential along the greenbelt? How can the green space be protected for everyone to preserve the rural feel providing good access to the city?
- How can we take advantage of the current DNR plans to preserve rural land in Jefferson County? (Leslie offered to find out who the new DNR contact is.)
- How can we learn more about what the city plans are?
- How does the purpose of the green belt connect with the current Master Plan?

Your Humble Heart,
Ann