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Mayor Bob Schumm           [schummfoods@gmail.com](mailto:schummfoods@gmail.com)  
Vice Mayor Michael Dever   [mdever@sunflower.com](mailto:mdever@sunflower.com)  
Commissioner Hugh Carter   [hughcarter@sunflower.com](mailto:hughcarter@sunflower.com)  
Commissioner Mike Amyx     [miekamyx515@hotmail.com](mailto:miekamyx515@hotmail.com)  
Commissioner Aron E. Cromwell [aroncromwell@gmail.com](mailto:aroncromwell@gmail.com)  
City Hall  
6 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

Re:     **Revised Joint Economic Development Council**

Members of the City Commission,

I read with interest the revisions to the proposed Joint Economic Development Council.

*Representation*

The proposed Council now includes four community representatives to counter the five Chamber of Commerce representatives. This falls short of equal representation which would enhance the standing of this body. As long as the Chamber of Commerce retains too much control of the Council, its advice will be viewed with suspicion by the community at large.

It is worth noting that the community representatives do not necessarily come from any of the many community and neighborhood organizations who could provide valuable input. Thus, there is nothing to prevent a pro-Chamber City Commission or County Commission from appointing additional pro-Chamber individuals to these positions.

If this body is to gain the respect of the community and is to provide valuable advice, it is important that it be seen as truly representative of the community at large. As revised, the Council falls short.

*Professionalism*

Local economic development planning is complex and requires professional expertise. Virtually every city in the nation is in the game, and playing the game successfully requires an in-depth knowledge of

what works, why it works, and what it takes to make it work here. Too many cities, implement economic development strategies by following advocacy and ideology rather than following research based professional guidance.

The City and the County continue to give over \$400,000 per year to the Chamber of Commerce and get too little in return. The Chamber is a business advocacy organization. Advocacy has its place, but it is not the way to succeed in local economic development planning. The record of the City in its failed economic development programs is testament to the inherent flaws in following advocacy.

Professionalism is the path to successful local economic development planning. At the moment, the City is staffed by a single profession economic development coordinator. Creating this position was a step in the right direction, but it was only a good first step. More professional planners are needed.

Currently, the community is confronting many issues that require the input of these planners. These questions include: Can the city absorb all of the additional hotel rooms that are proposed downtown? Can the city absorb the additional retail space proposed as part of the sports complex? Can the city attract enough events to make such a sports complex viable? Will there be enough demand for downtown vendors that the city can use of tax increment financing successfully to support other services such as the Lawrence Arts Center? Are the City's investments in industrial and biotech performing well?

Additional professional local economic development planners could provide the guidance and instruction that an advisory board, such as the Joint Economic Development Council, needs. Just being a business or community representative does not mean that the representative is knowledgeable on matters of selecting, designing and implementing effective economic development strategies. Advocates paid by the Chamber of Commerce cannot provide the full truth; they must adhere to the ideology of their employer. Professional planners who report to the City and County Commissions can provide this evidence driven expertise.

#### *Recommendation*

Further refine the composition of the Joint Economic Development Council to ensure that the community representatives truly represent the community at large and are, at least, equal in number to the representatives from the Chamber of Commerce.

Bring economic development planning inside City Hall and inside the County Court House. Reduce the role of the Chamber of Commerce in economic development planning and increase the role of professional planners who bring expertise to the process and who report only to the elected commissioners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirk McClure", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Kirk McClure