

NCRPC NEWS

North Central Regional Planning Commission
Serving Kansans Since 1972

June/July 2011
www.ncrpc.org

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Upcoming Events

Thursday, July 28

Thursday, August 25

Thursday, September 29

Thursday, October 27

Thursday, December 1

Executive Board Meetings

Beloit Main Office

RURAL OPPORTUNITY ZONES IN EFFECT

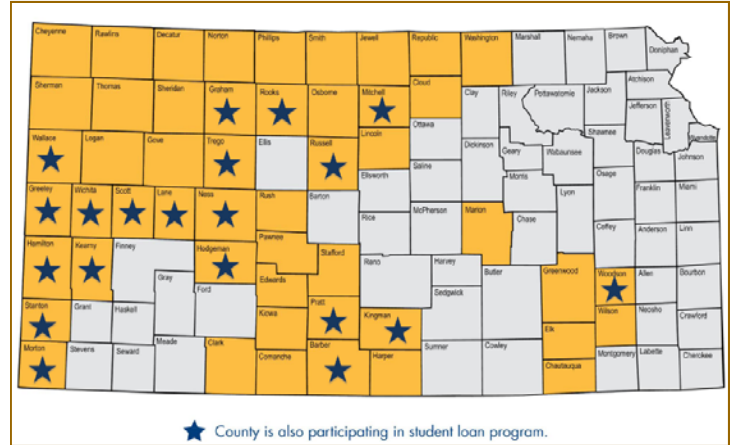
Beginning July 1, a law went into effect designating 50 counties in Kansas as Rural Opportunity Zones (ROZs). Six of these counties, including Cloud, Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Republic and Washington, are in the North Central region.

The ROZs program, administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce, is intended to reverse population decline.

“Rural Opportunity Zones is a big priority for the Governor and the Legislature by extension,” says Chris Harris, Rural Opportunity Zones Program Manager with the Department of Commerce.

The program has two main incentives. One is a state income tax exemption for up to five years to individuals who move to a ROZs county from outside the state. Individuals must have lived outside the state for the past five years and have Kansas source income tax less than \$10,000 per year over the past five years. All 50 of the ROZs counties are part of the income tax exemption program.

The other main incentive of the ROZs initiative is a student loan forgiveness program. The law authorizes ROZs counties to participate in a state-county matching program to repay 20 percent of outstanding student loans up to \$3,000 per year



The Rural Opportunity Zones (ROZs) map as of July 5, 2011.

Highlighted counties are the 50 designated for the program. A star indicates the county is also participating in the student loan program. (Source: Chris Harris, Department of Commerce)

(\$15,000 maximum benefit) for students who graduate from an accredited post-secondary institution and move to a ROZs county. This incentive is voluntary and counties have until January 1, 2012 to opt in. As of July 5, 20 of the 50 counties had opted in to the student loan program.

“The Department of Commerce has assumed a lot of administrative responsibilities for the student loan program because we don’t want it to become a burden on counties,” Harris says.

Counties establish their own budgets and those can be revised annually.

Harris says they encourage counties to partner with community foundations, hospitals, and businesses for funding.

“The money doesn’t have to come from the

general county budget,” Harris says.

Payments are made at the end of a calendar year and the county pays the state and then the state makes one payment to the lending institution. Once a county’s budgeted funds for the program are used, Harris says the county can either find additional funds or start a waiting list.

Harris says response so far has been positive.

“The ROZs application was published on July 1 at 9 a.m. and we had our first application by 10 a.m.,” Harris says. “The demographics are tending to be younger, newer graduates, some with young families.”

While much of the early focus on the program was legislative, Harris says it is moving into a marketing and administrative focus.

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RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR BUDGETING PROCESS

The annual budget process is happening now in many local units of government. During this process, some also may be considering longer-term plans. If Capital Improvements Planning (CIP) seems daunting, the NCRPC may be able to assist.

While a CIP is a long-term guide that provides for a schedule of construction or acquisition of capital improvements, the capital budget is a one-year authorization to spend money for specified capital improvements.

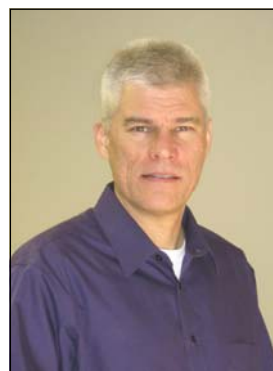
A CIP helps a local government take a critical look at itself, identify what is good, what could be improved and what opportunities for new projects exist. Often, cities and counties with a CIP in place have an easier time accessing funding.

The NCRPC, along with a team of consultants, developed a CIP workbook about 10 years ago. It is available upon request. Staff are also available to help facilitate meetings to guide planning efforts. For assistance, contact the NCRPC.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: STRIVE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE DURING THE UNEXPECTED

As many of you know NCRPC and its affiliate, NCKCN, are involved with a plethora of community and economic development endeavors. Business gap financing, cost benefit analyses for business expansion projects, homeland security procurement and fiscal management, weatherization home assistance, public health coordination, housing rehabilitation, various housing inspection services, environmental assessments, internet service provisions through NCKCN, community development project planning and administration, capital improvement planning, wind energy education, leadership development support and more.

I changed this column due to my observations on an early July evening as I traveled between two city meetings. At about 6:37 p.m. along U.S. Highway 24 just two miles west of U.S. Highway 81, a near head-on collision occurred



Doug McKinney is the NCRPC Executive Director.

between a young family from central Arkansas and a salesperson from eastern Kansas. Fortunately, no serious injuries resulted even though both vehicles were totaled. What saved each of the drivers and the passengers in the van I was following was simply their fervent wearing of seat belts and Divine Intervention. All too often we take such basic acts for granted and forget to count our blessings when we have been so close to peril.

Glasco and Concordia emergency personnel were prompt and skilled in their aiding of the injured.

Equipment purchased through the North Central Homeland Security Council was engaged during the response. A representative from Hays Fire Equipment was behind me in a new fire truck on his way home. He too stopped to render prompt aid and direct traffic until the trained professionals arrived.

As I ventured back to the office after the Glasco City Council meeting, I observed a dazzling sunset with clouds to the southwest and rising nimbus clouds on the north as well as a vast array of wildlife on the periphery as darkness approached. I will long remember little Farrah, who lost a tooth in the accident, telling her daddy these people in Kansas are sure nice to us.

North Central Kansans do have a lot to ponder and appreciate and, if we are willing, there is a lot to share with others about the great places in which we have to visit and reside. Go out and make a difference — and please wear your seat belt.



Board gets analysis update.

The NCRPC Executive Board had a joint study session with the Flint Hills Regional Council in Clay Center on May 26 to learn the latest in the Regional Industry Cluster Analysis for 19 counties in North Central Kansas. The analysis has been conducted by the Advanced Manufacturing Institute (AMI) in Manhattan. Pictured at left is AMI Assistant Director Jeff Tucker. More is available on the web at ami.ncrpc.org.

NCKTC OFFERS INNOVATIVE OUTREACH IN UNDERGROUND TECHNOLOGY, GIS/GPS

The North Central Kansas Technical College (NCKTC), with headquarters in Beloit, offers a variety of outreach and training opportunities for business and industry. Two programs in particular, the Geographic Information System/Global Positioning System (GIS/GPS) program and the Kansas Institute of Underground Technology, have been partially assisted by the Rural Business Development Tax Credit program operated by North Central Regional Planning Commission through its affiliate NCKCN and as authorized by the Kansas Department of Commerce.

The Kansas Institute of Underground Technology is a training center for workforce development in the career fields of Horizontal Directional Drilling, Utility Locator training and Fluid Mixing. In addition, NCKTC is now designing customized training for telecommunications, utility and natural gas pipeline companies. Since late 2010, approximately 80 people have completed instruction through the training center. While many of the trainees have been from Kansas, others have

enrolled from as far away as Alabama and Canada. By assisting its clients, many hours are saved searching for utilities and disasters are averted. NCKTC also is currently researching the feasibility of a geothermal field installation course using directional drilling. For more information about the Kansas Institute of

looking for new projects that give students field experience. In the past, students have mapped infrastructure beneath small communities such as Simpson and have assisted rural water districts with line locates. Online and classroom training options for GIS/GPS also exist and can be customized to fit the needs of the client. If



A course in Locator Operations is one component of the Kansas Institute of Underground Technology, offered by the North Central Kansas Technical College. Through the course, participants gain the skills to accurately locate and identify underground utilities and obstructions. *(Courtesy Photo)*

Underground Technology, visit the website at www.undergroundtech.com.

The Geographic Information System/Global Positioning System (GIS/GPS) program has been actively involved with municipalities and counties in the region and is always

your community or business has project needs or desire training, contact John Matthews, Director of Outreach, at 785-738-9041 or email jmatthews@ncktc.edu or contact Clint Offutt at 785-738-9082 or email coffutt@ncktc.edu.

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"We are engaging with alumni associations, economic development directors, Workforce Services, and retiring military that are transitioning out of Fort Riley," Harris says. "The

marketing materials that are being worked on include social media, print, as well as a stand alone website for ROZs."

Harris indicates the website also will include a splash page with maps and county information.

For more information about Rural Opportunity Zones, visit www.kansascommerce.com and click on the link in the Special Initiatives box. A list of frequently asked questions is also available at that site.

MEET THE BOARD



Janelle Dockendorf

Janelle Dockendorf began serving on the NCRPC Executive Board in spring 2011. She has been the Dickinson County Budget Director for more than 3 years. In her position, she is responsible for administering and improving procedures for the county's annual budget. She routinely monitors the county's fiscal position and reviews revenues and expenditures. Janelle also has taken on the role of Economic Development Coordinator and assists new and existing businesses with locations, business plans and financing.

Prior to working for Dickinson County, Janelle worked for the City of Abilene in various roles including finance director, utility clerk and 911 dispatcher.

Janelle attended Fort Hays State University. She is also active with the Trinity Lutheran Church in Abilene. Janelle and her husband, Joe, have two grown sons, Josh and Jarrod.

ABILENE RESTAURANT RELOCATES TO DOWNTOWN AREA

Joe Snuffy's Old Fashion Grill has been serving meals in Abilene since September 2001 from a leased space in the Green Acres Bowling Alley. This Spring it was able to purchase its own building and relocate to the historic downtown.

The family style restaurant, owned by Marty Andrews, emphasizes home-cooked meals and serves breakfast, lunch and dinner six days a week. It opened at its new location May 6. Andrews also operates a catering business.

Andrews manages the day-to-day operations of the business. He is assisted by his wife, Anja. The business employs 25 people, having a full-time equivalency of 12.5 FTE. Andrews says he has already hired additional staff to accommodate being open an additional 6.5 hours per week.

"Everything has been better than I expected," Andrews says. "We've had



A sign welcomes customers at 209 W. First Street in Abilene.

an increase in traffic, the employee attitude is great, and customers seem to be genuinely enjoying the new location. Everyone seems more relaxed."

The new location at 209 W. First Street has approximately 2,400 square feet, providing increased space and kitchen efficiency. In addition the new location is more accessible, has additional seating capacity, and increased parking. The building that Andrews purchased was constructed about 15 years ago. Andrews says while the building was in good condition, renovations were necessary for the kitchen to be fully operational and



Joe Snuffy's Old Fashion Grill has increased its seating capacity from 55 to 88 at its new location in downtown Abilene.

to get the restaurant ready to open.

"It was a challenge to get a new location ready to open while still running the existing restaurant," Andrews says. "I had a lot of friends and volunteers who helped me get it all done. We bought the building and opened within a month and I only missed my target by two days."

In the first few weeks after the move sales doubled and have stayed consistently high.

This building purchase and relocation project was made possible with funding from the Dickinson County Bank in Enterprise, the Four Rivers NCKBDF Loan Pool and investment by the owner.

For more information about the financing programs used, contact Debra Peters, NCRPC Business Finance Director at 785-738-2218 or email dpeters@nckcn.com or visit www.ncrpc.org/services/business.html.

Interested in rural and community development? Visit our sister sites!
Online Journal of Rural Research and Policy
www.ojrrp.org
Eye on Kansas
www.eyeonkansas.org

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