

Thursday February 26, 2009

Mercer, Anderson discuss regional industrial park

By DAVID BROCK
dbrock@amnews.com

HARRODSBURG - Mercer County is taking the first step toward a possible collaboration with Anderson County on a future industrial park.

Fiscal Court approved a resolution Tuesday that encourages cooperation between both counties, Harrodsburg, Lawrenceburg and each county's industrial and economic development authorities to "investigate and develop ways and means for the establishment of a regional industrial park."

The resolution does not create any financially binding agreements between any of the government entities. The park could be located in either Mercer or Anderson County, but no sites have been identified to date.

Some of the actions suggested in the resolution include developing strategy, conducting research and identifying resources that may be available for the project at the state level.

Officials from both sides caution that the resolution is only the beginning.

"This is really about the possibility of working together and is more about investigating feasibility," Mercer County Judge Executive John Trisler said. "We are looking forward to finding out more information."

Jim Kurz, executive director of the Lawrenceburg-Anderson County Economic Development Authority, concurred that the work is in the nascent stages.

"We are jointly pursuing this as a concept to see if it is something that would be beneficial to both sides," said "There is no timeline at this point. I think we have to acknowledge that this is a long range project that could be four years down the road. But it will take a great deal of planning and that is why these actions are being taken."

'Two heads are better than one...'

Both sides also cited the opportunity to pool resources and increased possibilities for funding as benefits of collaborating on such a project.

"The possibility of funding grows with regional cooperation and that is true of any project," said Trisler.

"Two heads are better than one when you are trying to do something like this," Kurz said. "Working with other counties brings more resources - both political and financial - to the table, and that really strengthens our capabilities."

Cindy Lanham from the Kentucky Department for Local Government said the fact that multiple counties are working with one another does not necessarily guarantee funding.

However, she acknowledged that the ability to secure future funding and sustain the project are considered in both grant and loan applications.

Several other areas across the state, including far West Kentucky and Northeast Kentucky have developed regional or inter-county industrial parks.

Most of these have arrangements where revenue is shared among the participating counties.

Trisler said the plan is one of many that he hopes will be able to flourish once the current economic problems dissipate.

"Now is not necessarily the time to build something, it is the time to plan for the future so that we are ready to capitalize when the economy does improve," he said. "We are looking at a number of opportunities to do that."

Copyright: The Advocate-Messenger 2009