

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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December 9, 2013

“Norfolk Area Economic Development Council Annual Meeting”

Nearly 70 people from Northeast Nebraska recently attended the Annual Meeting of the Norfolk Area Economic Development Council.



Director Courtney Klein told the group the council is currently working on a number of projects with hopes of releasing details soon.

“It’s a good time to be in Madison County, Nebraska,” Klein said.

She then introduced the keynote speaker for the event- Bill Luttrell, Senior Locations Strategist for Werner Enterprise’s Global Logistics division in Omaha. Luttrell told about his extensive experience finding locations for investors to build manufacturing and distribution plants. He has been a site selector for 30 years and lived in many

locations including Russia and Japan.

Luttrell described some of the major criteria that goes into site selection including labor, taxation, incentives, business climate, real estate, logistics, infrastructure and utilities. He said one of the most important criteria was labor with logistics a close second.

He went over the three major phases of site selection noting that 70% of the population lives east of the Mississippi River drawing many companies to look in that area.

The first phase is the strategy/screen phase in which different aspects of a site are analyzed including customer location proximity, supply chain infrastructure, and product strategy.

Phase two is when sites are chosen as semi-finalists. This is the phase in which the investors and/or site selectors actually do a site visit, interview local investors and do field work in the potential site areas.

Phase three is the negotiation phase where incentives and real estate transactions are discussed.

Luttrell’s recommendations for people looking to have sites in their communities selected were to 1. Know your product 2. Implement a realistic “target industry.” 3. Improve the business environment 4. Know your target industries inside and out and 5. Sell your strategic differences at the industry.

Luttrell said the the overall goal for a community was to get a site visit as “no one has ever invested in a location without seeing the location first.”

He noted that economic development leaders need to understand the benefits of “after care” with over 45% of all direct investment in the form of expansion of existing facilities.

Luttrell said that the Norfolk area could take advantage of the fact that they are halfway between Interstate Highways 80 and 90. He emphasized that websites must have current information. “If the information isn’t on the website we’re not wasting our time looking for it,” Luttrell said.

In answer to a question about the most important aspect of site selection, Luttrell said it was access. “Roads, rail, shipping are very important. Do what you can to get four lane access to this town,” Luttrell said.

In response to a question from Norfolk Mayor Sue Fuchtman about incentives, Luttrell said that the best incentive was employee training. “At the end of the day, lifting skill levels in the workforce will attract investors in the future,” Luttrell said.

Luttrell said that the strong Midwest work ethic is a real phenomenon that does exist. “They (Nebraskans) know how to work. They work hard all day. Many people will say this about the Midwest,” Luttrell said.

The Norfolk Area Development Council is a collaborative public-private partnership formed to promote new economic development opportunities and to support existing small businesses in the Madison County region. For more information contact Klein at 844-2260 or grow@ci.norfolk.ne.us.