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Coalition for Economic Development formed; Members Announced

For further information contact Jonah Shumate, President & CEO, Batesville Area Chamber of Commerce, at 870-793-2378 or jonah.shumate@mybatesville.org

Independence County Coalition for Economic Development

Members: Charlie Wade, Bob Stroud, Debbie Frazier, Denny Gibson, Dr. Jeff Angel, John Richardson, Renee Martin, Randy Luster, Ben Ladd, Ed Mabry, Ronnie Dowdy

The Independence County Coalition for Economic Development was announced today. The purpose of this coalition is to serve as the initial Board of Directors for the proposed economic development tax that is to be voted on by the people of Independence County on December 9th. These leaders, who live throughout Independence County, represent a broad group of business, industry, and service based employers who will work together for the advancement of our county and community. Each one of these people represents important areas of not only employment, but areas of our future growth. The governing bylaws of this organization will provide very firm and defined rules that would prevent any kind of conflict of interests that could jeopardize any project that would be presented before them.

From this Board of Directors, they will nominate and elect an Executive Committee that will work on a regular basis with the economic developer on various projects and initiatives. This Board of Directors will work and comply with all appropriate agencies and officials to maintain the highest level of integrity when it comes to financial records, etc. This group will work closely with the Quorum Court as they are the entity that will authorize any expenditure of the collected tax dollars for economic development purposes. “This type of relationship is a significant step forward in that you have private business leaders working with the elected officials of the Quorum Court to advance the economic development landscape of Independence County”, said Jonah Shumate, President & CEO of the Batesville Area Chamber of Commerce.

As stated in the ordinance that will be before the voters on December 9th, this tax will be utilized for “economic development purposes as authorized by the Quorum Court and/or to secure the repayment of bonds issued from time to time by the County and approved by the voters to finance capital improvements of a public nature for economic development purposes.” Economic development purposes is clearly defined as: “The

funding, promoting, and providing of economic development purposes and economic development projects to stimulate the local economy and to support the creation of private sector job opportunities”. This criterion is what will guide this group of leaders, and by this they will measure requests from companies, as well as proactive measures to secure interest from potential business and industrial prospects. “Every person asked to be a part of this initial Board of Directors expressed and enthusiasm in being a part of the solution, and want to ensure the highest level of integrity with this Board and the taxpayers money”, said Shumate.

There will be public meetings at the following locations to inform the public about this effort, what it will mean to them, and answer any questions that they have about how their tax dollars will be spent. The public is encouraged to come to any of the meetings below that fit their schedules:

- Pleasant Plains High School Cafeteria, November 17th, 530pm
- Bethesda Community Center, November 18th, 6pm
- Newark High School Cafeteria, November 20th, 530pm
- Charlotte Community Center, November 25th, 6pm
- Batesville High School Cafeteria, December 1st, 6pm
- Southside Middle School Cafeteria, December 2nd, 6pm

Each of these meetings is open to the public, and the public is encouraged to attend and ask any and all questions they may have about this overall effort.