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## **NCBDC progresses;**

*Dixie County Chamber and Gilchrist County Ec. Advisory Committee express interest in participating*



**NCBDC Director David Pieklik**

### **Story and Photos**

**By Jeff M. Hardison © June 17, 2019 at 9:29 a.m.**

**LEVY COUNTY** – A quorum of members of the Nature Coast Business Development Council (NCBDC) Board of Directors met Thursday afternoon (June 13) in a room at the College of Central Florida's Jack Wilkinson Levy Campus, just south of the City of Fanning Springs and north of Chiefland.

Thanks to telephone conference technology, and thanks to one of the board members overcoming obstacles from a traffic detour, a quorum came to fruition late Thursday afternoon.

The discussion and successful motions by the board reflected continued progress by the NCBDC.

NCBDC Chairman Greg Galpin, senior manager, planning, of the Weyerhaeuser Co. led the meeting via a telephone connection from his location at that time.

In addition to Chairman Galpin, other NCBDC Board members participating by the telephone conference call method were Dr. Philip R. Geist, area director of the Florida Small Business Development Center at the University of North Florida in Ocala; and Danielle Ruiz, the senior economic development manager at Duke Energy.

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**NCBDC Board Member Mark Meyer**



**NCBDC Board Member John 'J.D.' Jordan**

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telephone conference call method were Dr. Philip R. Geist, area director of the Florida Small Business Development Center at the University of North Florida in Ocala; and Danielle Ruiz, the senior economic development manager at Duke Energy.

Ruiz is responsible for the attraction and location of new business, as well as the retention and growth of existing companies to Duke Energy's 35-county service area in Florida, with a focus on Tampa-St. Petersburg and North Florida markets.

John "J.D." Jordan, mortgage broker at Capital City Bank's Inglis branch, and Mark Meyer, director of marketing and sales, of Florida Northern Railroad are the two NCBDC Board members who were present in the conference room with NCBDC Executive Director David Pieklik.

The NCBDC Board members who absent from the most recent monthly NCBDC meeting were Vernon Lawter of the College of Central Florida; M. Joyce Wilson, executive director of Unity Family Community Center; Ryan Watson of Central Florida Electric Cooperative; Chris Cowart of the Levy County School Board; Daryl Kirby of Kirby Family Farm; Dr. Dick Streeter, vice chairman and treasurer of the Withlacoochee Area Chamber of Commerce; and Levy County Superintendent of Schools Jeff Edison.

Brenda Chrisman, chief business development officer of CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, was present to listen to the conference call and she participated.

Three of the main topics discussed were Finding Investors For NCBDC; Letting Two Interests Join the NCBDC; and Evaluating Executive Director Pieklik, which included a recommended 5 percent pay increase for him.

The quorum existed after Meyer arrived. A double-fatal accident in Marion County caused traffic delays and detours for many travelers that day. As noted previously on *HardisonInk.com* on the Police Page, two motorcyclists from Italy died in a crash that morning on I-75 in Marion County.

Meyer found himself being rerouted after coming from an area near the intersection of State Road 44 and Interstate-75 northbound. The mandatory detour caused him to arrive about 15 minutes after the meeting's planned start time of 3 p.m.

## **Finding Investors For NCBDC**

In part, as a method to not be constrained by only the funding provided by the Levy County Board of County Commissioners' budget for this council, the NCBDC is moving toward the establishment of an annual investment proposal.

The currently proposed different levels for investing in the NCBDC are Champions of Prosperity (two available)- \$10,000; Second Stage Investor (four available) \$7,500; Global Leader Investor (four available) \$5,000; Investing In The Future (five available) \$1,000; Customize Services (unlimited available) \$250; and For The Cause (unlimited available) \$25.

These various investment levels come with many and various benefits, such as lead generation service for supply chain, support in target industry, depending on the levels of investment. The many different benefits on each level are extensive.

As a result of the action at the regular meeting on June 13, Pieklik was given the go-ahead by general consensus of the board of directors to begin the process of marketing this program to potential investors. October to December is seen as being the best time to obtain this first round of investments with January to December being the period covered by the investing.

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The current plan is, before September, to finalize a list of proposed investors with whom to meet and close those deals.

## Letting Two Interests Join NCBDC

In regard to discussion of this topic, Chairman Galpin spoke about the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce and the Gilchrist County Chamber of Commerce joining the NCBDC.

While Galpin and others may have understood on Thursday afternoon (June 13) that it was the Gilchrist County Chamber that was interested in joining, a conversation with a member of the Gilchrist County Board of County Commissioners on Monday morning (June 17) showed it is an advisory committee that is part of the sources of recommendations for the Gilchrist County Commission, which is exploring the idea of being part of the NCBDC.

After more communication with those two entities, the NCBDC will provide the Levy County Commission with information about those two entities depending on if either or both make a presentation for the Levy County Commission to consider, because the Levy County Commission is the deciding body in this regard.

Among the facets to be considered are investment amounts by those two interests and the return on those investments from the NCBDC to benefit those two entities.

NCBDC Executive Director Pieklik told the board members present last Thursday (June 13) he had been in communication with Dixie County Chamber of Commerce President Carol West and Gilchrist County Commissioner Todd Gray, representing the Gilchrist County Chamber, about the concepts of those two Chambers joining this business development council.

While Pieklik may have understood Commissioner Gray as representing the Gilchrist County Chamber of Commerce, that was not the case.

According to that Chamber's current website, Commissioner Gray is not an officer or on the board of directors of that Chamber. And Gray Construction Services is not listed under the "construction" category when conducting a member search of that Chamber.

Gilchrist County Commissioner Marion Poitevint is the Gilchrist County Commission member who is listed with the Gilchrist County Chamber of Commerce.

In a telephone interview with *HardisonInk.com* on June 17, Commissioner Gray clarified the point. He is a member of the Gilchrist County Economic Advisory Committee. Gray said he sees a regional effort for attracting business to the area as beneficial to all people in the area, because people from each of the counties cross county lines to work in the Tri-County Area of Dixie, Gilchrist and Levy counties.

During the meeting on Thursday, Pieklik was directed to continue those discussions, which may lead to the Dixie County Chamber and-or the Gilchrist County Economic Advisory Committee to approach the Levy County Board of County Commissioners with a presentation for consideration of this potential Tri-County Area effort for improved economic development.

Pieklik mentioned that the longest this concept can wait for a presentation to the Levy County Commission for consideration in the Oct. 1, 2019-Sept. 30, 2020 budget year is next month (July), because that is when workshops for the 2019-2020 budgets are active.

NCBDC Chairman Galpin said the NCBDC is working to provide any background

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information that can foreseeably be needed for the Levy County Commission to decide about this request, however it is the two interested groups seeking to join.

This potential expansion by adding the other two counties, he said, was initiated by interests in those two other counties.

The decision to grant or reject one or both requests, Galpin said, is up to the Levy County Commission.

The NCBDC will be prepared, however, if called upon for input, Galpin said, on what would be required to operate as a three-county business development council – in contrast with NCBDC being only oriented toward the Levy County portion of the Nature Coast now.

Dr. Geist, area director of the Florida Small Business Development Center at the University of North Florida, mentioned that funding for an expansion like this, which may require including at least one more part-time paid employee, is an element to be considered in regard to this possible future Tri-County Area entity.

Ruiz, the senior economic development manager at Duke Energy, said she believes the impact of a regional economic development group when competing for projects is more impressive and convincing than when just a single county is making a presentation.

Chairman Galpin, and Chrisman, who is chief business development officer of CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, said they agree with Ruiz. Chrisman said this creation of a stronger entity is a great idea.

Meanwhile, Pieklik is in the midst of preparing the budget submission request from the NCBDC to the Levy County Board of County Commissioners for the upcoming 2019-2020 budget year.

## **Evaluating the Executive Director**

Wilson and Meyer completed a combined draft of the annual evaluation of NCBDC Executive Director Pieklik. Although Wilson was absent from the June meeting, Meyer was present and shared information with the board members on the joint Meyer-Wilson review. NCBDC members who were present physically or via telephone conference heard Meyer's verbal report.

"We both felt that David was doing his job and doing it very well," Meyer said.

In regard to Pieklik's work habits, Meyer and Wilson noted, Pieklik takes his job very seriously – exhibiting excellent work habits, and constantly going above and beyond the requirements noted in his job description.

This employee, Meyer said, forms jobs that he initiates beyond what is demanded by the NCBDC Board of Directors, and that synthesis, coming to life without direct orders, is appreciated by the Board and the community Pieklik is serving.

As for his quality of work, Meyer and Wilson said he exceeds the required level. Meyer noted that Pieklik meets or exceeds requirements for working with a very diverse group of people. Meyer added it is his opinion that for Pieklik to convince Levy County leaders to go in one direction, is a challenge that Pieklik has met.

In regard to some current goals, Meyer said he and Wilson noted they would like Pieklik to complete the Duke Site Readiness Plan – which involves property north of Inglis that would have been developed for two new nuclear reactors, but which Progress Energy Florida and its later buyer Duke Energy did not carry forward to completion.

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Meyer said another goal is to market this and other sites that are available for business development in Levy County. Another goal stated by Meyer is for Pieklik to look at the existing business interests in Levy County, and notice which are growing and strive to determine how the NCBDC can help them. Added to this goal, is for Pieklik to assist wherever possible in maintaining all of the existing businesses.

Pieklik already is performing these actions, Meyer said, however the goal moving forward is to do that even more and better.

Meyer said that he and Wilson found a shortcoming of Pieklik. The Nature Coast Business Development Council executive director wants to single-handedly do everything. Meyer said he understands this “lone wolf” approach, because he has the same method of operation.

Sometimes, a person prefers to do something himself rather than to ask someone else to complete a task.

Going forward, Meyer said, he hopes that Pieklik will reach out to the NCBDC Board members to help him complete his various missions.

After more comments about the positive results of this worker, a motion and second were made and unanimously approved to recommend to the Levy County Commission that Pieklik receive a 5 percent increase in his annual pay.

As they discussed this, the board members who were present mentioned that this is not saying that the 10 percent increase in pay for this worker from last year means that he was twice as good during that evaluation period.

Instead, it means that last year, the bigger increase was to try to bring Pieklik’s salary up closer to what is a standard for his job in the industry.

The NCBDC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to enhancing the economic prosperity and quality of life of Levy County through strengthening the business community and attracting supportive new industry to Levy County.