

# S·I·R·D·P



**SOUTHERN INDIANA**  
**RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT, INC.**

**Meeting of the Board and  
Advisory Board of Directors**

Oliver Winery – Bloomington, Indiana  
September 12, 2007

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## **Agenda**

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| <b>10:00</b> | <b>Call to Order &amp; Welcome</b>                               |
| <b>10:10</b> | <b>Review Minutes from July 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting</b>          |
| <b>10:20</b> | <b>Staff Report</b>  |
| <b>10:40</b> | <b>SIRDP Business</b><br><b>The New SIRDP – Future Direction</b> |
| <b>11:40</b> | <b>Other</b>   |
| <b>12:00</b> | <b>Lunch &amp; Member Updates</b>                                |
| <b>1:00</b>  | <b>Adjourn</b>   |

## **Southern Indiana Rural Development Project, Inc.**

### Board and Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

July 11, 2007

French Lick, Indiana

*In attendance:*

Judy Gray  
Adam Dickey  
Karla McDonald  
Phil Ward  
Ron Arnold  
Brenda Swartz  
Fay Greckel

Joe Pearson

Dave Cox

*Staff:*

Thayr Richey  
Scott Burgins  
January Jones

Fay Greckel called the meeting to order at 10:15. Judy Gray then welcomed the group to Orange County and went over the Know Your Host facts. She then introduced Chris Leininger, General Manager of the French Lick Casino.

Mr. Leininger summarized the start-up of the resort and casino. A summary of his main points is listed below.

- Workforce of 1550 people at the opening
- 7 months operation
- West Baden had been open since mid May 2007
- The resort has received national media coverage in USA Today and the LA Times
- To date in the casino had someone from every state in the county in the first six months
- The occupancy rate has been about 80%, but most weekends are full.
- A local business person creating an indoor water park with additional hotel rooms
- Need more restaurants and retail in the town
- 145 is being completed to hook into I 64, should be fully operational by October
- Over half of the workers live in Orange County
- Lawrence and Dubois Counties are second and some people come from the Louisville area

Judy Gray then gave an update on what is going on in Orange County. She said that they are now 6<sup>th</sup> in unemployment for the state. She put emphasis on the proactive approach the town of French Lick has undertaken to utilize the momentum the casino has brought. French Lick has put together a redevelopment commission and planning commission. They have created a TIF for the whole district. They have 5 million bond for the sewer plant and 10 million to start the improvements. She said that Mr. Cook ended up buying the bonds, so if the casino goes belly up the town won't be responsible for the bonds. The town is working on a new green space, town hall and shops. There is also a Denny's going in.

She also mentioned that leadership is a challenge here. Three of our towns are not having elections, because no one is challenging the incumbents. Orleans can't find people to fill leadership positions. She said there is money coming to the communities. About 4 million a year will go to Orange County. The Orange County Development Commission replaced the Historic Commission and they will have 2 million dollars. Each town will have representation. The CVB will get 700,000 and Orleans and Paoli will get 800,000.

January then explained that the recent grant application to the Office of Community and Rural Affairs had been submitted. We developed a project that will expand on the Indiana Entrepreneurial Agriculture Directory. If we receive the grant will use \$5,000 of administration money to leverage another \$20,000 from the state. We will use this money to give direct marketing support to agricultural entrepreneurs in Southern Indiana. We complemented this project by using funds from the remaining USDA money to create an interactive web forum for Agricultural Entrepreneurs. Announcement for the grant are due in August.

Thayr Richey said that we didn't get the WIRED grant. Although we felt it was very competitive proposal, Indiana already received grants in the first two rounds.

The executive committee and staff have been working on sustainability issues. The remaining discussion at the meeting centered on ideas for maintaining the organization.

Ron Arnold explained he is working on a regional partnership with Daviess, Knox and Pike Counties, although many questions remain to be answered about the specific services and benefits.

Joe Pearson reported that he spoke to multiple economic development folks but did not get a positive reaction from them. He said Scott County remains very supportive.

Although the economic development landscape in the region has changed considerably over the last 10 years, the group feels that there is still a need to represent rural southern Indiana. How to do this in the most cost effective manner is the issue.

The meeting adjourned at noon for lunch.

## **Staff Report**

SIRDP's project did not get funded in the latest round of OCRA's Rural Capacity Grant. The proposal was to build upon our Indiana Entrepreneurial Agriculture Directory by providing direct marketing assistance to growers.

The Indiana State Board of Accounts has requested, as they periodically do, an audit of SIRDP. Staff sent them a letter requesting deferral because SIRDP fiscal agent and bookkeeper is the University of Southern Indiana. SIRDP's account already falls within the realm of university audits, which include both internal and independent procedures. We have not had a response from the state yet.