



THE

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## BOONE COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S MEETING

### More, better jobs goal of agency

BY ROD ROSE  
The Lebanon Reporter

Getting persons back to work in high-paying positions will be job one for the Boone County Economic Development Corp. next year.

"It's been a very, very interesting year economically for everyone," Dax Norton, the EDC's executive director, told the Boone County Commissioners Monday.

Although battered, Boone County's economy has been less bruised than it could have been, Norton said.

"We only lost one major company (MI Windows & Doors) because of the economic downturn, he said.

About 130 persons lost jobs when the company closed a 210,000-square-foot manufacturing plant here in November 2008.

Another company is considering moving into that building, Lebanon Mayor Huck Lewis said Monday

afternoon.

"We have a couple of prospects," Lewis said. "One of them could be very big."

When banks stopped lending, companies that had planned new buildings or expansion of others put those plans on hold, Norton said. Some projects developed as late as 2007 could be coming back on-line soon, he said.

Two firms in Lebanon Business park have expansion plans, Norton said. "We're starting to see ... good signs" that the local job market will expand, Norton said.

Both firms are asking the state for financial help to train workers, Norton said.

Another company has put the Anson area in Whitestown on its short list for new construction, Norton said.

"It's a smaller project, but with high-paying jobs," he said.

While more than 93 percent of the county's estimated 27,500 workers have jobs, many of them are "under-employed," Norton said.

"We need to diversify our jobs," Norton said.

A "career and opportunities fair" will be held in February, Norton said. The idea is to help job-seekers find training for modern jobs, rather than submitting resumes to land \$8-per-hour jobs.

"We're going to be inviting people who are under-employed," Norton said. "It'll be, 'come in and let's see if we can get you on a different track ... to get some of these 21st Century jobs.'"

Consultants have told the EDC that areas with trained, educated worker pools have better odds of attracting new companies, Norton said.

"It's very important we develop (our workforce) for the future," he said.

"It's really the quality of the job that's important," Norton said.

An "industry cluster analysis," showing the types of firms Boone County can reasonably expect to attract, will be unveiled at a Nov. 12 meeting in Zionsville, Norton said.