

ZIONSVILLE TIMES SENTINEL

Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2010

www.timesentinel.com

75 cents

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Gifford speaks to EDC



Photo by Nick McLain/Times Sentinel
Indy Partnership President and CEO Ron Gifford speaks to the Zionsville Economic Development Commission Wednesday night, Feb. 10.

By Nick McLain
Times Sentinel writer

A major player in the economic development community lauded Zionsville before its Economic Development Commission Wednesday, Feb. 10.

But Ron Gifford, president and CEO of Indy Partnership, also emphasized the "now" factor in today's fast-moving business world.

Gifford came to the EDC meeting in Zionsville Town Hall at the invitation of Boone County EDC Executive Director Dax Norton. Indy Partnership provides detailed information about possible sites in its 10-county Indianapolis region, acting as a liaison and promoter for the area. Boone County EDC is a partner in the group.

"We go out and sell this region to site consultants around the country and the world," Gifford said.

He said that Zionsville and Boone County's competition comes not just from surrounding cities and counties, but also the entire globe. In illustrating this point, he showed a list of the largest cities in the world. The Indianapolis area ranked 193rd with 1.9 million residents, well behind No. 1 Tokyo, 34 million, and No. 2 New York City, 20 million.

The competition is not

EDC

Continued from A1
just the folks next door," Gifford said.

Although Zionsville is blessed with great schools and other amenities, he added that Zionsville and Boone County needed more readily-available sites for business development.

"There's no waiting anymore," Gifford said. "There's just too many other options out there."

He also said that town and cities can make more effort to welcome businesses.

"It's about making sure that your ordinances are as user-friendly as possible and streamlining those steps," Gifford said. "Clients want to do business in places that make it easy to do business."

Both Gifford and Norton emphasized how little the

state's economic development organizations receive toward their budget. Over 93 percent of Indy Partnership's funding, Gifford said, come from private donors.

Norton said a great deal of the Boone EDC's effort is going to retaining its current businesses and assisting in creating more small business.

"It would be good for the public to know that the Boone EDC is helping to try to work on smaller properties," he said. "We need to tell our story."

EDC President Charlie Edwards said it was helpful to hear from Indy Partnership about what the group is doing and how it believes Zionsville fits in their regional initiatives.

"At the same time, I think it highlighted the fact that we have work to do locally to put Zionsville in a position to take advantage of the work being

done by Indy Partnership," he said.

Edwards also brought up the Dow property and discussed the possibility of getting a building design concept for the site. He said the EDC will take it up for discussion at the March meeting, or perhaps a joint meeting of the EDC and Zionsville Redevelopment Commission.

"We're certainly going to take a good look at the Dow property, and what, if anything, the Economic Development Commission should be doing to help make sure the future of that property fits the needs and desires of the Town of Zionsville," Edwards said.

The site, owned by Dow Chemical Company, is being marketed by John Demaree, vice president of Summit Realty Group.