

# Jobs & Economic Opportunities!

Rawlins County Citizens concerned about the future of the County met last Thursday in the Sacred Heart Church basement in Atwood. The program was titled Rawlins County 2020 and was facilitated by Chris Sramek, Rawlins County Economic Development Director, Darryl Birkenfeld, Director of Ogallala Commons, the Rawlins County Ministerial Alliance and Rawlins County HTC. The meeting was held to prioritize the needs and issues that must be addressed to insure the future of the County. 19 areas were identified with the most important being creation of new jobs and economic opportunities, growth and support of existing business, schools and healthcare. If we focus on these areas, the goals to attract new business and industry and increase the County's population by 3000 can be met. In addition, several other community issues and concerns were identified that need to be addressed in order to bring in new business and young families. In order, they were community appearance, water & water conservation, strong community foundations, all civic organizations working for one common goal, infrastructure, leadership development, water in the lake, youth attraction, leisure and recreation (swimming pool), housing, governmental leadership, tourism and creating a strong sense of place. There were over 100 ideas or suggestions people said they would like to see accomplished over the next 15 years. They ranged from keeping Dr. Baskar, building a new swimming pool and auditorium / band room, to conserving water and bringing the County's population back to 5,000 with new industry, value-added agricultural, renewable energy, and small manufacturing and technology businesses.

To successfully achieve all 19 community priorities identified at the Rawlins County 2020 meeting will require everyone working together. Over the past year the community has become more cohesive and willing to work together for the future. Now where do we go? HTC provides the framework; city government and county government must increase resources for economic development, RCED has to provide the leadership and the community needs to volunteer and support RCED efforts. The community can participate in the local HTC group, volunteer for community activities and projects, provide financial support, positively promoting economic development initiatives and programs and most importantly "look at the glass as half-full; not half-empty!"

"Economic development is no different than the biology of the human body or the planet. Every organ, ecosystem, organization or person has their role in keeping the system healthy and living. If one fails the whole system could die, but God gave us beautiful gifts to be able to self heal, learn and reproduce. If one area weakens it can be healed by technology, new innovations or another person stepping in to tackle the challenge. To bring new business and 3,000 people to Rawlins County we need to market what our forefathers have given us and self promote and build from within. The drought, a slow economy or a natural disaster can't kill the beauty of the high plains, the spirit of the people or the fact we live in the greatest country in the world that allows us take care of ourselves. If you want to be part of Rawlins County in 2020 become active in HTC or a civic organization, join a working committee or take it upon yourself to "Get R' Done!"

1. Creation of Jobs & Economic Opportunities - (49)
  - a. A new farm product that can be exported. (14)
  - b. Well paying jobs. (8)
  - c. Alternative energy sources like a wind farm. (3)
  - d. New Jobs (3)
  - e. Keep encouraging farmers to market their own local products. (2)
  - f. Jobs w/ Living Wage
  - g. New jobs | more jobs.
  - h. 50% increase of job opportunities.
  - i. Technology Jobs.
  - j. Job opportunities
  - k. Jobs so people can stay here
  - l. Jobs for young families.
  - m. Value-Added Agri-Business
  - n. Form a local food cooperative.
  - o. Find new ways to improve farming and develop alternative crops for new sources of income.
  - p. Bringing Home Youth Entrepreneurs
  - q. More diverse employment market: (Industry, new business opportunity and funding for such expansion.)
  - r. Entrepreneurial nurturing & emphasis.
  - s. Economic Draw to the County
  - t. Enhancement of the Ag industry.
  - u. Support use of our local resources: wind, location, space and innovated people.
  - v. Open Financing Avenues.
  
2. Growth & Support of Existing Business - (45)
  - a. Support local business. Stop going out of town for basic needs. (6)
  - b. Keep pounding away on how important it is to shop at home. (6)
  - c. Tax enticement to keep business in Atwood/Rawlins County. (3)
  - d. Viable business district. (2)
  - e. Find ways to help expand current businesses. (1)
  - f. Support growth of local businesses including farms. (1)
  - g. Local Support (Banks, Businesses, Farms) (1)
  - h. Grocery Store. (1)
  - i. Family Farming.
  - j. Put in place an entrepreneurial development system.
  - k. Come up with ideas to help family farming.
  - l. Keep the businesses we have and try to find new ones.
  - m. Pass businesses to new owners. The next generation.
  - n. Newspaper & Postmasters-Banks
  - o. Support old and new businesses.
  - p. Downtown vs. highway or non-downtown businesses.
  - q. Retention of businesses and professional services.
  - r. Promote local business on an area basis.

3. School System - (44)

- a. Schools. (13)
- b. Excellent School System (9)
- c. Support schools that are innovative. (6)
- d. An auditorium at the high school – south of the present gym. It needs to have a stage for presentations, a sloping floor with seating. It can be used as a band room – with storage for instruments and music. Also, it would serve the vocal music classes, the speech and drama classes, school plays and concerts of all kinds. (3)
- e. School Funding Arts & Sports & Priorities (2)
- f. Schools (Gr & HS) (2)
- g. Strong School System (1)
- h. Keeps the school going.
- i. We need to keep our schools.
- j. Education
- k. Keep schools going in a positive direction.
- l. Local School District
- m. Continues & improved school and community cooperation.
- n. Education (k-12)
- o. Continued high standard in school system. Is a regional system coming?
- p. Top notch education system.
- q. Maintaining Excellence in Education
- r. Quality School System
- s. Business education Improvement in the school system
- t. A good school system.
- u. Good schools
- v. Technology in school system
- w. Keeping the school system viable.
- x. Modern school system.

4. Health Care - (40)

- a. Keep hospital and health care services. (9)
- b. Hospital & doctor. (8)
- c. Viable Regional hospital in Rawlins Co. (5)
- d. Adequate health care. (5)
- e. Assisted Living Center (in conjunction with Hospital/Good Sam) (3)
- f. Emergency services: Fire Department and EMT. (3)
- g. Medical Facilities (2)
- h. Affordable healthcare facilities.
- i. Health care: hospital, clinic, assisted living and nursing home.
- j. Assisted Living
- k. Assisted Living for Older People
- l. Continued improvements to the Rawlins county Health Center and Clinic
- m. A full service hospital with plenty of medical staff.
- n. Healthcare continued or better.
- o. Maintaining Health Care
- p. Medical – Take a real look at feasibility or regional care.
- q. Health care service for young & old, wide range and quality.
- r. Keep Dr. Baskar!
- s. Hospital Operating.
- t. Another Dr. to serve our hospital.
- u. Keep the hospital going.

5. New Industry & Business (33)

- a. New Industry (8)
- b. New Business (4)
- c. New business & job creation (3)
- d. Drive up window fast food service in Atwood. (3)
- e. Clothing Store (2)
- f. Implement Store (2)
- g. Good motel in Atwood. (2)
- h. New Businesses (dress shop, dentist, jewelry, computer sales) (1)
- i. Small Industry to offer more jobs in community (1)
- j. Industry Based on non Locally Consumed Items (1)
- k. A dairy
- l. Industry recruitment.
- m. Small industry.
- n. More Small Businesses
- o. Sale Barn
- p. Develop agricultural based businesses
- q. Bring businesses to county & younger families.
- r. Create a good environment to encourage businesses.
- s. Expand Incentives to attract new business
- t. Use of empty buildings in the business square.

6. 3,000 additional people (29)

- a. New Wealth (7)
- b. 3,000 additional people. (6)
- c. Population stabilization. (1)
- d. 50% increase in population (County)
- e. Find ways to encourage young individuals and families to return to Rawlins County.
- f. More families
- g. Increase the number of school age children in our county.
- h. More Young Families.
- i. Concentrate on Basic Services To Be Able to Attract People

7. Community Appearance (23)

- a. Make a clean and attractive town. (4)
- b. Curb dilapidation of Atwood's (RA. Co.) & Properties (3)
- c. Improve appearance of Atwood along both highways.
- d. Update housing and demolition unlivable houses

8. Water & Water Conservation - (20)

- a. Adequate water supply. Not necessarily for farming, but ensuring that we have good quality water to drink, bathe, etc. (9)
- b. Water conservation. (6)
- c. Water (5)
- d. Adequate water system for the future.
- e. Good Clean Portable Water
- f. Water Supply

9. Strong Community Foundations (16)
  - a. A strong community foundation. (4)
  - b. No inheritance unless you live in Rawlins County.
  - c. Form a grant writing team.
  
10. All civic organizations working for one common goal. (16)
  - a. All groups working together on a common plan. (Commissioners, City Council, HTC, Economic Development and Chamber) (4)
  - b. Cooperation of city and county officials. (1)
  - c. Counties and Cities cooperate more in economic development.
  - d. County Government.
  
11. Infrastructure (14)
  - a. Sound infrastructure: water, wastewater, roads, streets, electric, gas, radio and T.V. (2)
  - b. Infrastructure (2)
  - c. Build a strong tax base. (2)
  - d. I-36 (2)
  - e. Good roads. (1)
  - f. Maintain infrastructure to support the needs of population.
  - g. Continued infrastructure repair (i.e. streets)
  - h. City infrastructure.
  - i. Law enforcement.
  - j. Updated local Agencies (road county. fire, law.)
  
12. Leadership Development (13)
  - a. Interaction between youth and adult community in order to strengthen the desire of young people to contribute to community life. (4)
  - b. More participation in all community affairs by 20-40 year olds. (2)
  - c. Leadership Development (2)
  - d. Community unity. (1)
  - e. Have a Rawlins County leadership academy.
  - f. Convince those under the age of 40 to participate in community affairs.
  - g. More People belonging to Community Service Organizations
  - h. Leadership strength
  - i. Demonstrated Sense Of Community Pride Through: (Participation, Involvement, Determination, Elimination of Negative Influences)
  
13. Water / Lake. (7)
  - a. Water / Lake (9)
  - b. Lake Atwood (3)
  - c. Water Quality (1)
  - d. Lake Atwood Project.
  - e. Water in Lake Atwood-getting it there and keeping it there.
  
14. Youth Attraction
  - a. Incentives for graduates to come back. Specific scholarships for professions needed in Rawlins County. (Lawyer, Dr. Mortician) (4)
  - b. Bribe the talented young people raised here to come home. (1)
  - c. Keeping youth.
  - d. Youth Center
  - e. Youth Retention

- f. Youth involvement.
- g. Figure out how to let kids be kids again (entertainment).

#### 15. Leisure & Recreation

- a. Swimming Pool (3)
- b. Keep and add to our existing "attractions" we have (i.e. Theatre, Pool, Golf Course, Museum) (2)
- c. Provide Entertainment for all age's leisure time. (1)
- d. A new swimming pool.
- e. A new swimming pool enlarged to eight straight lanes and a new bath house.
- f. Recreational facility continued theatre, pool, library, etc
- g. New Pool
- h. Addition to the City Library
- i. Community Services such as Library, Museum, Elder Care.
- j. New Recreation outlet
- k. Recreational Opportunities for Youth
- l. Recreational Business Opportunities i.e. Lake Based Fishing/Car Racing/Motorcycle Racing/Powered Chute Rally's
- m. A motorcycle rally in August 1 week before Sturgis.
- n. A consolidated recreation and sports complex.
- o. Recreation for all ages.
- p. Recreation facilities.
- q. Community recreation and attractions.
- r. Things for young people to do for their recreation time. Security for community.

#### 16. Housing

- a. Rentals – Housing & storage. (1)
- b. Affordable housing.
- c. Provide adequate housing for quality people that may want to move to rural setting.
- d. More adequate housing
- e. Providing homes & better housing.

#### 17. City / County Government Leadership

- a. Merger of City/County Governments (1)
- b. Have a responsive and efficient county and local government. (1)
- c. Consolidation of city & county. (Law, courts, services and retail)
- d. Tax relief. Why is Rawlins County the highest taxed county in northwest Kansas?

#### 18. Tourism

- a. More promotion of the valley setting of Atwood.
- b. Tourism.
- c. Better motels to help promote tourism.

#### 19. Sense of Place

- a. Hope for the future. (2)
- b. Willingness to accept change!!! (In job market, ideas, employment force). A more open mind. (2)
- c. A strong family unit. (2)
- d. Quality of Life opportunities.