

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Mari E. Macomber, City Manager *MSM*
SESSION DATE: March 2, 2009
TIME: 12:00 p.m.
PLACE: City Council Chambers

The second floor conference room is beginning to prove unacceptable in accommodating various guests and visitors to these meetings. Therefore, the Study Sessions will be moved to the Council Chambers unless the Council decides otherwise.

AGENDA:

- **Chapter 353 Development Presentation**
- **Discuss Salary Plan**
- **Economic Development Program**
- **Newsletter Review – February 27, 2009**

CHAPTER 353 DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION

The City Council will hear a presentation regarding a proposed development for property located at 1600 South Baltimore.

The project is described as a Medical/Professional Center and is intended to provide office space for new doctors recruited to the area by Northeast Regional Medical Center. The project will also include at least two other medical professionals and 2 other local professional groups.

The developer explains in an attached handout that the project will establish 50 new jobs with \$3 million in additional payroll within the first two years of the project.

The property to be developed has sat vacant for many years previously serving as a trailer park and a few other small businesses no longer in operation.

The developer has stated that the taxes paid on this property is \$2,095 per year and proposes to invest in the construction of a professional office building. The documentation from the developer does not state the size of the building, the estimated cost of construction or if the project will be a phased approach.

The developer has considered several financing options and would like the City to consider Chapter 353 Tax Abatement. The purpose of this program is to provide an incentive to developers to redevelop or improve areas of a community that are blighted. To be eligible the developer must be an Urban Redevelopment Corporation. The project would be supported through tax abatement for a period of 25 years, which begins when the Urban Redevelopment Corporation takes title to the property. For the first ten years the property is not subject to real property taxes except that portion already assessed on the land. The next 15 years the property may be assessed up to 50% of its value with improvements.

A city could impose Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) on the Corporation by contract. PILOTS are paid annually and intended to replace all or part of the real estate taxes that are abated. If PILOTS are required, then the payment is allocated to each taxing district based on a proportionate share of the taxes levied.

Attorney Tim Reuschel and Bob Moore, CEO of Northeast Regional Medical Center will attend the Council Study Session on Monday to explain the project and answer questions that you may have concerning investment, make-up of the building, timeframe to develop, reasons for the building, reasons for tax abatement, aside from the medical office space, what other professional space is being planned, etc.

If possible, it would be important to find out from the hospital how critical this project is to their success and ability to recruit additional doctors.

Council should be aware that the group has met with the Kirksville RIII School District. The District questioned the need for the project, and though they did not take any formal action for or against the project had concerns about the need for the project.

The big question is whether or not the project is needed to support improvements in medical staff for the hospital and if so what sort of impact will these additional doctors have on our community – the health and care of citizens, the prosperity of the hospital, additional employment, enhancements to attract residents from outlying areas, etc. Creating space for professional services alone may not be a suitable use of the tax abatement program.

Recommended Action

It will be important to listen to the presentation on Monday and ask questions that you may. More information is needed and further discussions with the developer, hospital and others before a decision is made or a recommendation given.

DISCUSS SALARY PLAN

In January, the Council approved a ballot measure asking the voters whether or not to support a ¼ cent sales tax that is used to pay for fire service expenses. This tax would generate approximately \$600,000 each year and would be used to cover current fire operating expenses freeing up other funds to be used toward improving the compensation of city employees paid from the General Fund. The City has 144 employees, of which 65% are paid directly from General Fund revenues and another 12% are supported through General Fund revenues, leaving 23% to be paid from funds capable of generating revenues to cover operational costs. The General Fund has the least available funds and supports 77% of the personnel costs of the City.

The Council has asked that a plan be prepared that would tentatively establish how the compensation would be changed if the tax passed in April.

Several issues were identified that needed to be addressed: our ability to recruit employees, our ability to retain employees; and insufficient pay differential between supervisory and first line employees.

Other items to consider:

Adding holiday pay to the base wage of public safety employees – currently the pay is not added to base, but it is paid out to the employees. By adding it to the base, the hourly rate of the wage would increase, thus increasing overtime pay and future pay adjustments would be increased due to the additional wages added to the base.

Adding shift differential to the base wage of personnel – currently the pay is adjusted by so much per hour when employees work second and third shift. By adding the shift differential to the base employees would see an increase year round in their pay and again future wage increases would be calculated with the differential included.

The City Council should also consider changing the overtime policy to pay overtime for hours worked in excess of the established work week as required by Federal law, or at a minimum only allow the inclusion of vacation hours as hours worked for calculating overtime pay, as opposed to allowing the inclusion of sick leave to count as hours worked.

What is included for your consideration is a 1% increase across the board and a 1% increase between the salary ranges. The public safety employees were then pulled from the other pay scale and an additional 3% pay increase was added to the base. By doing this, 50% of the total increase is going to this segment of the City's workforce, which only comprises 35% of the workforce. This would increase police department pay on average by \$2,900 and fire department pay by \$3,500 on average. These increases reflect the inclusion of the holiday and shift differential in the applicable base pay, it does not include changes in

overtime compensation. The total cost for the three adjustments for all funds is \$360,104. If the council were interested in improving the retirement program the cost would be an additional \$158,466 based on current wages for a total investment of \$518,570. The total cost to the General Fund on the wages only would be about \$269,000 plus the General Fund share of the lagers increase which would be about \$135,750. Combined the two figures are \$404,750 or 78% of the total increase.

Recommended Action

There is room for the Council to make slight adjustments if you desire, I caution the allocation of all of the funds since a wage increase results in additional costs for those employees who still have step increases available to them and for social security and lagers costs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Staff would like to discuss the various economic programs currently in place within the city and receive some direction from the Council on the economic development portion of the program that City staff is responsible for addressing – retail and service sector. Included in your packet is a report from Cherie Bryant that outlines

Attraction Efforts

Previous Councils were concerned about the competition that other retail and service sector business made for existing companies. For example, both Walgreens and Home Depot were seen as direct competition for existing business, the City Council was opposed to providing incentives, specifically TIF to assist with the development.

Another concern was the city actively soliciting competition to come to Kirksville and so limited efforts were made to try and attract other restaurants and retail segments.

In the last year, we have made efforts to contact businesses when we determine they are interested or if we have local citizens who bring the ideas or business to our attention, as ones they shop at.

The City spends most of its economic development funds on efforts to support KREDI, if the Council was interested in additional economic efforts outside of KREDI, additional funds would be needed to market and promote Kirksville.

Retention Efforts

The City has limited financial resources but has worked to assist local business when we are asked. We now have a low interest building façade program, and have worked with businesses to obtain low interest loan funds from the Regional Planning Commission.

The City has also spent many years supporting the efforts of the downtown businesses. We are starting to see some progress on this effort through DREAM support. We have tried in the past to organize a section of Baltimore businesses and were hoping the Baltimore wreath project would be the catalyst for some additional partnerships.

Recommended Action

We would like to visit with the Council about our role in economic development, efforts that are being made and what direction the Council would like city staff to take.

NEWSLETTER REVIEW – February 27, 2009

Attachments

- 1600 South Baltimore Development Summary – pg 6-7
- Staff Report – Pay Plan – pg 8-9
- Total Compensation Based on Proposed Increases – pg 10
- Pay Scale General Employees – pg 11 - 12
- Pay Scale Public Safety Employees – pg 13
- Salary Adjustments Previously Provided – pg 14
- Comparison Information to Similar Size Communities – pg 14
- Living Wage Information – pg 15
- Staff Report – Economic Development Program – pg 16 -17

1600 S. BALTIMORE PROJECT

Development Group:	Weaver Holdings LLC
Project Overview:	Development of a Medical/Professional Center at 1600 S. Baltimore.
Hospital Involvement:	NRMC is in the process of recruiting new doctors and support staff in an effort to better serve the existing needs of the community and to expand the areas of practice now available in this area. NRMC has issued a letter of support for this project and they see its implementation as a crucial step in advancing healthcare in Northeast Missouri.
Other Participants:	Weaver Holdings has received commitments from 2 medical practices as well as 2 other local professional groups to locate their enterprises in the Baltimore Development if the project moves forward.
Economic Impact:	The benefits of this development to the City and surrounding area are enormous. NRMC and the other professional groups will create up to 50 new employment opportunities. It is important to note that all of these new jobs will be comparatively high paying and the new employees will have benefits beyond their base salaries. Weaver's projections indicate that Phase 1 of this project can create up to 3 million dollars in new salaries within 2 years. In addition, the City will see ancillary benefits as the money from these new salaries cycles through the Kirksville economy. If successful, it is hoped that future development and expansion will create even more opportunities for Kirksville.
Current Property Use:	The subject property has been undeveloped and vacant for a number of years. It has previously served as a car lot, a trailer park, gas station and pawn shop. All of these businesses have been abandoned for some time. There are underground gas tanks on premises, but an environmental study has revealed no soil contamination.
Property Taxes:	The subject property currently generates \$2,094.78 per/year.

Weaver Plan: Weaver proposes the creation of an Economic Redevelopment Corporation under Chapter 353 of the Missouri Revised Statutes. These Corporations are designed to encourage and stimulate new economic development on blighted properties. The law allows the property taxes assessed to remain steady for a period of 10 years at the current tax rate, with the Corporation paying 50% of a newly assessed tax rate for an additional 15 year period. This temporary tax relief is a necessary component for the project to proceed.

353 vs. TIF: The City is familiar with TIF districts and the problems associated with their creation. TIF districts can return 100% of the developer's costs through tax credits over a 23 year period. In addition, TIF districts can cost the City 50% of any gross sales tax receipts for the life of the TIF District.

Weaver is proposing a 353 because it is limited to the help we need. Only the medical and professional space will be eligible for benefits. If this project becomes as successful as we hope, leading to the development of other retail or commercial projects, the City and other taxing authorities will get the full benefit of the newly created sales tax revenues and ad valorem property tax revenues.

KIRKSVILLE CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ATTACHMENT

SUBJECT: Pay Plan Information

STUDY SESSION MEETING DATE: February 27, 2009

CITY DEPARTMENT: Administration

PREPARED BY: Pat Meredith, Human Resources Director

The Pay Plan

The City adopted our current Pay Plan in 1996. A Pay Plan is necessary to ensure equal pay for equal work, to attract and retain qualified employees, and to provide for a non-discriminatory means of compensating employees.

Position descriptions were developed position specifications outlining characteristics associated with the performance of the job were established (knowledge, skills, and abilities... associated with the position), and a position evaluation procedure was implemented. Position evaluation is the procedure by which the relative worth of jobs in the organization is determined. Position evaluation concentrates on the job, not the person in the job, and measures contribution of the job, not merely activity. A point position evaluation is used by the City to numerically rank positions based on their compensatory factors. Compensatory factors are those characteristics of jobs that the organization is willing to pay for.

Pay ranges were established to group jobs of approximately equal worth into categories. With the point, job evaluation system, points determine pay ranges. Within each range, all jobs are treated as equivalent. They may be varied in nature but must be considered of about equal salary value.

Surveys of comparable cities are completed periodically to determine if our wages are competitive. Unfortunately, since the adoption of this Pay Plan the City has been unable to pay employees a competitive wage based on marketplace surveys.

Each pay range (*established from the point system*), is assigned a minimum and a maximum. The minimum should be high enough to attract minimally qualified people and the maximum should be high enough to hang onto good workers. For the most part, each salary range minimum is a constant percentage above the minimum of the range below it, and the same applies for the maximums. Each range is the same percentage of spread from minimum to maximum.

The Pay Plan requires annual maintenance keeping job descriptions up-to-date, classifying employees properly, rerating jobs as necessary, conducting salary surveys to keep pace with the dynamics of the labor market and economic conditions, and continually communicating with employees.

Changes in labor laws and the City of Kirksville revenue challenges has resulted in some inequities in our current Pay Plan, however the basic components continue to be comparable to current Pay Plan designs.

Regardless of the problems noted we continue to attract and retain quality employees, operate with an efficiency the exceeds that of many of our sister cities, and are a leader in leader among peer organization in the provision of services, adherence to current federal and state laws, and innovated processes.

Total Compensation

Based on 2009 Benefits

Fund	2008	2009	2009	2009	2010
	Projection	No Increase	1% Adjustment	8% Btwn Ranges	New Plan
10	\$ 4,488,810	\$ 4,629,019	\$ 4,671,554	\$ 4,798,605	\$ 4,897,962
25	\$ 375,635	\$ 377,394	\$ 380,631	\$ 388,336	\$ 392,136
27	\$ 49,979	\$ 50,310	\$ 50,770	\$ 52,992	\$ 52,992
40	\$ 172,780	\$ 180,823	\$ 182,245	\$ 187,658	\$ 189,303
80	\$ 1,028,563	\$ 1,157,713	\$ 1,167,698	\$ 1,194,610	\$ 1,200,504
85	\$ 332,816	\$ 345,814	\$ 348,590	\$ 358,830	\$ 360,082
87	\$ 145,440	\$ 151,889	\$ 153,196	\$ 156,418	\$ 160,087
88	\$ 110,341	\$ 128,446	\$ 128,446	\$ 128,446	\$ 128,446
89	\$ 30,680	\$ 28,312	\$ 28,312	\$ 28,312	\$ 28,312
	\$ 6,735,044	\$ 7,049,720	\$ 7,111,442	\$ 7,294,207	\$ 7,409,824
Projected Increase			\$ 61,722.00	\$ 244,487.00	\$ 360,104.00
New Plan - 1% COL plus 7-8% Between Hourly Ranges plus 3% Public Safety					

LAGERS Projection Based on 2009 Wages		
L7	\$	304,956
L12	\$	463,422
	\$	158,466

Example of how the LAGERS change impacts employee benefits.	
L7	1.50% X \$3,000 X 25 years = \$1,125 per month payable for life
L12	1.75% X \$3,000 X 25 years = \$1,312 per month payable for life

2/26/2009

City of Kirksville - Pay Structure

General Employees

[1% Cost-of-Living plus an increase between ranges from 7% to 8%]

Hourly/Non Exempt Positions						
Range 5		Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Custodian	Proposed	20,548	21,204	21,860	22,516	23,172
	Current	20,345	20,995	21,644	22,293	22,943
Range 6						
Accounting Clerk	Proposed	22,192	22,901	23,609	24,317	25,026
Airport Operator	Current	21,769	22,464	23,159	23,854	24,549
Animal Control Officer						
Customer Service Clerk						
Deputy Court Clerk						
Maintenance Worker						
Range 7						
Accounting Clerk II	Proposed	23,968	24,733	25,498	26,263	27,028
Administrative Assistant	Current	23,293	24,037	24,780	25,523	26,267
Communications Operator I						
Customer Service Representative						
Equipment Operation I						
Facility Maintenance Worker						
Records & Evidence Custodian						
Utility Locator						
Range 8						
Administrative Assistant	Proposed	25,885	26,711	27,537	28,363	29,189
Communications Operator II	Current	24,924	25,720	26,515	27,310	28,106
Engineering Technician I						
Equipment Operator II						
Utility Billing Coordinator						
Range 9						
City Clerk/Executive Secretary	Proposed	27,956	28,848	29,740	30,632	31,524
Inspector I	Current	26,669	27,520	28,371	29,222	30,073
Mechanic						
Traffic Control Technician						
Utility Operator						
Range 10						
Engineering Technician II	Proposed	30,193	31,156	32,120	33,083	34,047
Inspector II	Current	28,536	29,446	30,357	31,268	32,178
Municipal Court Clerk						
Recreation Specialist						
Street/Park Maintenance Foreman						
Utility Maintenance Foreman						
Utility Operator II						
3% Between Steps/ 8% Between Hourly Ranges/ 10% Between Exempt Ranges / 20% Between Hourly and Exempt Ranges						

City of Kirksville - Pay Structure
General Employees
FY January 2010

Salaried/Exempt Positions						
Range 111		Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Fleet Maintenance Supervisor	Proposed	37,741	38,946	40,150	41,355	42,559
GIS Coordinator	Current	35,669	36,808	37,946	39,084	40,223
Risk Coordinator						
Senior Engineering Technician						
Senior Inspector						
Range 112						
Administrative Sergeant	Proposed	41,515	42,840	44,165	45,490	46,815
Airport Director	Current	39,237	40,489	41,741	42,993	44,245
Asst to the City Engineer						
Street Maintenance Supervisor						
Utility Maintenance Supervisor						
Utility Supervisor						
Range 113						
Asst to the City Manager	Proposed	45,667	47,125	48,582	50,039	51,497
Deputy Public Works Director	Current	43,160	44,538	45,915	47,292	48,670
E911 Communications Director						
Human Resource Director						
3% Between Steps/ 8% Between Hourly Ranges/ 10% Between Exempt Ranges / 20% Between Hourly and Exempt Ranges						

City of Kirksville - Pay Structure
General Employees
FY January 2010

Unclassified Positions - Performance Based Adjustments		
Classification	Proposed	Budgeted
Community Services Director	\$ 51,837	\$47,477
Codes/Planning Director	\$ 53,439	\$50,040
Engineer	\$ 51,837	\$47,477
Finance Director	\$ 65,000	\$63,144
Fire Chief	\$ 65,000	\$48,458
Police Chief	\$ 65,000	\$61,248
Public Works Director	\$ 73,184	\$73,184
Forensic Director		
City Manager		

City of Kirksville - Pay Structure

Public Safety

[3% increase above general employee's adjustment]

Police Department						
Range 9		Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Police Officer	Proposed	31,316	32,316	33,315	34,314	35,314
School Resource Officer	Current	26,669	27,520	28,381	29,222	30,073
Range 10						
Police Corporal	Proposed	33,821	34,901	35,980	37,059	38,139
Police Detective	Current	28,536	29,446	30,357	31,268	32,178
Range 12						
Police Sergeant	Proposed	42,200	43,547	44,894	46,241	47,588
Detective Sergeant	Current	39,237	40,489	41,741	42,993	44,245
Range 112						
Administrative Sergeant	Proposed	42,200	43,547	44,894	46,241	47,588
	Current	39,237	40,489	41,741	42,993	44,245
Range 113						
Deputy Police Chief	Proposed	46,420	47,902	49,383	50,864	52,346
	Current	43,160	44,538	45,915	47,292	48,670

Holiday compensation and shift differential included in base of proposed plan only.

Fire Department						
Range 8		Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Firefighter	Proposed	29,215	30,148	31,080	32,012	32,945
	Current	24,924	25,720	26,515	27,310	28,106
Range 9						
Firefighter II/EMT	Proposed	31,552	32,559	33,566	34,573	35,580
	Current	26,669	27,520	28,371	29,222	30,073
Range 10						
Fire Captain	Proposed	34,076	35,163	36,251	37,339	38,426
	Current	28,536	29,446	30,357	31,268	32,178
Range 112						
Battalion Chief	Proposed	44,807	46,237	47,668	49,098	50,528
	Current	39,237	40,489	41,741	42,993	44,245
Range 113						
	10%					
Assistant Fire Chief	Proposed	49,289	50,862	52,435	54,008	55,581
	Current	43,160	44,538	45,915	47,292	48,670
3% Between Steps/ 8% Between Hourly Ranges/ 10% Between Exempt Ranges / 20% Between Hourly and Exempt Ranges						

Fire Hourly rate based on 2,756 hours per year - actual hours approximately 2912.

Holiday compensation include in proposed plan only.

Wages Provided to City Employees in the last 10 years compared to COLA

<u>Month/Year</u>	<u>Amount Given</u>	<u>COLA (as provided for SSI)</u>
April 1998	3%	1.3%
April 1999	2% hourly 3.5% salary	2.5%
April 2000	4.5% hourly 3.5% salary	3.5%
April 2001	2%	2.6%
April 2002	2%	1.4%
April 2003	0	2.1%
May 2004	3%	2.7%
April 2005	0	4.1%
Jan. 2006	2.5%	3.3%
Dec 2006	\$250 bonus*	
Jan 2007	\$350 bonus*	2.3%
Dec 2007	3%	
Dec 2008	\$1,500 bonus*	5.8%
Total COLA %	22%*	31.6%

* One time bonuses were not factored in.

City Comparisons

Population

Kirksville: **17,304**

Moberly: **12,118**

Hannibal: **17,456**

Warrensburg: **18,629**

Sales Tax Rates

Kirksville Sales Tax Rate - **.7850**

Moberly Sales Tax Rate - **.8225**

Hannibal Sales Tax Rate - **.8975**

Warrensburg Sales Tax Rate - **.7660**

Estimated median household income in 2007

Kirksville:  \$26,293

Moberly:  \$32,837

Hannibal:  \$34,500

Warrensburg:  \$33,702

Missouri:  \$45,114

Estimated median house or condo value in 2007

Kirksville:  \$110,387

Moberly:  \$73,169

Hannibal:  \$89,530

Warrensburg:  \$144,686

Missouri:  \$138,600

LIVING WAGE INFORMATION -

Hourly Wages	One Adult	One Adult, One Child	Two Adults	Two Adults, One Child	Two Adults, Two Children
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Kirksville

Living Wage	\$6.71	\$13.74	\$10.79	\$17.80	\$23.35
Poverty Wage	\$5.04	\$6.68	\$6.49	\$7.81	\$9.83
Minimum Wage	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25

Moberly

Living Wage	\$6.58	\$13.52	\$10.66	\$17.60	\$23.15
Poverty Wage	\$5.04	\$6.68	\$6.49	\$7.81	\$9.83
Minimum Wage	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25

Hannibal

Living Wage	\$6.50	\$13.44	\$10.58	\$17.52	\$23.07
Poverty Wage	\$5.04	\$6.68	\$6.49	\$7.81	\$9.83
Minimum Wage	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25

Warrensburg

Living Wage	\$7.01	\$13.83	\$11.09	\$17.89	\$23.43
Poverty Wage	\$5.04	\$6.68	\$6.49	\$7.81	\$9.83
Minimum Wage	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25

KIRKSVILLE CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ATTACHMENT

SUBJECT: Economic Development Program

STUDY SESSION MEETING DATE: March 2, 2009

CITY DEPARTMENT: Economic and Community Development

PREPARED BY: Cherie Bryant, Assistant to the City Manager

Economic Development Plan

The city's Economic and Community Development department performs a variety of administrative functions relating to business assistance and manufacturing base attraction through the support of the Kirksville Regional Economic Development, Inc. (K-REDI). Historically, the city's main focus has been to attract and to retain retail business, while K-REDI's primary focus has been on industry and the manufacturing base. Within the last few years, the Missouri Rural Enterprise and Innovation Center (MREIC) have become integral in addressing entrepreneurship and new business in the area. The following is a list of each organization's key components of economic development in Kirksville.

The City of Kirksville: Economic and Community Development

- ❖ Help business find available property for expansion
- ❖ Provide Revolving Loans to small business
- ❖ Provide follow-up correspondence to potential new business
- ❖ Help navigate the prospective new business on local and state programs

The **Missouri Rural Enterprise & Innovation Center (MREIC)** facilitates innovation-based economic growth in Northeast Missouri. MREIC provides support through one-on-one assistance and linkages to important resources. Programs include:

- ❖ Business Start-up Information and Assistance Opportunity Assessment and Business Planning
- ❖ Intellectual Property Management
- ❖ Technology and Product Development
- ❖ Grant Assistance
- ❖ Assistance to Become Venture Ready

The **Truman State University Small Business Development Center** is part of a nationwide network of Small Business Development Center programs and is affiliated with and supported by Truman's School of Business. The Missouri Small Business Development Center provides counseling in such areas as business plan development, financial management, market feasibility,

international trade, franchising and licensing, inventory, marketing and more. Training program topics include accounting, marketing, getting started in business, taxes, financial analysis, cash flow analysis, customer service and business plans. Information and technology resources include computerized patent, trademark and copyright searches; computerized exporting leads; product design, testing and SMART overview quality control; manufacturing studies; and plant layout.

Kirksville Regional Economic Development, Inc. (K-REDI) is Kirksville's reorganized job creation effort whose primary goal is to create new industrial jobs and assist in expanding the current industrial job base. K-REDI is a not-for-profit 501 C (3) organization. K-REDI forms partnerships on projects with local, state and federal government whenever possible. These partnerships design proposals to assist and attract new expanding job opportunities. K-REDI is always poised and ready to explore any new lead or opportunity.