

JCEDC director Coady leaving

By Alexa Zoellner azoellner@dailyunion.com | Posted: Thursday, June 9, 2016 9:05 am

JEFFERSON — Genevieve Coady, executive director of the Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium will be leaving the organization on June 24.

Coady, who has served as JCEDC executive director since spring of 2014, has accepted a position as executive director of the Plan for Economic Growth and Jobs with World Business Chicago, the region's economic development council.

“This was not an easy decision for me by any means,” Coady said. “It’s just one of those ‘dream jobs,’ and while this job here has been a dream job, I wish everyone here the best and I do believe they’re going to be able to do some pretty amazing things under this new organization in the coming years.”

Chaired by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, World Business Chicago drives regional economic growth by collaborating to create jobs, cultivate talent, and put Chicago at the forefront of the global economy.

In her new position, Coady will serve as the external facing lead for implementation of the Chicago regional economic development plan, a coordinated effort to assess and expand Chicago's economy. The plan provides a set of goals, a framework for research and analysis, and strategies being implemented by a robust network of public, private, foundation and community leaders to foster regional growth.

Coady's exit comes shortly after the beginning of a merger process between the JCEDC and the Watertown Economic Development Organization (WEDO) and just prior to the start of a \$4.1 million, five-year strategic initiative slated to begin in 2017.

In addition, she has led the charge as JCEDC develops a transition plan that will culminate with a new organizational model that engages the private sector, as well as a partner 501(c)(3) organization.

As part of the merger of the organizations, all employees of both entities will work under the umbrella of the JCEDC and, based on the Intergovernmental Agreement that formed under JCEDC, staff will be employees of the county.

It will be a phased merger, with the first phase including the transition of the business relations and marketing manager post to the JCEDC. WEDO will provide \$60,000 as part of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support costs for the transition.

The remaining position, the associate director of business development, will transition from WEDO to JCEDC as part of the 2017 budget process. After 2016, the two positions will be funded as a result of the capital campaign that will be completed by the end of 2016.

Coady's resignation also coincides with the resignation of Kim Erdmann, the current executive director of WEDO, who was scheduled to join JCEDC as its associate director of business development in January of 2017. He will be returning to private industry as the president of a Wisconsin-based manufacturing firm.

"It's still all systems go," Coady said of the merger. "We've had quite a few conversations in the last several days with the leaders both of WEDO and the JCEDC, and there is much, much, much commitment to continuing the momentum of the capital campaign process, insofar as we can maintain all momentum possible."

Overall, Coady said the campaign's overall timeline is not expected to shift more than one month.

"(The merger) is still going forward," Jefferson County Administrator Ben Wehmeier said. "We'll be working with the WEDO leadership making sure they have the support for the next six months that Erdmann was going to be providing and that organization wound down. This will give us time to do a search, to involve their leadership as well. We already started to execute the MOU — the agreement between WEDO, the JCEDC and the county."

Coady will be missed, he said.

"Genevieve was a great asset as we looked at how we changed the organization for economic development, and engaged both the community and private sector on what was the best methodology of moving forward," Wehmeier commented. "The results are what we're doing now — partially developing the not-for-profit model and then how do we bring the private sector in as part of the board of directors to help provide the leadership with that executive director position. So that was a pretty significant change that she (Coady) helped guide us through as we looked at best practices in economic development to support the county."

Watertown Mayor and JCEDC Board Chair John David agreed.

"Genevieve has been instrumental in developing local economic development," David stated in a press release. "That being said, she has laid the groundwork for the JCEDC to take our efforts to a new level.

"I am confident the search for her replacement will go smoothly, and I look forward to the continued success of the organization under new leadership with its capital campaign in the fall," he added. "There is more than enough work to be done and it will be critical to have the right leadership in place to help shepherd the organization into its next iteration."

A professional economic development executive search firm, most likely Power 10 of Atlanta, will conduct a national recruitment process for Coady's immediate replacement so that new leadership is in place for the slated capital campaign later this fall. The new JCEDC director will be charged with developing an expanded public and private economic development board of directors.

This expanded group will oversee the five-year strategic initiative slated to launch in early 2017. Erdmann's position will be advertised at a future date.

"I think the approach we'll take is moving forward immediately with filling the executive director role," Wehmeier said. "Get that position in place as soon as we can (and) ensure it's the right fit for the county, the community and the private sector. As part of that, I'll work with that new executive director in reviewing that second position of what skill sets are needed with what that executive director brings to the table."

In the meantime, Coady has communicated to both her future employer and to Jefferson County officials that she will be available to help through the transition.