

## Pratt to head up JCEDC

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JEFFERSON — The Jefferson County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved the appointment of Victoria “Vicki” Pratt as the new Glacial Heritage Development Partnership (GHDP) chief executive officer/Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium (JCEDC) executive director.

Pratt, a resident of Jefferson, was one of three finalists for the position and will begin in early September. She will succeed Genevieve Coady, who left the organization on June 24 for a position as executive director of the Plan for Economic Growth and Jobs with World Business Chicago.



Victoria "Vicki" Pratt

“We had well over 30 applicants for the position,” Jefferson County Board Chairperson Jim Schroeder

said following the meeting. “The first round of interviews, we interviewed 10 and the final round we interviewed three.

“The clear consensus of everybody involved in the interviews was Vicki as our choice,” he added. “We’re really excited to have her with her long record of success in cities across the United States and the same level of energy that we saw in our last economic development director.”

The two other finalists for the position were Steven J. Anderson of Plover and Joyce McArdle of Brookfield.

The JCEDC Search Committee met July 13 to narrow the list of applicants for interviews, which were conducted on July 18 by JCEDC board members, and other government officials and local representatives. The final round of interviews were conducted July 29.

The GHDP is a private-public nonprofit corporation being created by the JCEDC, which will include a private sector board, and lead and coordinate the area’s economic development efforts. The plan is for an expanded JCEDC staff to manage implementation of GHDP’s/JCEDC’s \$4.1 million, five-year plan, “2017-2021 Strategic Initiative,” and for the organization to be funded by private and public sector investors.

Pratt will serve as the lead economic development executive for Jefferson County, and report to the GHDP and JCEDC boards and the county administrator. She will oversee all day-to-day GHDP/JCEDC operations, financial matters, implementation of board decisions, and continued development and refinement of the strategic initiative.

“At the end, Vicki has the skill sets and the experience that we were looking for in this transitional phase of the organization,” Jefferson County Administrator Ben Wehmeier said Tuesday morning, as he was unable to attend the county board meeting. “We’re endeavoring our new opportunity and moving ahead with developing a true partnership with the private sector, along with our public entities. Vicki has those known factors and known experiences to do that. I think she will bring the experience necessary to bring this organization forward.”

In her most recent position, Pratt was the sector development director for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation in Madison. Her sectors include manufacturing, defense manufacturing and advance materials. She has been in the position since December 2015.

As sector development director, Pratt’s work is focused on placing strategic investments in the state to support and grow businesses engaged in advanced manufacturing and/or those engaged in defense-related manufacturing, and to manage those investment projects to ensure desired outcomes are met.

Prior to that, Pratt was president of Cornerstone Alliance in Benton Harbor, Mich., from March 2013 to May 2015. Her resume states she was hired as president of Cornerstone Alliance and the Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce to reorganize the Alliance with a narrow focus on economic development.

The combined entities had a 14-member staff and an annual operating budget of more than \$3.5 million. A new three-year economic development strategic plan developed in 2013 resulted in full separation of the two entities and Alliance staff reorganization.

During that time, she was involved in more than \$30 million in existing business expansions; attracting an Illinois-based manufacturer, a \$9 million investment resulting in 80 new jobs; was part of 22 business startups representing \$800,000 in new investments and 45 new jobs; and “pipeline” of 34 projects representing more than \$660 million and 1,100 new jobs.

Pratt was president of Warren County Economic Development Corporation in Glens Falls, N.Y., from April 2011 to March 2013. From 1993 to March 2011, she worked in multiple positions relating to economic development in Albion, N.Y.; Columbia, Mo.; Rochester, N.Y.; and Wichita, Kan. Most recently she served as president of the Greater Wichita Economic Development Coalition and vice president for economic development for the Wichita Metro Chamber of Commerce.

She is a certified economic developer (CecD) from the International Economic Development Council. Pratt is a graduate of State University of New York at Buffalo.

“I’ve been doing economic development for 25 years,” Pratt said, following the meeting. “It’s just very exciting for me to be able to be part of an organization like this right here in the county where I live.

“I’ve loved working for WEDC — it’s a great organization,” she added. “But my goodness, when I have the opportunity to build something like what is being proposed here — and this fits in my wheel house — I’ve done this before and I’m excited about being able to do it here.”

The director said the position was brought to her attention by many people.

“It was brought to my attention by many people who know my background, who know the work that I have done, and who are aware of the fact that I live here in Jefferson, who said, ‘you should really take a look at this,’” Pratt said. “Once I did take a look at it, I thought, ‘well gosh, this really is something that I have a tremendous amount of experience in doing in other places.’ I couldn’t imagine a better community to try to do it in. Obviously I like it here — I moved here.”

She explained that, not only is Jefferson County a part of the Madison region economic development work, but the county also is “sandwiched” between Madison and Milwaukee.

“I’ve had the experience of running a rural economic development organization, an industrial development authority, that sat between two cities in New York,” Pratt explained. “Sitting between those two cities, I quickly learned over time that, when you partner in both directions, you then build the presence of your community to be much more attractive to businesses that are looking at those two regions. We totally have that opportunity here — and we have an interstate.”

While she said she does not “know what I don’t know yet,” she knows there is a lot of work ahead of her.

“Getting the 501(c)(3) established, we call it a P3 — a public-private partnership — for economic development, so getting that established,” Pratt stated. “Laying the groundwork to make sure that organization has the capacity to really be nimble and adjust as necessary when good economic development opportunities are in front of you. Also, being able to bring the private sector to the table and be part of that.

“I’ve run four other public-private partnerships in other states,” she continued. “Bringing the private sector to the table just makes all the difference in the world. You can really be nimble and much more flexible, and the community tends to see those benefits early in those endeavors.

“So I’m excited about doing that because I know this community’s never done that,” she concluded, “so it’ll be a whole new opportunity.”

Meanwhile, in other business, the board:

- Approved an amendment of the traffic ordinance to change the speed limit on County Highway B in the Town of Aztalan. The reduction is near the location of the new Johnson Creek Middle and High School.

Speeds will be reduced to 45 miles per hour from 55 mph for all vehicles from a point 2,600 feet west of the Johnson Creek village limits to a point 1,120 feet west of the Johnson Creek village limits. Speeds will be reduced to 35 mph from 45 mph for all vehicles from a point 1,120 feet west of the Johnson Creek village limits into the Johnson Creek village limits.

The new speed limits will be effective upon passage, publication of the ordinance and erection of official signs.

“The signs will go in right away, so they’ll be up before school starts,” Jefferson County Highway Commissioner Bill Kern said. “We’ll flag them with some orange flags just to get everybody aware of the change.”

- Approved creation of a full-time Nutrition Program supervisor position and elimination of a soon-to-be vacant full-time Nutrition Program coordinator position at the Jefferson County Human Services Department.

New federal guidelines mandate stricter requirements for senior dining sites, necessitating the need for a supervisor to manage the county’s Nutrition Program, the Nutrition Site managers and volunteers. In addition, the current Nutrition Program coordinator will be retiring on Oct. 7. Human Services Director Kathi Cauley requested the position be eliminated upon the coordinator’s retirement.

There is no fiscal impact. The eliminated coordinator position is funded fully in the 2016 budget. Upon retirement of the incumbent, \$15,500 in wages and \$8,800 will not have been expended. These amounts are sufficient to cover the \$10,900 in wages and \$4,700 in fringe benefits for the remainder of 2016 for the newly created position.

The Nutrition Program coordination position has an hourly wage of \$17.36 to \$22.32. This range overlaps with the new Nutrition Program supervisor position that has an hourly wage of \$20.90 to \$26.88.

“The incumbent would be at the highest step in that Grade 4,” Cauley said. “We would anticipate hiring a new person in a higher grade, but at a lower step.”

- Authorized entering into a professional service contract with H&H Industries of Madison, in the amount of \$147,000 for removal of the old boiler system and installation of a new boiler system in the Jefferson County Courthouse. Bids were solicited for the project.

One other bid in the amount of \$150,860 from Johnson Controls of Madison was received. Adequate funds for the project are in the 2016 Central Services budget.