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Site Selection

When a business from outside the area decides it is time to consider a start-up facility, relocation from an existing facility or an additional location (expansion) they tend to send out a Request for Proposal (RFP) through a variety of sources. Some of these sources include inside staff, outside consultants and also state departments of economic development. Depending on the size of the company or the expansion, it can direct the process by which they narrow down the possibilities. Some companies are specifically considering a location within a certain number of miles from the existing facility, another may want a location in a different country. Still others request a location within so many miles of interstate a commercial airport or a specific city, a certain minimum building size, proof of workforce, specific utilities, a minimum relocation grant incentive and the list can go on and on. Others aren't quite as formal, but the process is still similar. Each community has a choice if it wishes to respond to the RFP. It could be that the community doesn't fit the established criteria, or it could be that the business doesn't appear to be a good fit with the community.

We know that each community is first visited by use of its website. If the website doesn't pass, we know we will not even be considered for further review. We also know that oftentimes, we are visited without our knowledge. Company representatives may drive through our industrial park, around town or even stay for the weekend as a tourist to establish an opinion of the area.

Once a business narrows down its list of potential communities it may conduct a phone visit or schedule a site visit. A phone visit allows both parties to discuss in a bit more detail the information provided in the RFP, if that goes well, a personal site visit is scheduled.

The actual site visit allows us to formally welcome the business representatives (typically one to three company representatives) into the community, showcase the community including our people, quality of life, family life, education, medical facilities, housing, telecommunications and other utility infrastructure. We also cover programs such as Workforce Training, ND Job Service and possible financing programs. The visit also includes an actual tour of the community which is usually dictated by the company's interests or concerns. During this time we also take the time to tour existing facilities or open locations that fit the criteria of the company. The site visit is really our chance to shine as a community. The visitors are also looking at what type of pride is shown in the community; is the downtown vibrant? Is the school system well maintained? Are there playgrounds and adequate parks for the children? Is there housing available? How do people in the area maintain their homes and yards? How are they treated in the hotels, restaurants, and retail and convenience stores? How are the other businesses in the area

maintaining their place of business? Are the other businesses happy with the treatment they have received from the community? Are they happy with the quality of workers? Does the community support its existing businesses? The business representatives will purchase the local newspaper, or Google Devils Lake and look for recent articles, are they positive or negative in nature? All of these factors and more are all being considered by the potential business in their decision whether or not to keep Devils Lake in consideration.

Once a community passes the test from the new business's perspective, it is our turn for thorough due diligence to be completed on the business. We try to learn as much about the business as possible before we get this far, however a business is typically reluctant to share its business plan and historical information before this point.

If everything continues to be positive and we are the location of choice, the total package is finalized and we would then welcome another new business to Devils Lake!

Until next month, feel free to stop in and visit or call me at 701-662-4933.