

Economic Development Insight

I'm Done Crying

Recently, I shared my excitement about the media exposure and impact on local development of the tourism industry due to the sightings of the pink Roseate Spoonbill at Goose Pond.

Frequently, I receive email comments about my Economic Development Insight articles and one, in particular, that related to the Goose Pond article caught my attention. I called the sender and we discussed the matter. I truly respect and appreciate when a person politely yet firmly expresses their opinion, regardless of whether it agrees or disagrees with my perspective.

After our conversation, he sent me this letter with the header, "I'm Done Crying":

"Several years ago the Goose Pond was converted from farmland to a wetland. Before this happened I did all I could to stop it. I wrote letters, I made calls, I organized a meeting, I did everything I thought of to stop it. I pointed out that to farm that ground over three million dollars per year is spent locally. Since its conversion Greene County has lost out on over 15 million dollars being spent in the area. Yes, if asked, I still think it was a mistake. I have however decided it's time to stop whining. I know there are some that agree with me and if it will make them feel better I will meet them at the Goose Pond and stomp up and down with them. This however accomplishes nothing.

I was recently talking with Joan Bethell airing my discontent when I stopped and asked myself, just exactly what do I think she will do about it? Can she wave a magic wand and make time reverse? It was at this point I decided to stop crying about it and see what can be done. This goal can only be accomplished by looking forward. I am challenging myself and all those who read this, to climb on board the forward-looking, positive-thinking bandwagon. It is my belief that Joan would rather hear a crazy idea about how to make it a better place than a complaint about the past.

As for myself, I in the future will attempt to be an open book, looking for ways to improve the situation and the area to help Greene County. I would ask all to join me in this quest."

John P Coleman

John helped me to understand his viewpoint about the loss of farmland and its negative financial impact on the local economy. In turn, I shared that part of my work as an economic developer requires me to assess the community's current situation and assets. (He's right. I can't go back in time and cast my vote on decisions that were made long before I got here. I have to make the best of whatever is available at the time.)

Once that assessment has been made, the process to determine the initial (or any) plan of action involves working with community partners to maximize the available assets as we build toward the betterment of the community. Any improvements pursued should align with the shared community viewpoint.

When I came here, folks around the county shared with me all the documents that had been developed from visioning and planning sessions held during 2002 through 2007. The four prime assets most frequently referenced in those documents are: Agricultural resources, Goose Pond, NSWC Crane/WestGate Tech Park and Interstate 69. After review and consolidation, we asked

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for public opinion on setting the three top priorities. The ones selected were not only those deemed important but those that a significant number of individuals were willing to work on, i.e. Business development/entrepreneurship, Tourism and Land Use (a Comprehensive Plan and an I-69 Corridor plan.) Of course, it's the folks who are active in the community, who get and stay involved in community issues and, particularly, those who show up for the meetings who get to pick the priorities.

It seems that John had done all that could be done to share his perspective and to encourage continuance of Goose Pond as a farm, and that he had some valid arguments to support that viewpoint. However, no matter how passionate we are about a particular issue, as much as we'd like, we cannot govern over all circumstances. When it's all said and done, John's right. The best thing we can do now is to look forward, think positively and do whatever we can to work together to make our community the best that it can be.

If you'd like to know about meetings that impact our Greene County community, please share your contact information with GCEDC, so we can keep you posted.

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