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Cass EDC, county officials discuss business subsidy policy

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By Gail DeBoer Staff writer

The Cass County Economic Development Commission (EDC) and county officials continue to discuss Cass' current policy of not granting business subsidies such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

At th She noted that the state's JOBZ program, which offers business subsidies, will end in 2015, and that the economy has changed immensely since 2003 when Cass enacted its current policy.

Before 2003, Cass had offered TIF to six businesses. One goal of the policy not offering subsidies is to encourage new businesses to locate in or near cities, where infrastructure (sewer, water, roads) is in place. TIF is available through most municipalities.

A working group has met three times to look at the policy, to review policies of eight surrounding counties and to draw up a sample policy for discussion purpose

Leverson said the next step will be to consult with public policy and public finance experts and to ask for input from the county attorney. Commissioner Jeff Peterson asked that townships be given the chance to review any policy. Discussion continued at the Jan. 24 working session of the Planning Commission, Citizen Budget Committee and county board.

Also on the agenda for that session was a review of the 2012 budget and possible revisions to the county's capital improvement plan.

EDC projects

Leverson reported that the EDC completed four projects in December.

Nate Sauvageau plans to build a new Pine River laundromat this spring. Ridgeline Manufacturing, owned by Nick and Julie Newman, will expand operations to include deck and architectural components.

Travis Kelley of Backus is starting JenTra Tools to manufacture, sell and distribute a tool he developed for hanging doors. The EDC also helped Kelley obtain a patent on his invention. J.T. Industries of Pine River, owned by Jason Trout, will expand its manufacturing operation.

Foreclosures, fourth quarter 2011

Assessor Mark Peterson's analysis of fourth quarter 2011 foreclosures showed 23, compared to 30 in the fourth quarter of 2010; 36 in 2009, 30 in 2008; and 24 in 2007.

Of the 23, 12 were residential homesteads, 10 were other residential or cabins and one, commercial. Nine were located on lakes.

Of the 23 fourth quarter 2011 properties, seven had assessed values under \$100,000; eight, \$100,000-\$200,000; two, \$200,000-400,000; one, \$400,000-\$600,000; four, \$600,000-\$1 million; and one, over \$1 million.

Total foreclosures for 2011 were 116. That compares to 164 in 2010 and 107 in 2009.

