



## Cass EDC report notes business improvements

BACKUS - Cass County Economic Development Corp. helped 46 businesses make improvements from 2004 through 2008, resulting in the hiring of 447 employees, according to EDC Executive Director Gail Levenson.

Employee wages in those businesses range from \$6.50 to \$25 per hour, with the average hourly wage \$11.67, she said.

Cass EDC budget ran \$551,819 for 2004 through 2008, meaning \$1,234 economic development effort was spent to create each job. Of that, the county contributed \$380 toward each job creation.

In 2009, the county has pledged to contribute about one-fourth of EDC's \$150,000 budget, according to Levenson.

Though unemployment is higher this year than most winters, Levenson said Cass' rate is similar to neighboring counties. She said she is focusing on counseling businesses on ways they can operate to retain their existing employees during the economic downturn.

She has referred information to cities about how to apply for stimulus funding for water and sewer projects. It appears, she said, Backus might have a good chance to receive some of that funding, because their project is ready to go.

During January, Levenson helped 17 businesses to work on plans for new businesses or expansions. Six propose retail projects; four, health care services; and seven, manufacturing operations, she said.

Cass EDC has three grant applications submitted for consideration.

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