

CCEDC and Longville business leaders discuss future

By Tara Nagengast Press-Citizen Staff

More than espressos and talk of the weather were discussed June 9 at the tables of Common Grounds, Longville. Executive Director of the Cass County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC), **Jaimee Meyer**, met with local business owners, organization volunteers and chamber members to discuss the present and future business climate in Longville.

"Listening to the needs first, before coming in with the mission," was the purpose of the meeting states **Meyer**.

According to **Meyer**, Cass County suffers from an unemployment rate of 7.9% and an older demographic. Local business owners voiced concern that most visitors do not even know what Longville has to offer, and, subsequently miss out on their services. The need to fill empty buildings and bring in new blood is evident, concluded the group.

"Twenty years ago, we were young and vibrant," said Jim Garner, Longville local business owner, "...now we have gray hairs or no hair."

The next step is figuring out the needs of the community. Numerous prospects were generated in the meeting. These include a café, childcare availability, a shuttle service, parking, visible signage for amenities and businesses, sidewalk connection and an assisted living facility. Communication and collaboration between the City of Longville and its businesses, organizations and residents is necessary for these suggestions to come to fruition. Members of the community are encouraged to email their own suggestions to Chamber of Commerce Member Tenlee Lund at chamber@longville.com.

Job opportunities, successful businesses and an active community are desirable traits, **Meyer** recommends. "We need to promote Longville's amenities, location, job availability and community events as the first steps in assisting the city," she continued.

"Quality of life is a big deal...making that known will attract the millennials and people in their 30s to start a family or business here," **Meyer** said, "...being a part of a community...that's what's attractive."

"There's a desire to come here," observes Cathy Finley, Longville chamber volunteer, "but many visitors do not know what Longville has to offer that would make remaining here attractive."

The Cass County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) is a nonprofit corporation formed in 1997 with the mission to help create jobs and opportunities for Cass County residents and businesses. It seeks to connect regional businesses with government resources in efforts to generate success for businesses and communities.

Meyer was recruited by the CCEDC in November of 2015. She has a strong background in sales and marketing and holds a Bachelor of Science in Marketing Communication from Bemidji State University. Previously, she held directorial positions at both the Northwest and West Central Small Business Development Centers and "Dream It. Do It." Minnesota career recruitment strategy. In these positions, **Meyer** managed consultants and recruiters and worked largely with small businesses.