



Paul Kwapich of Rudolph Libbe, Andy Maher of Waterford Bank and Rod Bowe of Rudolph Libbe visit before the presentation.

MIRROR PHOTOS BY KAREN GERHARDINGER



Site selector professionals (from left) Jason Hamman and Tim Feemster join Waterville Mayor Lori Brodie and Waterville Economic Development Corporation coordinator Todd Dickerson after a November 8 meeting.

National Site Selectors Share Advice With Waterville Group

BY KAREN GERHARDINGER
MIRROR REPORTER

With over 50 years of collective experience in site selection for companies throughout the United States, Jason Hamman and Tim Feemster have advice for cities trying to attract new business:

Have the zoning and infrastructure in place for that dream business. Make the permitting process easy. Choose a positive, knowledgeable spokesperson. Target certain industries and go after them.

The two site selectors shared insights with real estate agents, investors, economic development professionals and municipal representatives during a November 8 Waterville Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) meeting at Browning Masonic Community.

Founded in 2012, the

WEDC is a collaboration of public- and private-sector stakeholders with a goal of improving the city's economic health by attracting, retaining and growing business, said president Tim Pedro. The nine-member board recently hired coordinator Todd Dickerson to take the nonprofit organization to the next level.

Dickerson brought Hamman and Feemster to Waterville for a tour of the area and to answer audience questions, which ranged from the bid for Amazon to repurposing vacated buildings.

Danberry National president Brian McMahon served on a team that recently submitted a bid for Amazon's second headquarters. He asked Feemster and Hamman whether they would choose the Fallen Timbers area if Amazon was their client.

For Feemster, the answer was no. A city such as Dallas,

with 7 million residents in its metropolitan area, is more suitable for Amazon to attract 50,000 highly trained employees, he said. While the available land and proximity to transportation are pluses, Feemster believes finding enough employees could be a risk Amazon isn't willing to take.

Hamman said he wouldn't rule out the area for an Amazon location, but asked whether the community is ready for such a large operation.

"If they announce they're coming, it's going to alter life in this town for everyone. Are you ready?" he asked. "Think about what will it do to existing real estate values. Will it price people out of the area? Are the schools ready?"

Both men recommend the WEDC determine what type of businesses to target.

"Go after industries and projects you could actually

win," Feemster said. "Don't go after something because it's trendy, like biomedical."

While the term "site selector" implies finding a location for a company, it's more a process of site elimination — crossing off the list those cities that don't meet the criteria. A qualified workforce, transportation plans and costs, the cost of doing business and taxes are among the factors they consider. Empty land is just that until utilities are in place.

So what can a city do to get on the radar with national site selectors? Have an easily reachable, positive, local economic development representative. Maintain a website with up-to-date, detailed information. Share success stories, such as how the city worked with J&R Contracting to make the repurposing of the old Kroger plaza successful.

"A lot of people say 'we're flexible,' but show me where

you've done it," Feemster said. "You're telling stories about your community. Stories are powerful to clients. I've seen it."

The entire presentation

was filmed by the Regional Growth Partnership and will be posted soon at www.rgp.com. For more information on the WEDC, visit www.watervilleedc.org.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Waterville Township

The Waterville Township Board of Trustees is accepting letters with resumes from township residents who are interested in filing the vacancy of Township Fiscal Officer. The Fiscal Officer is the records keeper and financial officer of the township responsible for the management of all financial records, accounts and transactions including paying bills, issuing checks and payroll. Duties include annual budgets and appropriations, the annual financial report, filing of Federal, State and Local payroll taxes, Workers' Compensation, OSHA and insurance claims. Candidate must have the qualifications of an elector of Waterville Township, Lucas County, Ohio. Knowledge of modern governmental accounting theory, principles and practices is a plus. This is an appointment to an independently elected public office that would expire in Spring, 2019 and is subject to re-election pursuant to ORC 503.24. Please note this is an elected and compensated position.

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