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An Electronic Update on Economic Development Activities in St. Croix County

published by: St. Croix Economic Development Corporation ~ 1101 Carmichael Road ~ Hudson, WI 54016
phone: (715) 381-4383 ~ email: jacki@stcroixedc.com ~ website: www.stcroixedc.com

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Gov. Doyle Appoints Aaron Olver as Secretary of Commerce

On April 15th, Governor Jim Doyle announced the appointment of Aaron Olver as the Secretary of the Department of Commerce, effective Monday, April 19, 2010. Olver, was the department's Deputy Secretary and has been an integral part of the agency's management team since 2003. Secretary Olver replaces Richard Leinenkugel who resigned effective April 9th.



Aaron Olver

"Aaron Olver has been a key leader at the Department of Commerce for seven years, and is a close partner with Wisconsin's business leaders in creating jobs, attracting new companies and helping existing companies expand," Governor Doyle said. "Nothing is more important than helping our businesses create jobs, and Aaron's talent and experience will be a strong asset as we continue our efforts to grow Wisconsin's economy."

Olver has served as Commerce Deputy Secretary since 2007. In Governor Doyle's first term, Olver served as the department's Executive Assistant. He also served on each of Governor Doyle's transition teams.

Prior to joining Governor Doyle's Administration, Olver was a management consultant with McKinsey and Company in Chicago, where his practice focused on business development and growth strategy. Olver speaks regularly on economic development, manufacturing, technology, entrepreneurship, and management in the public sector. Olver earned an undergraduate degree in Economics from UW-Madison and a graduate degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics from Oxford University, Oxford, UK, where he was a Rhodes Scholar.

Olver has been instrumental in the development of many of Governor Doyle's economic initiatives, including helping:

- Develop the Governor's economic strategy, Grow Wisconsin;
- Create the Angel and Venture Capital Tax Credits through Accelerate Wisconsin (Act 255) to assist early stage start-up companies and entrepreneurs;
- Launch the Wisconsin Entrepreneurs Network to help entrepreneurs create new ventures, grow existing businesses, and create new jobs;
- Work with the Wisconsin Technology Council to create the Wisconsin Angel Network and the Governor's Business Plan Contest to increase early-stage investing and high-tech business growth;
- Reform numerous Commerce programs and consolidate Commerce's tax credit programs to provide more flexibility for businesses as they expand and create jobs; and
- Develop the Enterprise Zone and JOBS tax credit programs – two new powerful economic development tools that have resulted in many of the Governor's recent economic successes, including helping Mercury Marine and Republic Airlines create and retain thousands of jobs in Wisconsin.

"Governor Doyle has been focused on creating jobs and growing Wisconsin's economy since day one," Olver said. "I'm incredibly proud to be on his economic team, and I look forward to this opportunity to lead the Department of Commerce and continue our work to help businesses expand and bring new companies and good-paying jobs to Wisconsin."

Governor Doyle also announced the appointment of Zach Brandon, current Commerce Executive Assistant, as the department's new Deputy Secretary, effective Monday, April 19, 2010.

Momentum West Selects Noel Eggebraaten as Executive Director

Regional Organization Promotes Western, West Central, and Northwest Wisconsin

On April 14th, Marc Harding, president of Momentum West, announced the selection of Noel Eggebraaten as its executive director.

Eggebraaten, a resident of the Hudson, Wisconsin area, is a seasoned executive with a demonstrated record in growing and developing businesses, communities, and non-profit organizations. He has worked with organizations to improve their performance while balancing the interests of customers and shareholders.

Eggebraaten has held leadership positions as president of Hammond & Stephens, a specialty print company; Southern School Supply, a sales and distribution company; and Space Explorers, an internet curriculum development company. All of these companies experienced exceptional growth under his leadership. He also worked for Kimberly-Clark in a corporate consultant role throughout the United States and Canada.



Noel Eggebraaten

Most recently, Eggebraaten served as the principal of his own consulting business, Eggebraaten & Associates. Eggebraaten is the recipient of many professional awards during his career. He has served on the board of St. Croix Economic Development Corporation since May 2008.

“We are excited to have Noel taking on the leadership role for Momentum West,” said Harding. “He brings us the experience and successful track record needed to grow and strengthen economic development, while working with all of Momentum West’s partners in the region,” he added.

“I am excited about the challenge Momentum West offers,” stated Eggebraaten. “We do not need to reinvent the wheel, we just need to spin the wheel our direction to enhance the economic development possibilities. I truly believe we are stronger and better able to grow as a region collectively in a world market.”

Momentum West is a 10-county external marketing and collaborative economic development organization in west central and northwest Wisconsin. Counties aligned with Momentum include Barron, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Rusk, and St. Croix.

For more information on Momentum West, contact Eggebraaten at (715) 874-4671 or neggebraaten@cvtc.edu.

Ceremonial Groundbreaking for Leverty Financial Group Begins Redevelopment

Former Bank at 201 South Second Street in Hudson will be Converted to Office

Redevelopment activities are underway at 201 South Second Street in Hudson, Wisconsin. By mid-summer, a former bank will be converted to an office for Leverty Financial Group (Northwestern Mutual Financial Services). Mike Leverty is the managing director of Leverty Financial Group. He and a business partner formed MLME Holdings and own the building. Previously, the building was occupied by First Federal Bank and Associated Bank.

The building is one of the first commercial structures that motorists see as they exit Interstate 94 and travel north into downtown Hudson via State Highway 35 (Second Street). The building will have a new exterior and a new entrance. The interior will be gutted, resulting in office space for Northwestern agents. A conference room will be added on the second floor.



Hudson community leaders joined Leverty Financial Group of Northwestern Mutual Financial Services for a ceremonial groundbreaking on April 21st in downtown Hudson.

Photo: Randy Hanson, Hudson Star Observer

Project financing came from multiple sources. First American Bank (Hudson) and Wisconsin Business Development Finance Corporation worked with Leverty on a Small Business Administration (SBA) 504 loan. Additional financing came from the Regional Business Fund, Inc., a nonprofit entity that provides supplemental loans to new and expanding businesses in the 7-county region of west central Wisconsin.

Frisbie Architects (River Falls, Wisc.) is the architect for this project and Derrick Commercial Contracting (New Richmond, Wisc.) is the general contractor.

Census Bureau Says Region Continues to Grow

St. Croix Retains Fastest Growing Title (2000 to 2009)

In late March, the U.S. Census Bureau released population estimates for all U.S. counties, effective to July 1, 2009.

St. Croix County's population was estimated at 83,351 — an increase of 20,196 people since the April 1, 2000 estimate of 63,155 (+32.0%). By percentage increase, St. Croix remains Wisconsin's fastest-growing county. By numeric increase, St. Croix ranks 4th behind Dane (+64,831 new residents since 2000), Waukesha (+22,389) and Brown (+20,659).

From April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2009, the Census Bureau estimated Wisconsin added 291,066 new residents (+5.4% increase) and grew from 5,363,708 to 5,654,774 people.

The 10-counties of western, west central, and northwest Wisconsin continues to grow as a region, as evidenced by the following table:

	Population Estimates				State Rank	
	July 1, 2009	April 1, 2000	Number	% Change	By Number	Rank by %
Barron	45,591	44,963	628	+1.4%	41	42
Chippewa	60,609	55,197	5,412	+9.8%	16	7
Clark	33,426	33,557	-131	- 0.4%	51	50
Dunn	42,968	39,858	3,110	+7.8%	22	12
Eau Claire	99,409	93,140	6,269	+6.7%	14	16
Pepin	7,293	7,213	80	+1.1	48	46
Pierce	40,081	36,804	3,277	+8.9%	21	10
Polk	44,252	41,319	2,933	+7.1%	23	14
Rusk	14,367	15,347	- 980	- 6.4%	68	69
St. Croix	83,351	63,155	20,196	+32.0%	4	1
Total	471,347	430,553	40,794	+9.47%	- - -	- - -

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; St. Croix Economic Development Corp.

Note: The 10 counties of western, west central, and northwest Wisconsin comprise Momentum West, an external economic development and marketing organization.

The 10-county region added an estimated 40,794 people (+9.47%) from 2000 to 2009 and grew from 430,553 residents to 471,347. Almost half of this growth is attributable to St. Croix County's additional 20,196 residents. The region's increase of 9.74% outpaces the state's increase of 5.4%. Two counties in the region, Clark and Rusk, lost population (an estimated 1,111 people). Pepin County is the region's smallest county with 7,293 residents. Eau Claire is the region's most populous county with 99,409 residents.

Governor Doyle Salutes Small Business Development Centers and Entrepreneurs' Network Agencies Celebrate Milestones

On April 14th, Governor Jim Doyle congratulated the UW Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) on 30 years of assistance to Wisconsin's small businesses. He also recognized the Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Network (WEN) on its five-year anniversary of assisting the state's entrepreneurs. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary Aaron Olver represented the Governor at the joint anniversary celebration held April 14th at Madison's Hilton Hotel.

"I congratulate Wisconsin's Small Business Development Center Network and the Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Network on their milestone anniversaries," Governor Doyle said. "I thank both organizations for their hard work to provide the necessary tools for our state's small businesses to be successful. To grow Wisconsin, we must continue to create the kind of environment and connections that help an entrepreneur take a good idea and translate it into a successful business enterprise. Together we can create the foundation for a strong, innovative economy and produce the high-paying jobs of tomorrow."

“Our business counselors and staff have significant experience, knowledge and background in all areas related to starting and growing a business, including planning, financing and marketing. Their insight and advice in client meetings and the classroom continues to impress and deliver results across Wisconsin,” said Gayle Kugler, SBDC and WEN State Director. “I couldn’t be more proud to work with and represent this great group of dedicated people who work in our two programs.”

The late Sen. Gaylord Nelson, as chair of the Senate Small Business Committee, authored the legislation creating the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) concept. Wisconsin and seven other states piloted the program. Through federal funding from the SBA, matched by UW, the SBDC provides business counseling at all UW four-year campuses. Over the years, it has incorporated the latest technology teaching methods, strengthened its connections with economic development organizations, and linked to early stage funding opportunities.

During 2009, the SBDC provided counseling to nearly 5,000 clients and training for more than 9,400 clients. Businesses assisted by the SBDC completed 257 business plans and represented a \$22.4-million overall capital infusion to the Wisconsin economy.

WEN, an initiative in Governor Jim Doyle’s Grow Wisconsin plan, was established in June 2005 as a joint venture between the Wisconsin Department of Commerce and the University of Wisconsin-Extension’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Development Division (DEED). WEN has four regional directors and a minority business specialist. WEN Directors specialize in helping businesses secure federal SBIR funds through technology assistance grants. WEN and its partners strive to provide seamless access to the statewide network of entrepreneurial resources and expertise to create new ventures. They help grow existing businesses and move forward high-potential entrepreneurs to enable Wisconsin to be competitive in a global economic environment.

For the 2008-09 fiscal year, WEN counseled more than 3,000 clients and approved 94 business planning grants. According to a WEN survey, WEN and its statewide partners assisted in the creation of nearly 1,300 jobs and \$44.3 million in payroll impact, and \$169.2 million in sales.

St. Croix County is served by the SBDC on campus at UW-River Falls. It is staffed by Steve DeWald. He can be reached at (715) 425-0620. Pat Dillon is the northwest regional director of WEN in Eau Claire. She can be reached at (715) 836-5056.

Federal IRA Conversion Law Adopted For Wisconsin

On March 15th, Governor Jim Doyle signed 2009 Act 161 into law. The pension and IRA contribution limits that will apply for the federal tax purpose for 2011 will also apply to Wisconsin.

All taxpayers may convert a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA, even in those cases where the taxpayer’s adjusted gross income exceeds \$100,000. No penalties will apply on the conversion.

Taxpayers who make the conversion in 2010 may postpone payment of tax on the converted amount until they file their 2011 and 2012 income tax returns or they may elect to report the entire taxable amount on their 2010 returns.

The pension and IRA contribution limits that will apply for federal tax purposes for 2011 will also apply for Wisconsin.

At part of their February 16th legislative advocacy event in Madison, the 10-county Momentum West organization supported the conversion of traditional IRAs to Roth IRAs. Wisconsin was the last state in the U.S. to enact this legislation.

Act 161 also adopts certain provisions of the federal Heroes Earnings Assistance and Tax Relief Act of 2008. Among the provisions adopted are:

- The treatment of qualified reservist retirement plan contributions;
 - Military death benefits may be contributed to Roth IRA or Coverdell ESA;
 - State and local bonuses for combat veterans are not taxable income; and
 - Differential pay treated as wages for purposes of employer benefits.
-

UW-River Falls to Open Center in Hudson

On April 12th, the University of Wisconsin-River Falls announced it will open a new Hudson-based educational facility in the fall of 2010.

The UWRF Hudson Center will serve the St. Croix Valley with a focus on undergraduate courses for non-traditional and working adults seeking to complete a baccalaureate degree, or enroll in select graduate and certificate programs.

“We are excited about establishing a facility to serve the St. Croix Valley in new ways, and to further strengthen our partnerships with the community,” Chancellor Dean Van Galen says.



Chancellor
Dean Van Galen

The Hudson Center will include several technology-enabled classrooms and meeting spaces to serve a range of educational and community needs.

“UW-River Falls and the Hudson School District are partnering to provide new, engaging learning opportunities for Hudson High School students through the center,” said Superintendent Mary Bowen-Eggebratten.

Hudson School District Board of Education President Dan Tjornehoj added, “The district has a history of developing partnerships to better serve the learning needs of our students. This new partnership with UW-River Falls aligns well with the district’s long-range strategic plan. The UW-River Falls Hudson Center is a logical partnership in preparing Hudson graduates for post-secondary success and providing them with opportunities to expand their 21st century learning skills.”

The center will also serve as a base for UWRF to strengthen relationships with the area business community to meet economic development and workforce needs.

“I have received very positive feedback on this concept from Hudson community leaders as well as our own campus community, and we look forward to ‘planting the UWRF flag’ in Hudson later this summer,” Van Galen notes.

The actual location of the Hudson Center is yet to be determined, but will provide easy I-94 access. The Hudson Center will also support the University of Wisconsin System’s “More Graduates for Wisconsin” initiative, and the UW System will provide start-up funding for the center.

“As part of the UW System’s Growth Agenda for Wisconsin, we’re asking campuses to serve more student in new and creative ways, with a goal of stimulating a more vibrant state economy,” said UW System President Kevin Reilly. “The Hudson Center is a great example of how UW-River Falls is embracing this challenge and improving the university’s service to the entire region. I applaud Chancellor Van Galen and his team for their leadership and forward thinking.”

Center on Wisconsin Strategy Releases March Job Watch

Weak Job Picture; Unemployment Remains High; Manufacturing and Construction Gain

On March 20th, the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), released its monthly snapshot of the state’s job picture and reports on key economic trends. The summary represents March 2010 data.

The report says Wisconsin jobs declined slightly from February to March and is a reflection of the sustained weakness in the labor market. The state lost 2,200 jobs from February to March, bringing the total number of jobs lost since December 2007 to 173,800. The state’s job base is 6 percent below the pre-recession level of 2,885,500. The dip from February to March is in contrast to the rise in jobs from December to February, which fueled hopes that Wisconsin was moving toward recovery.

Wisconsin’s unemployment rate increased to 8.8 percent in March, which is nearly twice the pre-recession level of 4.5 percent in December 2007.

COWS offers a few bright spots. The state’s manufacturing sector gained 2,500 jobs in March and followed similar increases in January and February. Meanwhile, the state still has 72,800 fewer manufacturing jobs than it did when the latest recession started, going from 498,100 jobs to 425,300. This represents a 15 percent loss and accounts for 40 percent of the state’s total job loss. The construction sector added 500 jobs between February and March, and follows an increase of 3,000 jobs between January and February. Construction jobs are down over 20 percent since December 2007. Even with those gains, 25,800 construction jobs have been lost since December 2007 (123,700 v. 97,900).

COWS is a policy center for high road economic development, which is described as a competitive market economy of shared prosperity, environmental sustainability, and capable democratic government.

The report can viewed online at www.cows.org/pdfs-WIJobWatch-Mar10.pdf. Information provided in the report is based on Bureau of Labor data compiled by the Economic Policy Institute.

St. Croix County’s Unemployment Rate Rises in March

On April 21st, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) released the March unemployment rates for Wisconsin’s 72 counties. St. Croix’s rate was estimated at 9.5% (not seasonally adjusted). It is up from the February rate of 9.2%. A year ago, the county’s unemployment rate was estimated at 9.6%.

Eighteen counties had unemployment rates lower than St. Croix in March.

Dane County recorded the lowest rate at 6.5%, followed by La Crosse at 7.5% and Eau Claire at 7.6%. Rusk County had the highest rate in March at 15.0% and Iron County was at 14.8%.

The unadjusted unemployment rate for Wisconsin in March was estimated at 9.8% which is higher than February’s rate of 9.7%. The state’s rate was 9.4% one year ago.

The U.S. unemployment rate was estimated at 10.2% which is down from February’s rate of 10.4%. One year ago the U.S. rate was estimated at 9.0%.

County	March 2010 Unemployment Rate	Rank	Rate One Year Ago	County	March 2010 Unemployment Rate	Rank	Rate One Year Ago
Barron	10.7%	34	11.0%	Pepin	9.3%	55	9.9%
Chippewa	10.1%	43	11.0%	Pierce	8.7%	59	9.1%
Clark	12.1%	20	11.3%	Polk	11.9%	24	12.2%
Dunn	8.3%	65	8.7%	Rusk	15.0%	1	16.4%
Eau Claire	7.6%	70	7.6%	St. Croix	9.5%	54	9.6%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development; St. Croix Economic Development Corp.

Note: The 10 counties of western, west central, & northwest Wisconsin comprise Momentum West, a regional economic development & marketing organization

St. Croix County Recycling Event: May 15th Clean Sweep

CLEAN SWEEP Hazardous Waste Collection: May 15th from 9a.m. to 1 p.m.

at County Highway Shop just east of Hudson at 666 E Hwy 12

Households and farms with up to 500 pounds of waste are fee exempt. Small businesses (defined as those generating no more than 200 pounds of waste per month) may participate but will be charged. Clean Sweep events are only open to St Croix County residents. A photo ID will be required to participate.

Farms and businesses must pre-register by May 12th by calling (715) 386-4675.

[Click here for a Business and Farm Pre-Registration Form](#)