

Urbana discusses opportunities for economic development

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The Urbana City Council focused on the two bread and butter topics for any city on Monday - economic development and budget proposals for the next fiscal year.

Tom Bruno, John Kempen, and Barb Wysoki, all members of the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation (EDC), gave a presentation espousing the benefits that Urbana could receive both economically and socially. Supported by various cities in the county, according to its Web site, the association was formed in 2001, "To promote economic development in Champaign County by creating a business climate that enables local companies to prosper."

The council discussed interest in a deal with an unnamed business which could attract "over one thousand jobs to the area," Kempen said.

Bruno chimed in on the discussion, explaining the purpose and the power of the association.

"We want to attract all those types of businesses (from small to large)," Bruno said.

"We hope you will continue to support (the EDC)," he later added.

Councilmember Lynne Barnes responded to Bruno and the EDC .

"I hope we keep with our current levels (of investment) and even increase it," Barnes said.

With more industry it would be able to more easily fund the rising costs of running the city. In all of the budgets that were presented later in the meeting, from the city works budget to those of the police and fire departments, money was consistently cited as a key factor in determining the quality of the public services.

"I would love another police officer or social worker," Police Chief Michael Bily said.

Also for his department, one issue continues to be the turnover that occurs every year.

"Very few officers make it to retirement," Bily said. "But I'm still up from last year."

Fire Chief Rex Mundt also said he was excited because the budget he was presenting would allow for the emergency medical training that cuts had previously gutted.

"They need this training (to serve the people)," Mundt said.

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