



## March 24, 2011 CVC Meeting Summary

### PANEL DISCUSSION: JOHNSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Members of the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners were in attendance to provide input to the CVC on their vision for the future of Johnson County. Commissioners in attendance included:

- Chairman Ed Eilert
- Edward Peterson (District 1)
- David Lindstrom (District 3)
- Jason Osterhaus (District 4)
- Michael Ashcraft (District 5)
- Calvin Hayden (District 6)

Commissioner Jim Allen (District 2) was not in attendance due to illness.

Each commissioner was asked to take 7-10 minutes to respond to the following questions:

- What is your vision for Johnson County in the next ten to twenty years?
- What do you feel are the biggest challenges that Johnson County faces in achieving that vision?
- What type of end product would be most useful for the Board as an outcome of the Citizens Visioning Committee process?
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#### Speaker #1: Commissioner Peterson (District 1)

- What is My Vision of Johnson County Twenty years out?
  - Life is good in JOCO now – keep those elements that make it so
  - More emphasis on redevelopment (centralized nodes)
  - New forms of transit (technology not yet envisioned, but not bus)
  - Better connected to other communities
  - Still largely suburban in character
  - More educational opportunities (new higher educational institution, perhaps tied to bioscience initiative)
  - More sustainable infrastructure and buildings
- Biggest challenges
  - Our own Midwest value system (comfortable with what we have/take it slow approach)
    - need to be more aggressive to be more competitive on national/international stage
    - being followers won't work

- Will see economy return – bigger challenge is willingness to use economic power to effect change (i.e., to invest in our future)
- What he wants to see from the committee
  - Product is for the whole community, not just BOCC
  - Flesh out a little bit of what you hope the result would be – describe the desired outcome, not just a broad statement

**Speaker #2: Commissioner Lindstrom (District 3)**

- What is My Vision of Johnson County Twenty years out?
  - Not looking for general changes (likes the way the county is) , but specifics include:
    - The way we develop sewers to foster growth – not financially feasible to keep going the way we have been going
    - Sharing/consolidation of services – difficult topic of discussion, but needs to be talked about and considered
  - Would like to see the quality of life stay at a high level
- Would like to see from the Committee:
  - Working document
    - Measurable
    - Forces us to reach beyond what we think our grasp is now, but is achievable
    - Push us!

**Speaker #3: Commissioner Osterhaus (District 4)**

- What is My Vision of Johnson County Twenty years out?
  - Likes the current quality of life, it is what attracted him to move here
  - Would like to change perception of county in the eyes of others
    - Would like to see it be more attractive to a younger population
    - Retain positive attitude on the part of its citizens to be willing to invest in making county a great place
- Challenges
  - Times will continue to be tough financially – fed funding going down, how to retain and continue to fund quality of life
  - Address the changing population – working poor growing as a segment of community

**Speaker #4: Commissioner Ashcraft (District 5)**

- What is My Vision of Johnson County Twenty years out?
  - Have been fortunate to have a lot of wealth, have accomplished much
  - World has changed, not sure that we still have the luxury of throwing \$\$ at problems and opportunities like we used to

- We have 88 taxing entities that spend 3 billion – are we getting the best value?
- Do we need 6 school districts
  - Not necessarily advocating consolidation, but county can serve in a catalyst role to bring entities to the table to figure out how to get more value for what we spent
- Would like to see from the Committee:
  - Less interested in the detail, more interested in the vision that distinguishes JOCO and gets the community excited about our future

**Speaker #5: Commissioner Hayden (District 6)**

- What is My Vision of Johnson County Twenty years out?
  - Would like to see more unity with the rest of Kansas that we work together and reach out
  - Continue what has already been completed, continue on that path
  - Strengths are our people
  - Education second to none
  - Have to make it a work-friendly climate
  - Economic development, education, public safety – three legs of the stool
- Challenges
  - Have to work on growth
  - Have to draw a line in the sand about where growth occurs – distinguish between urban, suburban, & rural
    - Have to face realities and grow up, not out
    - Cant’ develop all of JOCO or we are doing ourselves a disservice
    - Work with urbanization, its happening
    - Sprawl has been good for JOC< but how far do we go before it starts to hurt us?
- Would like to see from the Committee:
  - Does not need to be a complicated document

**Speaker #6: Chairman Eilert**

- What might we add to Johnson County?
  - Become known as the academic center of the west & region
    - Education research triangle can serve as the catalyst
    - Build on community college, but need more
    - JOCO govt role not clear, but ought to be a clear goal
  - Research and development center – cancer trial, animal health, tied to academic center concept
  - Intermodal transportation – take advantage of our central location; key distribution center for goods internationally across the nation

- Stay the same?
  - Educational system has been the biggest factor in success of JOCO – need to have same K-12 opportunities 20 years from now (federal & state changes will be a big challenge)
- Would like to see from the Committee:
  - Identify assets we already have to be enhanced and maintained; and identify those things we don't already have but need over the next 20 years to be a part of the county's future success

### Questions from Committee:

1. Can we achieve vision with budget cuts or are we failing?
  - Have to balance expenditures with revenues or we go over the cliff
  - Need economic growth (jobs and revenue)
2. Clarify whether the vision is for the county as a whole or just what we can control?
  - Both – what we can influence and be part of, but identify what we can control
3. Federal funding for education and other services and how to deal with local options? Impact of cuts on economic development?
  - Feds are talking about new formulas – earmarks will be going away but concern is that they will favor the larger metro areas and will be skewed.
  - Part of the problem is that the state is shrinking the revenue sources (example – equipment tax), can't achieve our goals if we continue to shrink our tax base
  - Need to be sure that JOCO has a voice at the table
4. Comment – what we don't have is a good transit system. Other limitation is that our only airport is way up north, can we do more to get commercial service at other regional airports?
  - Opportunities explored for air service at New Century Center, carriers didn't want to pursue
  - Sees transit as a key investment today for affordable housing, to deal with traffic,
5. In the realm of economic development– increasingly, young and talented workers are seeking the places they want to live without having a job. What do we need to do to become the kind of place that they seek out?
  - Need to build some awareness among younger workers, but most important factor will be jobs
  - If we do things well and shoot for moderate growth, we'll do well in the long run
  - Culture and arts will be a part of that “attraction factor”
6. Would like to present a vision, but there are some political realities: huge demographic changes, aging population needs; educational system – very hard to state that our grandchildren will have to same opportunities that we had; greater services are going to be needed. Given the paradox of tax relief – how do we do both?
  - Population is going to have to pay more for the services that are going to be needed
  - Already spend a lot, we need to spend it differently

7. Clarify what you want – big picture, action plan, what you can only directly address, what you only influence, what you can't do anything about....clarify please!
  - Broader is ok, but specify what the county can directly do vs. other roles
8. How do we invite entrepreneurs? What is the county's role?
  - County hasn't been in the economic development business, city partners do a great job, but can act as conveners
  - If annexation changes via state legislation, then that might change and may have to get into the economic development game
  - Will be doing well to stay the same
9. What are you hearing from the citizens?
  - Mostly they focus on issues in their backyard, otherwise seldom hear from them.
10. What are our weaknesses?
  - Our challenge is our weakness, not taking bold steps
  - Falling behind in education
  - Biggest impediment to greatness is good enough
11. Clarity on development comments – is there a line in the sand where development occurs (and does not)?
  - No consensus plan, but need to be conscious about directing resources to redevelopment
  - Demand will still continue for outward growth
12. Should the county take a stronger role in shaping development?
  - Ultimately the market will decide