

**Bloomington Rotary Club**

**Roundabout**

**March 9, 2021**

**Next Week's Program**



Brad Kimmel, newly appointed executive director of IU Radio and Television Services (WFIU and WTIU), will speak. Before joining IU in November, Brad had been president and CEO of WNIN Public Media in Evansville, where he was a member of the Rotary Club. Brad brings to IU proven leadership in public media and in his own successful startup media companies.

**This Week's News**

**Jodi Hoagland**, past president of Bloomington North Rotary and a registered nurse, was spotted giving COVID vaccination shots to District Governor **Jessika Hane** and two other local Rotarians.

**This Week's Program. Available on YouTube:** <https://youtu.be/H7wcl639Zgg>



**Liz Feitl** introduced Jennifer Pearl, executive director of the Bloomington Economic Development Corporation. Jennifer joined BEDC in 2019, after serving as director at the Indianapolis Chamber's international program and working for a public affairs firm in Beijing. She earned a Master of Public Affairs at IU.

Jennifer shared the definition of "economic development" – a sustainable increase in prosperity and quality of life. Established in 1985 as a nonprofit corporation serving Monroe County, the BEDC's mission is to retain, develop, and attract quality jobs, with a focus on trade sector development. Pearl explained that the traded sector sells products

outside and brings revenue into the local economy. Examples are Cook Group, Catalent, and IU, with its students from outside the county.

Working at the intersection of the private and public sectors, BEDC focuses on data-based economy development strategy, business retention/expansion/attraction, entrepreneurship, networking, and support for its 100 members. In 2021, BEDC is working on developing a comprehensive economic development strategy to align stakeholders around a common direction and address challenges. As part of the strategy, BEDC will also be developing a business retention/expansion/attraction plan, including land use provisions, opportunities for trade sector job growth, supply chain resilience, and workforce development.

During the pandemic, BEDC has worked across the “social determinants of health,” which include economic stability, neighborhoods, education, food security, community context, and healthcare system. Monroe County unemployment claims skyrocketed – a 25% increase over 2019 (and that figure does not include those who have dropped out of the employment search). Using local data, BEDC can drill down to see what and who has been impacted. Current predictions are for a 5.3% growth rate in 2021 – although personal income expected to fall 3%.

Pearl said roles for economic development during a disaster response include gathering data and convening partners to share information to help stabilize and recover quickly. Beginning in March 2020, BEDC has met twice a week with the Monroe County COVID Coalition. Together they developed “MOCO Shoutout” to recognize extraordinary efforts; to nominate an individual or organization: <https://www.kudoboard.com/boards/mocoshoutout>. The Bloomington Economic Stabilization and Recovery Working Group, including staff and elected representatives from the City and County, the Chamber, Mill, and others, have provided low-interest loans to 62 nonprofit organizations and small businesses and launched reopening resources.

On behalf of the community, BEDC has applied for \$3.5 million in CARES Act funding to develop a new Trades District Technology Center, which would help diversify the local employment base by supporting business growth and talent development, especially in the traded sectors of biopharma, medical devices, and other advanced manufacturing, and healthcare. Grant awards have not yet been made, but BEDC is a finalist.

Pearl complimented members on their penetrating questions:

- How are the arts incorporated into economic development planning? The City of Bloomington has an arts specialist in the Economic & Sustainable Development department. There is broad recognition that the arts are important to quality of life in the community.
- Does BEDC support sole proprietors? Yes, if they are operating in the traded sector.
- What about local retail businesses, like Macy’s? Local retail is not part of the traded sector, so they are more likely to be served by the Chamber of Commerce, not BEDC.
- Can anyone join? Yes, Pearl said BEDC always welcomes members. There are two categories of membership. Sponsoring members become members of the board. General members can attend four meetings a year.
- What is the relationship of BEDC to the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC)? IEDC also supports business attraction and retention. They provide leads to businesses looking to relocate. BEDC follows up if the business and its needs are a match for Monroe County. Governor Holcomb spoke at the recent BEDC annual meeting. The state is becoming more strategic and will reinstate the Regional Cities Initiative.
- How many inquiries does BEDC receive in a year? Approximately 40 arrive each year from IEDC and others from local employers. Barriers are often space availability and zoning restrictions.

- The news reports many women lost or had to give up jobs during the pandemic. Is that the case here? What can we do? Pearl said data are not available locally. **Charlotte Zietlow** suggested she connect with the Bloomington Commission on the Status of Women.
- What is the impact of local education? Pearl noted that questions about the quality of local schools is often the first question businesses ask when seeking to relocate. They are looking to hire local talent and want good schools for their children.
- What about workforce housing? Pearl said this is a big barrier to recruiting and retaining businesses. Banks have pulled back on lending, many builders have gone out of business, and materials costs are high. There are also zoning restrictions and limited availability and high cost of land.

### **Our Weekly Gathering, March 9**

President **Ashley Wesley** welcomed members and guests to Bloomington Rotary Club's weekly Celebration of Service. She thanked producers **Natalie Blais, Michael Shermis, Sally Gaskill, and Earon Davis. Glenda Murray** reflected on six degrees of separation and some surprising connections among her family, recent speakers, and members of our club.

Guests included Allan Edmonds, Larry Allen, Lynn Coyne, and Catherine Swanson, **Tina Swanson's** sister.

**Rex Hillery** is celebrating a birthday on March 13.

**Liz Feitl** celebrated 17 years as a member, and **Jim Capshew** passed his third membership anniversary.

**Dave Meyer** welcomed returning member **John VanderZee**.

Happy Dollars celebrated **Liz Feitl's** coming retirement on May 31 and members who have received the "Fauci ouchy" COVID vaccinations.

Reporter: **Sara Laughlin**