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County considering more tax incentives

by By Joel Martin Senior writer

01.05.11 - 12:00 pm

Troup County's local governments may adopt a "more equitable" tax incentive policy to attract new businesses and maintain existing ones.

Diethard Lindner, chairman of the LaGrange Development Authority, and Scott Turk, governmental services manager for the county, explained the concept at Tuesday's meeting of the County Commission.

Currently, the Troup Board of Assessors awards tax incentives based on the number of jobs and total investment.

The new policy would employ a scorecard system like the county adopted two years ago to rank new developments. It would judge a company with questions such as what can the company do for the community; is it a good corporate citizen that contributes to the United Way; what salaries does it pay in relation to other companies; is it environmentally friendly; and does it set aside land for greenspace?

"We're looking at it more from a preferred customer standpoint and what companies would do the most good for the community," Lindner said. "Those companies would get the highest incentives."

The current incentive policy may remain "as a baseline, but it would not be the only determining factor," he said.

If a university, for example, wanted to build a research center in LaGrange, "there no way it fits into the current system," said Commission Chairman Ricky Wolfe. "It will be broader so there's an opportunity to plug in companies that don't fit the current model."

Lindner and Turk plan to meet with city government and business leaders "to make sure we're hitting all the right points," Lindner said. "We still need to sell the policy a little bit and modify it to meet the concerns some of the business community may have."

Lindner said the current policy has been modified several times by the Board of Assessors, but not adopted by the local governments.

"We want to go to the next level and get the local governments to agree on a good policy," he said.

He said tax incentives are particularly needed for small businesses, which account for 85 percent of all employees in Georgia.

"The Board of Assessor would like to see this adopted by all the local governing authorities that want to participate," Turk said.

He said it will give guidance to the Board of Assessors and provide certainty for negotiators who are trying to recruit business to LaGrange.

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