

# Cass County Gives State of the County Address @ Harrisonville Chamber Luncheon

**Harrisonville, Missouri** - The Cass County Commission gave a state of the county address at the monthly Harrisonville Chamber Luncheon at the Butcher Block Restaurant.

Presiding Commissioner Gary Mallory and Associate Commissioners Bill Cook and Brian Baker provided a detailed review of infrastructure development, economic development, and county projects. From a review the intermodal facility in Belton to the new "Enhanced Enterprise Zone" in southern Cass County, commissioners shared about united efforts to improve Cass County.

"Our county officials, in all offices, are working together to serve you," stated Gary Mallory. "Each county office is committed to coming together and helping Cass County move forward. Our efforts revolve around bringing people together."

Brian Baker gave an overview of work being done at the intermodal facility in Belton, the efforts to establish a foreign trade zone, and reviewed various MoDOT projects in Northern Cass County. "We are seeing MoDOT pour a lot of state dollars into our county to improve our infrastructure...and future projects are on the design table."

Mallory provided a review of the Cass Medical Center and reviewed MoDOT's plans to build the new "Hospital Interchange" on 71 Highway. He also shared that Request-For-Proposals had been issued with regards to the old Cass Medical Center. The county will sell the building and use the profits to pay down the debt on the new Cass Medical Center.

Baker then gave an overview of the county's efforts in researching the Lawrence-Smith Memorial Airport. "We are ready...we are extending our hand to Harrisonville to look for an innovative way to expand the airport runway and use the airport as an economic development tool," stated Baker. "We invite other communities to join us in making this a regional effort."

Bill Cook provided a review of the Enhanced Enterprise Zones in Cass County. In terms of land-mass, officials say Cass County now has the largest Enhanced Enterprise Zone area in the state. This state directed program provides tax credits for businesses. The facility must create and maintain the following minimum: new or expanded business facility - 2 new employees and \$100,000 new investment; replacement business facility - 2 new employees and \$1,000,000 new investment; health insurance at all times, of which at least 50% is paid by the employer.

"Cass County wants to help its agricultural business with the 'Enhanced Enterprise Zones' but we also want to help bring in manufacturing," stated Cook. "The airport is just two miles from the one of our EEZ areas and 71 Highway runs right through one of our EEZ areas...presenting us with huge opportunities as a county."

Cook also explained how the county is promoting the idea for new energy sources. One idea the county has presented to farmers is a Bio-Methane process that uses bio-mass to create energy. Creating these small bio-methane units allows the county to generate its own energy and become more independent.

Cass County is supporting a Midwest Research Institute grant proposal and assisting in applying for a grant to look at algae production (and then turning it into fuel). The goal is to work in association with the Bio-mass reactors that are being discussed for here in Cass County. This discussion centers on deploying second generation, carbon neutral, bio-hybrid methane gas energy production concepts for power generation at several sites in the county. The process utilizes cellulosic silage: converting it to gas and using the gas to generate electricity. It is environmentally friendly and could help bring energy savings to Cass County.

"This is about making Cass County ready and attractive to businesses...about bringing jobs to our county," commented Cook.

The Cass County Commission also announced that they have received nearly \$800,000 in grants for various projects. This includes the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant where Cass County applied for \$378,500 to reimburse the county for the cost of the Energy Audit Intern Program that looked at energy efficiency in 75 public buildings across Cass County this summer. The report shows cities how they can reduce costs and save dollars through energy efficiency.

Cass County applied for the State of Missouri's Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program, receiving \$185,715 over the next two years. This was done in partnership with Hope Haven of Cass County, Inc, a not-for-profit domestic violence shelter and Heart-n-Hand Ministries, Inc. a not-for-profit public assistance agency. Universal Assets in Harrisonville helped Cass County apply for this grant at no cost.

Congressman Ike Skelton aided in helping Cass County receive the FY 09 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program. Cass County applied for \$10,519 to develop a business plan to update the current law enforcement communications infrastructure in Cass County.

The County has also received Historic Preservation Grants and grants to assist the Cass County Health Department in offering services to citizens.

Cass County is also looking into the Broadband Infrastructure grant opportunities. There are a couple of programs aimed at improving access to broadband service in underserved and unserved areas we are investigating. These are competitive grant programs.

"Cass County has made huge strides in improving services to our citizens," commented Mallory. "We have worked to improve access to information, upgrade our road plans, improve customer service, involve citizens, save dollars, and access federal and state aid. Our officials are working together...and we believe in Cass County."