

Golden Triangle Business Roundtable  
Minutes  
March 15, 2005

**Committee Reports**

**Construction Industry Institute** - Walter Almon reported that a seminar is scheduled for May 3, 2005 at the Pompano Club. This will be a half-day seminar on "Lean Construction Methodology". A California based company representative will provide the speaker and will discuss how our area can improve its construction methodology process. Look for future fliers on this seminar.

**Safety Committee** – Pat Avery reported that the applications for the Safety Awards for 2004 have been sent to plant managers, safety professionals or contract administrators. The applications are due back to the GTBR by April 15, 2005. Please mark your calendars for the Fourteenth Annual Safety Awards Banquet on Tuesday, August 30, 2005. This year the Committee is working very hard to have some meritorious awards. This category is for a contractor company who has less than 10,000 safe man-hours at a site. It takes two companies to nominate a contractor for the Meritorious Award. The full safety committee will meet once more before breaking apart to do audits and evaluations of safety programs. While they are apart Robert Royal will lead the contractor group. The contractor group will analyze the GTBR safety statistics that companies have reported.

**Legal** – John Durkay reported that in both Texas and Washington D.C. there are asbestosis and silicosis bills winding their way through the house. The Texas bill has a relatively good opportunity for passage. One thing this bill will do is help get rid of a statute of limitations problem and hold the case. As the disease progresses and symptoms increase and the need for medical attention becomes more necessary the system will step in and process the claim. Symptoms of this disease don't normally show up until a person is about fifty years old or older. The workforce from the 50's, 60's and 70's won't start showing symptoms until they have reached that time span. It seems to be a good method.

The second item of concern is the bankruptcy law that is three to four weeks from passage. This is a return bill that restricts the mobility of consumer individuals to file bankruptcy. Credit card companies and loan companies are complaining about the amount of bankruptcies being filed. There are some remarkable provisions in this bill that are unenlightened and fairly stupid.

School finance is getting closer at the Texas level. There is an expansion of the number of businesses being taxed.

This is your annual reminder about anti-trust compliance. Violations will get you five years and not necessarily where Martha Stewart went. Petroleum refiners and chemical producers shouldn't be exchanging pricing information. Don't use our meetings for price fixing. Plant contract administrators can encourage construction vendors to become

members of the GTBR but cannot use membership as a requirement for doing business with your organizations.

### **Program**

Walter introduced John Durkay, attorney for the GTBR who is with Mehaffy Webber. John discussed county finances. He started with a brief history and a statement that he had never thought of the people he worked with as government, the county judge and district attorney. These individuals are constrained by the laws of the state and they will work in an honorable and compliant way. Citizens are sometimes uninformed about how a system works so there are sometimes misimpressions. John had a lot of information about the history of the county. The county has awakened to a problem some might even call a crisis. Some might even interpret a leader's actions as intentional. When the problem began to surface plant managers had a small concern whether they were talking about municipalities, school districts, or county government and they were going to be financing sixty to eighty five percent of the tab. That is one unique aspect of this community. It is supported by industry. When the budget crisis surfaced the plant managers agreed to fund a study. They were interested to know if any money could be saved on taxes. As the process moved forward restrictions and issues arose. Citizens could review this process and should be according to John, because he had found his information by following certain avenues himself. After living and working in the county for twenty-five years he knows the system and that helped in his search for information.

Management Studies – there are many ways to look at them. Generally there are three categories. Look on a detailed basis about the operations of a particular business and how it is processed and compile the comments of the people who work there. Second, review benchmarking with competitors and three delta management which entails looking at the changes. John used the delta management method. In reviewing the changes he found that there is a lot of misunderstanding about how county government works. Texas has a very unusual county government system and they do things differently. In reviewing a list of the constitutional officers of the county he noted that each officer is elected. He asked the question, who is their voice. There are eleven facets of county government and they include the county judge, commissioners, district attorney, sheriff, district clerk, county clerk, justice of the peace, constable, tax assessor, and treasurer. Each with their different duties and a check and balance system and all answering to the people they work for. The appraisal district stands alone. John gave a brief description of each elected position and what part they play in county government.

One item John clarified was that the County Judge presides over the Commissioners Court and directs only ten percent of the budget and that ninety percent is not his to do anything with. In reviewing where expenditures have gone up he reported that crime is not getting cheaper and prisoner populations are growing. Budget increases are up from non Commissioners Court increases and that Ford Park plays a small part in those increases.

Local businesses are paying more taxes but they are also doing more business. Ford Park has become the focus for costing the county money. John stated "It Ain't Ford Park!"

People are looking at it as the county problem when they should be looking elsewhere. Ford Park is there and it is worth money and it still has the ability to generate revenue. Tax rates for Jefferson County before the tax increase were in line with most counties its size. The county and its citizens need to look at projects they can bring to the area for revenue and abatements are lucrative. The county needs to get an LNG Project. There are no real conclusions but citizens should look at the criminal justice system and county expenditures. We need to stop talking garbage and look at the real issues.