



38 26

Sunshine and cold, along with some cloudy intervals today. Details, 2A.



SPORTS
Boys lose close one
To Knoxville Webb, 7A

THE STANDARD BANNER

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FEATURES
Park has new trees

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County should align itself with Knox area

When it comes to economic development

BY DALE GENTRY
Standard Banner Editor

When Jefferson County considers its economic development future, consultant Jay Garner has two words of advice — “go west.”

Garner, hired by the Industrial Development Board earlier this year to recommend the best strategies and industry targets for the future, told IDB members earlier this month that commuting patterns suggest alignments

with metropolitan Knoxville will bear the most fruit.

Nearly 5,000 Jefferson County residents commute to Knoxville for work every day — nearly as many as work inside the county itself (5,353). That figure produced what Garner called the “aha moment” of his study.

Jefferson County should not be a part of Morristown’s metropolitan statistical area (MSA) — as it currently is — but instead should seek to be included in the Knoxville MSA, Garner advised.

“You have greater synergy with Knoxville, with the commuting patterns,” he told board members.

Besides seeking to be included in the Knoxville MSA, the Atlanta-based consultant said Jefferson County should

also be a part of the Knoxville-Oak Ridge Innovation Valley. That alliance could eventually bring the county some high-tech jobs with good salaries — something else that is sorely needed in light of the county’s below-average per-capita income of \$25,200, which ranks \$8,000 below the state average of \$33,615.

Garner’s study provides a wealth of background information and statistics about local economic development, as well as 23 specific recommendations to improve the county’s approach to business recruitment and growth.

“The report is very eye-opening,” said Industrial Board Chair Ed Stiner, at the conclusion of Garner’s report. “To be a better entity or county, we’ve got

to address our weaknesses.”

Board members will take a month to digest the 72-page report, and come back at their January meeting to spend extended time discussing first steps that need to be taken to prepare the county for business growth. There are many areas where work needs to be done.

Near the top of the list are education and leadership.

Garner, who works to help major companies find new locations, said he analyzed the positives and negatives of Jefferson County as he would any area under consideration. He reminded board members that the process is not “site selection,” but “site elimination.”

The county is rated 35th among 95 Tennessee counties, Garner said, which

would get it through the “first cut” for a business looking at the state. However, he said a close look at the county’s educational facilities — particularly Jefferson County High School — and its student test scores would likely get it eliminated. Not only did Garner recommend fixing the current high school, he suggested county leaders look at developing a second high school based on future growth projections.

“You’ve got to invest in education for the benefit of all,” he told the board. “I think your test scores are good in light of the fact you have a low per-pupil [local] expenditure, and a high pupil-teacher ratio.”

Education and economic growth go
See **COUNTY SHOULD**, 2A▶



Commission committee issue settled

BY STEVE MARION
Standard Banner Staff Writer

Motions clearing up procedures for selecting members on two county committees passed commission without a hitch last week — but a vote on the mayor’s recommendation for one seat didn’t go as smoothly.

Meeting in regular session, the group unanimously approved an amendment which requires the mayor to nominate members of the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) and Nursing Home boards. Previously, commission had mistakenly

County should align itself with Knox ...

FROM PAGE 1

hand-in-hand, Garner pointed out. In the short term, education must be improved to attract new jobs. Business growth will fund educational improvements. But, "unless you attract new businesses, you will have a growing older population who won't support schools," he predicted.

Leadership is another key component of economic development. "The quality of public and private leadership is the most important factor in achieving success," he said. "Leadership allows all the other tools in the toolbox to come together."

The county needs to develop a new generation of leaders, the consultant said, adding that if the county had adequate public leadership, it probably wouldn't have the school problem it has today.

"People who take the attitude that 'we don't want change' are the communities that are suf-

fering today," Garner said. He pointed to Chattanooga as a good example of people being willing to change. The redevelopment of

should market itself in the U.S. and globally as a place that has a low cost of operation and a good workforce. Though the county

People who take the attitude that 'we don't want change' are the communities that are suffering today.

- Jay Garner, Garner Economics

that city's downtown has led to economic development success it enjoys today.

The industrial board and the Chamber must also take the initiative to educate current and future leaders on the "abc's of economic development," the consultant said. Along that line, board member Harrell Webb suggested that a joint meeting of key elected officials be convened early in the new year to share the details of Garner's report.

County's 'positives'

Garner said Jefferson County

has only 12 percent of its high school graduates go on to get four-year college degrees, it has a higher-than-average percentage of people with two-year college degrees. It also has a higher percentage who work in manufacturing than the state and nation. Add to that an excellent quality of life, and low relative land and labor costs.

Garner also noted a good working relationship between the industrial board and the Chamber of Commerce, and good leadership being provided by Chamber

CEO Don Cason and Industrial Board Chair Ed Stiner. The hiring of Brad Maul as a full-time economic development director is also a plus for the county.

"You've achieved a lot as a good community," Garner said. "You can be a great community if you get the tools and resources in place."

Business 'targets'

Based on all of the information he has studied since August, and the county's need to increase its per-capita income, Garner also came up with an industry "target list" for the county for the future.

Number one on the list was transportation-related industries, based on the county's two interstates and accessibility to major areas of the United States.

Call centers are also a good possibility, due to the availability of college students and a stable, older workforce. Food manufacturers would also seriously consider the county, Garner believes,

ABUNDANCE OF COMMUTING

Only 26 percent of local residents work in Jefferson County, according to figures in a report presented to the County Industrial Board December 18. Below is a breakdown of where Jefferson Countians worked, based on 2004 to 2006 figures.

	Workers	Percent
Jefferson County	5,353	26.2%
Knox County	4,966	24.3%
Hamblen County	3,554	17.4%
Sevier County	2,349	11.5%
Cocke County	562	2.7%
Davidson County	540	2.7%
Anderson County	484	2.4%
Blount County	410	2.0%
Hamilton County	295	1.4%
Greene County	221	1.1%
All other locations	1,715	8.4%

SOURCE: A Blueprint for Success: Economic Development Strategy for Jefferson County

and he listed scientific and technical consulting services as a "stretch target."

He also recommended that the county continue to develop tourism, specifically by enhancing its visitor's center. Retirement communities could also be a sector that the county should study, he said. That effort will be enhanced by the addition of a full-time

tourism position at the Chamber in the near future.

Longtime industrial board member Gill Moore said the key question for the county and its leaders is what they will do with Garner's report and its recommendations.

"There's nothing cheaper than a good idea with no action," he observed.

Commission committee ...

FROM PAGE 1

board. Masters said Chambers recently caught a mistake in which a type of natural gas piping other than that specified in the bid had been installed at the nursing home addition that is currently underway. The piping was replaced at no extra cost to the county, Masters said.

Kindred added that he believes Chambers has made a "significant contribution" on the nursing home board, and Mills said Chambers has "put his heart and soul" into service on that board.

The commission approved Palmieri's nominations of Commissioner Nina Snodgrass, Raymond Ellis, Jewel Curry, and Ronny Coleman to the EMS Board. Coleman is a new member, and the others are reappointments. Kindred and Mike Burleson are also serving on the board, and Palmieri will need to bring one more nomination to the January meeting, since commission's amendment calls for a seven-

boards in an ex officio capacity.

Confusion over who was to nominate members of both boards arose around the time Palmieri declined to seek the commission chairmanship in order to effect a better balance of power. Previous-

ly, the county mayor, serving as chair, had made the nominations. Officials assumed incorrectly that it was a power of the chair, but the commission actually had assigned the duty to the county mayor years ago.



Bank employees help families

Your Local Weather

Tue 12/29	Wed 12/30	Thu 12/31
38/26	43/35	46/31
Sunshine along with some cloudy intervals. High 38F.	Cloudy. Highs in the low 40s and lows in the mid 30s.	Showers. Highs in the mid 40s and lows in the low 30s.

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