

## State jobs recruiter pledges local help

- By Chuck Stinnett, *The Gleaner*



Larry Hayes

The state's top economic development official pledged -- repeatedly -- to cooperate with Henderson-area officials to keep and bring jobs here.

"Our message today is, we want to partner with you and partner with you early," Larry Hayes, who last week was appointed secretary of Kentucky's Economic Development Cabinet by Gov. Steve Beshear.

Hayes' visit came on the eve of Beshear's announcement today of a technology-related company coming to Henderson.

Hayes, who previously had been secretary of the governor's Executive Cabinet, isn't without experience. He had served as interim economic development secretary since last September, and as the budget director for former governor Martha Layne Collins, he helped recruit Toyota Manufacturing to Georgetown in the mid-1980s.

Hayes participated in an informal 90-minute discussion over lunch here with several elected officials and economic development representatives.

Kevin Sheilley, president and CEO of the Northwest Kentucky Forward, briefed Hayes on the regional economic development organization recruitment and retention strategies.

Those range from focusing on recruiting companies in the energy, aluminum, distribution, processed food and auto industries to visiting with every existing industry in Henderson, Union, Webster and McLean counties at least once a year.

"I'm impressed that you have a strategy," Hayes said. "Some communities simply react" to opportunities that happen along.

He also commended the four counties for pooling resources to attract jobs, including teaming up to recruit Hudson (now Tyson) Foods and developing the Four Star Industrial Park near Robards.

"I think you all are known for your regional attitude down here, and that's an asset," Hayes said.

As for the state's efforts, "Our charge from the governor is to grow the economy," he said.

"We're not in it for the glory ourselves. We want to be the work horses in the cabinet and make you guys look good."

Officials here were heartened by Hayes' visit, the first by a state economic development secretary since Sheilley came here four years ago.

Meeting with Hayes were Sheilley; state Rep. Dorsey Ridley; Henderson Mayor Tom Davis; Judge-executives Sandy Watkins of Henderson County and Jim Townsend of Webster County; David Scott, the chairman of Northwest Kentucky Forward and the acting judge-executive of McLean County; banker Doug Bell, chairman of the Four Star board; Debbie Gray, an economic development agent for E.ON U.S. and Kentucky Utilities Co.; Cj Maple, the existing business manager for Northwest Kentucky; and Patty Lacy of the cabinet's Madisonville regional office.

Later, Hayes toured Rio Tinto Alcan's Sebree smelter