

Moving Our Economy Forward

For the first time in his life, **Bernie Dardis**, *Indigo Signworks*, is supporting a sales tax. **Roger Timm**, a retired marine, isn't far behind him. "I'm not a tax guy," Timm says. "I've only voted for one tax in my life and that was the Renaissance Zone project a couple years ago."

Come June 10th, both men will vote in favor of the half-cent sales tax to fund economic development in Fargo and Cass County as part of the *Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation's* Smart Growth Initiative. As members of Fargo/Cass Forward, an independent citizen group working to pass the funding necessary to put the Smart Growth Initiative into action, they are asking business leaders and community members to do the same.



Members of Fargo/Cass Forward spoke on their efforts in support of the GFMEDC's Strategic Growth Initiative and the June 10th ballot initiative during April's Regional Issues Committee meeting.

On Thursday, April 10, the *Regional Issues* committee heard Dardis and Timm present on Fargo/Cass Forward's efforts in support of the initiative. "This growth plan is the most innovative growth plan I've seen in the last 10 years," Timm said. "I've come to the conclusion this initiative was absolutely necessary for our region."

They are in the process of printing 6,000 absentee ballot applications to be distributed to *North Dakota State University* students who will be absent when the vote takes place. "The young people are our first impetus," Timm says. "These kids

are amazing and they know what's at stake for them. They like Fargo Moorhead and they want the chance to stay here. Our campaign is about the future."

Dardis agrees. "We are known for the young minds in this area and the incredible work ethic," he says. "Yet the greatest things we export are these same young minds and work ethic. We can compete so let's bring the jobs here."

Fargo/Cass Forward is also meeting with people in the community. "We're having coffee in homes with audiences of six to eight people," Dardis said. "We're handing out information and they're promising to go back out into the public and talk to other people."

It's information they believe will affect a wide audience. "Though it's the GFMEDC's responsibility to plan for the future and guide the economy, this plan was really developed by dozens of community members," says **Mary Batcheller** of the GFMEDC. "While we've guided the process and the Cass County Commission has approved it, it's really the community's plan."

Dardis and Timm know it will be an uphill battle but they believe the fight will be worth it. "This is not a traditional campaign. This is like putting your arms around water," Dardis says. "We're selling a concept. But if we do a good job of planning and a good job of funding, good things are going to happen. We're going to see economic growth in this region. There are all kinds of opportunities here. We just need people to step up and get in front of the microphone."

Help Move Fargo/Cass Forward

Here are a few ways you can help support the GFMEDC's Strategic Growth Initiative.

- Learn more! Visit www.gfmedc.com/growth or www.fargocassforward.com for additional information about the cause and how you can support it.
- Talk to your employers/employees. Tell them you support the Initiative and ask them to do the same.
- Have one-on-one discussions with people and allow them to ask questions about the plan.
- Make **five** phone calls to your friends, encouraging them to support the cause.
- Get out and vote on **June 10** for the half-cent sales tax to fund economic development!



Thank you to the *Fargo Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)* for sponsoring April's *Business After Hours!* At the event, ESGR presented awards to organizations for their support and dedication to our armed forces. Among them, your Chamber was honored with the **Above and Beyond Award**, presented for outstanding service and continuing support to the national defense. Pictured from left are Chamber Board Past Chair **Shawn Dobberstein** of *Hector International Airport*, **Gene Orson** of *Fargo ESGR*, and Chamber Board Chair-Elect **Jim Welch** of *YHR Partners, Architects*.