

MCEDC picks Cumpata to lead new vision

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Justin Edmonds – jedmonds@nwherald.com Pamela Cumpata was named the new president of the McHenry County Economic Development Corporation on Tuesday. (Justin Edmonds (Photographer))

When the McHenry County Economic Development Corp. commissioned a feasibility study of the group last fall, it found that the group lacked visibility and leadership.

Those are among the first things that Pamela Cumpata wants to bring to the group as its new president.

"We need to get a common vision," Cumpata said. "This campaign was a big step for the board of directors to make. ... Given this economic time, we need to know what's happening in our business community and local businesses, and understand it, so we're working with municipalities to build the strongest McHenry County we can."

Cumpata's hiring was announced Tuesday by the MCEDC. She will start July 8 as the organization's fifth president in its 18 years of existence.

"She's a great fit for us, and a great fit for the county," MCEDC interim president Jean Schober said. Schober will return to her role as vice president when Cumpata starts.

Cumpata started as a volunteer with MCEDC in 2003, eventually becoming a board member and the treasurer for the organization – a position which she resigned Tuesday.

"My family has been in McHenry County since 1870," she said.

"My mother's side has been there since then, and so I've always been in McHenry County. A lot of family still lives there."

Cumpata is an Elgin resident and is the vice president of finance/treasurer for the Elgin YWCA. She has more than 20 years of experience in banking, working as a vice president at American National Bank and Trust and LaSalle Bank before becoming a commercial banker at Associated Bank from March to December of 2008.

"With a career in transition, this sounded like a great fit," Cumpata said. "My background in community development and banking gave me an opportunity to deal with business leaders and owners, and to bring that knowledge base with me, as well as a comfort level."

The MCEDC said it evaluated more than 85 candidates before selecting Cumpata. She succeeds Chris Manheim, who resigned in October.

"Pam's business talents and finance experience will be of tremendous value as MCEDC provides service to McHenry County businesses impacted by our current economy," said MCEDC Board Chairman Jim Thorpe of Crystal Lake Bank & Trust. "Cumpata's local ties and knowledge of McHenry County, combined with her strong business network, put her quickly on the short list."

After studying the results of the feasibility report, MCEDC hired R&M Resource Development, a consultant company in Colorado, to kick off a campaign of change.

"Whenever you strip everything down and take a look at what you do well, everyone feels good. When you get to more raw areas, it's tough," Cumpata said. "But we know we needed to do it. We knew we weren't going to come out the other side if we didn't do it.

"I don't want anybody to think we're moving out, but we still have a ways to go. We're rebuilding. It's a rebirth."

Leading that rebirth is the vision and mission of MCEDC, which Cumpata repeated often Tuesday – creating wealth and primary jobs.

"I want to strengthen the organization, increase visibility, and stick to creating wealth and primary jobs so it's a talking point for the county," she said.

In her first days on the job, Cumpata said she expected to meet with county board members and investors to get their feedback on the organization and its campaign.

"We need to understand what's going on with our businesses much more than what's gone on in the past," she said. "We've had good responses from many people we never touched before. The challenge is first, the economy. The other is they wanted to see who the president was. While Jean was doing a fabulous job in the interim, she knew going forward that was not a role she wanted.

"The organization need a president, and today it was announced. I'm hoping this will solidify in people's minds that this is a good organization and that we've got some good momentum going forward."

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