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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CCEDC BOARD MOVES FORWARD TO CONTINUE FUNDING

Countywide economic growth funding measure to be decided possibly in September

WYNNE – Members of the Cross County Economic Development Corp.’s 30-member board of directors unanimously approved continued funding for economic growth during a special board meeting Tuesday afternoon.

The meeting, held at the Technology Center for the Delta in Wynne, featured a review of a recent independent poll conducted by Opinion Research Associates, Inc. The poll, funded by a group of concerned Cross County citizens, revealed that of the 401 registered voters interviewed, 60 percent would support a countywide sales tax for economic growth if an election were held today.

“Our board is committed to the continued economic growth of Cross County,” said Norris Cruthirds, president of the Cross County Economic Development Corp. “The results of both the recent poll and Tuesday’s vote indicate a strong desire from Cross County to move forward in the pursuit of continued funding for economic growth.”

In 1999, Cross County voters approved the state’s first countywide 1-cent sales tax in support of economic growth. The measure lasted three years. The CCEDC has not collected new revenues since 2002. A similar 1-cent measure was defeated by 135 votes in March. Cruthirds and other board members said the narrow defeat was due to miscommunication and the mistaken belief that the measure would be approved without a strong grassroots effort.

Voters in Cross County may once again have the chance to decide the future of economic

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growth in their county if another election is held. Members of the Cross County Quorum Court, who oversee the distribution of the revenues from the sales tax to the CCEDC, will review an ordinance at their Monday, July 13, meeting that if passed would place the decision on a Sept. 8 special election ballot.

“Hopefully, the Cross County Quorum Court will give voters the chance to allow us to continue working with new companies to attract them to our area and with existing companies to help them expand in Cross County,” said Aaron Stewart, CCEDC executive director. “With continued funding, we’ll be able to pursue additional state and federal grant opportunities and broaden the county’s tax base for our schools, roads and other services for all Cross County residents. We’ll also be able to make the Technology Center for the Delta an even better place for education, job training and community events.”

The 1999 measure led to the eventual creation of the Technology Center for the Delta, a former K-Mart building that is now the home of East Arkansas Community College’s Wynne campus, the Cross County Chamber of Commerce and CCEDC and Arkansas Workforce Center. The CCEDC was also able to bring new jobs to the county through incentives that brought two new companies to the region and allowed several existing companies to expand. Approximately \$5.2 million in grant funds were also leveraged by the CCEDC using the tax revenues.

Voting members of the CCEDC present at the meeting either through attendance or proxy were Cruthirds, Brenda Holmes, Vance Lawson, Jerry Lovrien, Circuit Judge Richard Proctor, Marvin Hagaman, O’Neal Taylor, Susie Thomas, Butch Peeler, George Owens, William Riley, J. L. Campbell, Randal Caldwell, Betty Lee, Matt Boone, John Smith, LeRoy Dangeau, Clyde Collins, Ronnie Cox, Luther Sigman, Darrell Smith, Wynne Mayor Paul Nichols, Cross County Judge Kenneth Witcher, Shea Lewis, Keeli Smith and Joy Shepherd.

Cross County elected officials who attended the meeting were Witcher, Clerk Peggy Jones, Treasurer Karen McCorkle, Tax Collector Debbie Davis, Assessor Joy Horton and Justices of Peace Mike Davis, Bedford Tuberville, Vernon Horton, Mike Curtner and Danny Thomas.