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Vorys Hosts 2018 Economic Development Incentives Conference

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Vorys third annual Economic Development Incentives Conference – hosted in February – welcomed more than 160 guests from several states across the country. Scott Ziance, head of the Vorys economic development incentives practice, opened the conference by welcoming guests and highlighting some of the featured events – which included a variety of presentations touching on key issues impacting economic development incentives.

The first presentation, titled the “Do’s and Don’ts of Working with the Media,” featured Jamie Richardson, senior vice president of White Castle, and reporter Brian Ball, who shared media stories and underscored how media coverage can significantly impact an economic development project. Rob Phillips, of Vorys’ strategic communications team, moderated the panel. The next presentation focused on “Federal Tax Considerations in Incentive Transactions,” and featured moderator Aaron Berke, and speakers Jeff Miller and Kelly Bissinger, all from Vorys, who discussed how tax considerations can impact and help structure an incentives transaction.

After the first two presentations, guests at the conference were invited to attend breakout sessions, which allowed attendees to select a course path to match their interests. Each guest was able to select a track that allowed them to attend up to two different break-out sessions, including:

- “Incentive Considerations in Multi-Phase Projects,” headlined by moderator Ted Smith of Vorys, and speakers Andy Weeks from VanTrust Real Estate and Mike Fitzpatrick from Elford Development
- “Multi-State Site Selection—Best Practices & Lessons Learned,” with moderator Chris Knezevic of Vorys, and speakers Rita Williams of The Kroger Co. and Cheryl Filippou of Nestle USA, Inc.
- “How Creative Local Government Incentives Strategies Create Positive Results for All,” hosted by moderator Chris Clements of Vorys and including speakers Karen Freeman of the City of Rossford, Ben

Kessler of the City of Bexley, and Matthew A. Stuczynski of MAS Financial Advisory Services LLC

- “How to Make Your Lender Happy & Improve Your Loan Terms,” presented by moderator Jill Tangeman of Vorys, with speakers Michael Kelley of the Kelley Companies and Bill Kuhar of Fifth Third Bank.

The keynote presentation offered guests a chance to see comparative approaches to economic development issues across several different states – Ohio, Alabama and North Carolina. The event was moderated by Jon Stock from the Vorys’ economic development incentives team and featured speakers: Amy Brabham, the economic development director for the Prattville Chamber of Commerce; David Spratley, vice president of business recruitment for the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina; and Matt McCollister, senior vice president, economic development of Columbus 2020. The keynote presentation covered a variety of topics in a panel format. The speakers discussed the different approaches in each state to economic development – noting the key types of incentives that are available, the particular industry focus of each state, and the competitive environment for attracting new businesses. The panel members also discussed ways in which incentives can help overcome common challenges to economic development, such as workforce availability and site selection. At the conclusion of the discussion, the keynote panel took aim at some of the critical trends impacting economic development incentives today, such as the rise of mega-projects that have recently dominated the news.

Since its inception two years ago, the Vorys Economic Development Incentives Conference has grown substantially each year, with the attendance for the 2018 conference setting a new record. We look forward to hosting the conference once again next year.