

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)
BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE
TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE
MINUTES
January 19, 2007
EDC, Willmar**

Present: Dean Bouta, Ron Erpelding, Bill Fenske, Mike Nitchals, Charles Oakes, Jeff Roiland, Dave Sisser and Jean Spaulding

Excused: Bill Jagow and Jeff Tengwall

Staff: Steven Renquist, Executive Director

Secretarial: Jodie Heuring, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Vice Chair Ron Erpelding called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 a.m..

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Charles Oakes, SECONDED BY Jeff Roiland, to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2006 meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Get Broadband Grant Status and Budget. Vice Chair Erpelding reviewed the Blandin *Get Broadband* web site for communities doing something similar to what we plan to and circulated some of the information he found. The common thrust has been increasing knowledge locally.

[Dave Sisser joined the meeting.]

The followup research done by Blandin of projects funded has shown they have been successful. It is unclear whether the broadband usage in those participating communities is increasing at a faster rate than a community that has not participated in this Blandin program. It was suggested to possibly have a booth at the KWLM spring show to survey people in Kandiyohi County as to their services and needs. Is there a message that we should do a little of both: education and assessment? One of the goals of this grant is to determine which communities and areas in the county do not have service.

[Jean Spaulding joined the meeting.]

2007 Goals. Chairperson Spaulding asked task force members to review the 2007 goals prior to discussion.

[Steve Renquist joined the meeting.]

As part of Goal 2, Spaulding stated a meeting was held with service providers at the City of Willmar about the industrial park. Mike Nitchals has a staff person who looks at lots and layouts to outline easement areas on the new plats to make sure they have ample room for future utility needs.

The plan is to set action items for each of the goals. Steve Renquist believes Goal 1 is the principal task for the task force.

Discussion was held about how do we define the needs in addition to broadband. Spaulding believes the task force may have input into the survey tool and the ability to add specific items. There is a fear of Blandin's survey being too generic when surveying businesses. Is it possible to suggest Blandin surveys percentages, i.e., % large business, % small business and % residential. Discussion was held about whether it is possible through the city planning process to allow planning by other providers. This could be a question posed to the city/county planning to see if plat review could be expanded. Nitchals stated utility providers should be looking at sizes of right of way and easements the city is platting for utilities to see if they need to be enlarged to allow space for future technical services. Nitchals stated in some new developments, they are joint trenching and this is a tool city/county planners should be using or encouraging.

After further discussion, the following goals and action items were established for 2007:

Goal 1: Assess needs and access opportunities

- a. Assess needs and access opportunities for technology-based industry recruitment and expansion.
- b. Identify locations in the area that have and do not have high speed internet capacity, telephone redundancy and cellular telephone service and determine the needs for such type of services.
- c. Communicate to prospective businesses the technology services that are available and attempt to have those services provided to all areas of the county.
- d. Encourage businesses to complete a technological needs assessment of the services provided by their current provider and do a comparison with alternative providers.

Action:

- ★ Through grant, quantify services available and unavailable in all parts of the county.
- ★ Develop survey to accomplish goal.
- ★ Meet immediately with Blandin to discuss survey plans and ask for additions.
- ★ Determine what we should have, what we have, what others want that we have and identify who they are.
- ★ Determine basic needs of prospective recruits into Kandiyohi County.
- ★ Provide assistance to EDC in recruitment efforts as requested.
- ★ In-service small businesses on technology advancements to increase customer services.
- ★ Using broadband grant, develop self-evaluation survey for small businesses.

Goal 2: Infrastructure

- a. Identify and share with elected officials and public policy makers the necessary technological infrastructure to be included in new construction, repairs and improvements to state highways, county roads and city streets, especially in the area of the new Willmar industrial park.

Action:

- ★ Recommend to city and county in the plat review process a notification and opportunity for comment be given to service providers.
- ★ Develop a list of desired technical services for new developments that is reviewed semi-annually.
- ★ Encourage city/county planners to increase easement capacity in addition to utilities to accommodate current and future technical services and suggest joint

trench usage. It is noted that with more underground facilities being provided, congestion may be an issue.

Goal 3: Educational Opportunities

- a. Identify and implement ways to support entrepreneurial efforts in technology by individuals and companies.
- b. Identify and implement ways to attract, retain and support technologically-based educational offerings.

Action:

- ★ Facilitate educational offerings on “how to” for entrepreneurial startups and expansions using the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Ridgewater College and Community Education.
- ★ Assist EDC in the recruitment and retention efforts involving entrepreneurial technological companies.
- ★ Education seminar through Blandin.

Discussion was held about the Technology Showcase action item stated on today’s agenda.

IT WAS MOVED BY Charles Oakes, SECONDED BY Jeff Roiland, to table the technology showcase until 2008. MOTION CARRIED.

It will be removed from 2007 goals action items.

Other. Consensus was to wait to prepare a budget until after the task force initially meets with Blandin on the survey plans. Part of the budget may be to increase the shell survey provided by Blandin.

Renquist will arrange a meeting with Blandin about the *Get Broadband* program. **Renquist** will notify task force members via e-mail of this special meeting. The following will be invited to participate in the *Get Broadband* program:

- ▶ TDS (Ron Nelson) [Spaulding stated they have agreed];
- ▶ Kandiyohi Power Cooperative (**Spaulding** will contact);
- ▶ Xcel;
- ▶ Frontier (**Roiland** will provide a contact name);
- ▶ Clara City Telephone (Bruce Hanson); and
- ▶ RedRed (**Dean Bouta** will provide the contact information).

There was no other unfinished business.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular task force meeting is **7:00 a.m., Friday, February 16, 2007**, at the EDC office.