

**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  
July 13, 2006  
EDC Board Room, Willmar**

Present: Ron Erpelding, Bill Jagow, Charlie Oakes, Mike Nitchals and Jean Spaulding

Staff: Steve Renquist, Executive Director

Excused: Dean Bouta, Diane Schulte and Teri Beyer

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Chairperson, Jean Spaulding, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:14 a.m.

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Charlie Oakes, SECONDED BY Mike Nitchals, to approve the minutes of the June 8, 2006 meeting as mailed or e-mailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Greater Minnesota Technology Showcase.** Steve Renquist provided background on the showcase and the work done to date. The estimate to host such an event is \$200,000 to \$300,000 and the cost for well known speakers is approximately \$65,000 plus expenses. A \$70,000 budget request was made to the boards for the showcase and \$11,000 for the BRE committee. Renquist believes the showcase will not be held in 2007 because of feedback received from board members. The subcommittee would still like to hold the showcase, but it may not happen until 2008. Spaulding questioned how to make the showcase stand out from others to draw attendees. Renquist stated the subcommittee discussed using a theme of "offshore your company without leaving the state of Minnesota." Thomas Friedman was contacted to be the keynote speaker. Bill Jagow questioned whether the boards' viewpoints would change significantly in one year. Mike Nitchals suggested linking a result that could come from the showcase and providing an analysis and take the focus away from funding. Spaulding recommended taking the focus away from mass corporate marketing and using Harlan Jacobs to target the audience and exposure. Renquist stated the EDCOB supports the concept, but possibly on a smaller scale. Renquist provided information on Harlan Jacobs, a consultant from Minneapolis who is working with MinnWest Technology Campus. Nitchals recommended finding another community interested in co-hosting a showcase. The subcommittee will continue to look at options. Charlie Oakes mentioned a conference held by Collin Peterson in the Granite Falls area every other year. **Renquist** will ask Jay Bosch to attend the August committee meeting to report on the showcase.

**Joint Budget Meeting.** Renquist reported the EDC's Joint Powers board established a levy for 2007 of \$455,000 and a total budget not to exceed \$500,000 using reserve funds.

**Detroit Lakes Technology Campus.** Renquist reported speaking with Larry Remmenn, Community Director for Detroit Lakes, who has never heard of a technology campus in the Detroit Lakes area. **Oakes** will see if he can find any information when he is in the Detroit Lakes area. **Nitchals** will contact the utilities general manager in Detroit Lakes.

**MinnWest Technology Campus.** Renquist reported the company has spent millions of dollars in renovating buildings and some companies have started moving onto the campus, including Nova-Tech Engineering. Life-Science Innovations, Inc. has 13 subsidiaries. A new tunnel is being built between buildings. The Administration building was obtained June 1. Renquist and Kathy Schwantes made presentations to several businesses in Minneapolis last week that were referred by Harlan Jacobs and two of those contacts have since toured the campus. A public open house will be held this fall. Erpelding recommended informing others on the progress of the campus and holding small tours for the business community before the public open house. Oakes stated his Rotary Club recently toured the campus. Renquist reported \$25,000 was obtained from the Willmar Development Corporation to retain Harlan Jacobs as a consultant for the campus for one year. Renquist reported he has made presentations to approximately 15 companies, all but one of which are valid companies.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**2006 goals/action plan.** Spaulding recommended the task force assign actions to its 2006 goals (see copy attached to original minutes). Erpelding recommended a subcommittee work on potential action plans and bring them back to the task force. Those present stated goals 2 and 3 could be tied together. The word identify in goal 3 was changed to investigate. **Spaulding** and **Renquist** will discuss how to pursue goals 2 and 3 and move forward and will set up a meeting with Dean Bouta, Jagow, Nitchals, Mel Odens and Bruce Peterson and possibly representatives from Charter, Entel and Qwest. Need to include users, providers and the city of Willmar as the enabler. The task force expressed the need for basic infrastructure must be met and the city of Willmar must deal with congestion in the rights of way. Jagow stated it is hard to recruit individuals in technology to this area from a metro area when cell phone and DSL services are not readily available or accessible and the level of technology is behind. Oakes stated there appears to be a shortage of technology technicians, which he discovered after moving to Willmar from Wadena. It has taken Oakes approximately 18 months to get West Central Industries' technology services upgraded and has been a very difficult and fragmented process. Oakes stated he may need to look at possibly hiring an IT person because it has been difficult to locate a provider. Nitchals stated the Municipal Utilities Commission is approximately the same size as West Central Industries and it has an IT person, but they are more generalists and not specialized. The shortage of technology technicians could relate to goals 1, 4, 5 and 7. Jagow stated there is not a shortage of places to send technicians for training. It was the task force's consensus to complete goals 2 and 3 and then work on the remaining goals. **Task force members** were asked to think of action plans for the goals and bring those ideas to an upcoming meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:20 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next regular committee meeting is **7:00 to 8:00 a.m., Thursday, August 10, 2006**, at the EDC Office, Willmar.