

**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  
August 17, 2007  
EDC Board Room, Willmar**

Present: Dean Bouta, Bill Jagow and Jean Spaulding

Excused: Ron Erpelding, Don McGrath, Charles Oakes, Diane Schulte, David Sisser and Jeff Tengwall

Staff: Steve Renquist, Executive Director

Secretarial: Allison McGeary, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Task Force chairperson, Jean Spaulding, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:05 a.m.

The task force reviewed the minutes of the August 2, 2007 meeting with Blandin Foundation.

**MINUTES**—Action was tabled until the September meeting due to a lack of quorum.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS—**

**Meeting with Bonnema Surveys, Inc.** Steve Renquist reported a G.P.S. map is a possibility from Bonnema Surveys, Inc. A meeting with Bonnema Surveys, Inc. should be set up after the task force has gathered all information from the providers, then Bonnema Surveys, Inc. can electronically compile all of the maps into one map.

**NEW BUSINESS—**

**Review August 2, 2007 meeting with Blandin Foundation**

Goals

1. Increase residential broadband penetration from 45% to 55%
2. Stimulate small business broadband use by 10%
3. Create 20 new business web sites
4. Stimulate investment by existing 20 companies in web/e-marketing tactics.

The draft of Blandin *Get Broadband* Grant Residential Goal/Strategies/Activities, previously distributed (see copy attached to the original minutes), refers to the first goal to increase residential broadband penetration from 45% to 55%.

**Renquist** will work on the goals and strategies for the business side. Goals referenced from the first page of the August 2, 2007 minutes (see copy attached to original minutes) were as follows:

2. Stimulate small businesses to use broadband by 10%
3. Create 20 new business web sites

- a. Sponsor a seminar regarding the need for a website
    - i. Coordinate with the EDC Marketing Committee
    - ii. Press release
  - b. Sponsor 10-20 scholarships matching 50% up to \$500 for creation of a new web site
  - c. Enhancement of existing broadband technology utilization scholarship
- 4 Stimulate investment by 20 existing companies to enhance their web and e-marketing tactics.

**Renquist** will compile a list of implementations that need to be done based on goals above. Discussion was held as to how to implement these goals. Dean Bouta suggested the task force hold a seminar about training on web development and what options are out there and after this seminar have a training session on where and how to get your web page running and another training option for more advanced training on web development. A seminar for businesses with just a static basic web site would be on how to do more e-commerce and how to be on search engines. Bouta also suggests that the task force find local resources on who can do the training and what it would cost and see if the task force could get a grant to pay them for their services. At the August 2, 2007 meeting a task force member thought the training could be done for \$1,000.00. Companies could apply for a grant for 50% up to \$500.00 to create a web page. How does the task force talk to these types of businesses to get them to come to the training sessions? Should the task force partner with the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber, community newsletters, every organization that deals with small businesses for example the Willmar Design Team or Willmar Main Street committee? The key is to identify what the task force needs to put this seminar together so that we don't look like the task force is prioritizing services; this will be hard to do. The task force should coordinate with the EDC Marketing Committee.

The task force discussed hiring a coordinator. Renquist informed the task force it does not have to advertise for this position. At the August 2, 2007 meeting it was agreed upon by the task force to hire a part-time employee using the *Get Broadband* grant money. Bouta suggested spring of 2008 be the coordinator's deadline to meet the task force's goals for the grant. The task force will first have to identify a coordinator and then identify what the steps are and the time frame for these steps to be completed by the coordinator. Spaulding suggests while the task force is waiting on some of these steps they could work on other items, for example working with the EDC Marketing Committee. To prepare some of the work ahead of time was recommended so that when the coordinator is hired, ads are ready to be launched and other items ready to go when the coordinator starts.

**Spaulding** will attend the EDC Marketing Committee meeting on Wednesday, August 22, 2007 to explain what the task force is seeking. A marketing assistant request form was distributed (see copy attached to original minutes). Spaulding believes the task force is not at the stage of filling out the form as the task force is just looking for direction and ideas first from the EDC Marketing Committee. The task force would like ideas on how to promote a seminar, get businesses to think about creation of a web site, enhancing businesses with current web sites from informational to e-commerce and to find out what the most cost-effective way would be to advertise these ideas. The task force would like to know how to plant the seed for the need. Two different aspects to advertising are business and residential. **Renquist** will also attend the EDC Marketing Committee meeting on Wednesday, August 22, 2007.

Spaulding clarified from where the goals given at the August 2, 2007 meeting came. The goal of the *Get Broadband* grant is to increase the amount of broadband use. Every community that utilizes the *Get Broadband* grant has the option of deciding what they want to focus on, whether it is residential, school, commercial or another area. The task force decided to focus on small businesses and residential.

Suggested seminar speakers are someone:

- who has a small business and utilizes the web for their business needs
- like Luke Geiger, who is no longer active in web development so as not to show favoritism to one vendor or another.
- to speak on businesses allowing the consumer to purchase merchandise or services online.
- to speak about what all the government items are that can be done online for businesses and how to do these.

The task force will have to overcome two obstacles: 1) how do we get people to know they have a need to attend and 2) a web site is probably a foreign language to them, it could confuse them more than help them if the task force is not careful. Renquist suggested the task force could have booths outside the seminar for technology vendors.

Spaulding stated the task force needs to talk to the EDC Marketing Committee to determine to whom to market. **Spaulding** will type up a request asking for assistance from the EDC Marketing Committee using the residential and business goals. It was stated the task force needs to start looking for a coordinator and identify a business that does its business by web to speak at seminars and to give the task force information. The task force will also need a list of providers that develop web pages. **LAA**, with the help of **Renquist**, will send an email to the task force asking them to brainstorm on names for a coordinator and business resources for speakers at seminars. **Renquist** will finish the business goals and strategies.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next regular task force meeting is **7:00 to 8:00 a.m., September 21, 2007** at the EDC Office.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 8:05 a.m.