

Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC)
Joint Operations Board (OB)
AGRICULTURE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT (Ag) COMMITTEE
MINUTES
September 18, 2008
Willmar Design Center and EDC Office, Willmar

Present: Glenn Arfstrom, Gordon Behm, Ron Erpelding, Duane Hultgren, Kim Larson, Bob Meyerson, Bruce Reuss, Stan Simon and Rhonda Wulf

Staff: Steve Renquist, Executive Director and Wade Gustafson, Agriculture Specialist

Guests: Dorothy Rosemeier and Donn Winckler

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

Chair Bruce Reuss called the meeting to order at approximately 7:45 a.m.

AGENDA—Chair Reuss asked for changes to the agenda. The topic of livestock supportive was added to the beginning of the agenda.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Bob Meyerson, SECONDED BY Glenn Arfstrom, to approve the Minutes of the July 17, 2008 meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

[Wade Gustafson joined the meeting.]

Livestock Issue. How often this committee reviews where the county is at in its direction in livestock was discussed. Kim Larson stated as background, a BRE survey was done in spring 2005 and within that report, it was noted that in 2002, the county was ranked second in livestock with 104 dairy farms. There are now 97 dairy farms; however, the cow numbers remain about the same due to some increases in herds. In the latest report, the county ranked fourth in livestock production. Kim Larson shared concerns for the need to continue to pay special attention and focus toward the committee's efforts for this county to be livestock supportive. Through personal experience, Kim Larson believes Kandiyohi County is not a livestock supportive county and the process is very cumbersome in Kandiyohi County versus other area counties. Kim Larson stated a recent example is that when their EAW was submitted and was open for public comment, Kim Larson received a letter from Kandiyohi County Zoning. Kim Larson read an email he sent to Nate Hultgren (see copy attached to the original minutes). Kim Larson feels a major stumbling block within this county is there is no flexibility and he feels there needs to be flexibility in every case. Discussion was held about issues that arose with a recent dairy operation. Renquist sees this as an opportunity to move forward with a dairy project in this county that this committee has pursued for some time. Kim Larson encouraged committee members to attend the upcoming tour of a dairy operation in Morris on Monday, September 22, and the Planning Commission meeting at 7 p.m., Monday, October 13, at the Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services building at which the new dairy operation will be discussed. Renquist stated it would be good for committee members to attend these as positive sounding pro Ag people are needed.

Further discussion was held about the new dairy project and flexibility, as well as onsite housing. Kim Larson stated neighbors are not opposing the project. A couple members believe a proactive attitude needs to be developed to promote economic development in a positive manner. Glenn Arfstrom stated this project is an attempt to produce nutritious food and supply economically.

It was suggested that when this new dairy project has been permitted, Kim Larson provide this committee with items he feels were obstacles encountered during the permitting process and a list of suggestions for needed improvements. This committee will review the information to see if the EDC can mitigate potential obstacles for others and talk about when projects come in the future, what can the committee do to have them go as smoothly as possible.

[The agenda was taken out of order.]

[Kim Larson and Duane Hultgren were excused.]

Brokering locally-grown Ag products to food suppliers. Guests Donn Winckler and Dorothy Rosemeier, both members of the Kandiyohi County Sustainable Food Committee (KCSFC), shared information about food supply. Winckler stated they are asking for support to get the word out about local foods and distributed a copy of a recent *West Central Tribune* article (see copy attached to the original minutes). The KCSFC is working on ways to encourage locally-grown foods as it saves on transportation and energy costs. For every \$1 of locally-grown foods sold, \$3 is put back into the local economy. They believe this concept encourages young people interested in farming to get into farming and provides the ability for current farmers to diversify. Dorothy Rosemeier stated Bob Meyerson suggested sometime ago that the committee convene farmers and local food providers to build more of a local system in this area. She inquired if there is something that this committee can cooperatively work with them on or perhaps co-host an event. Rosemeier stated Woodbury County, IA, set up policies to encourage small farmer production of local and organic foods. They shared a special edition of *Woodbury News* (see copy attached to the original minutes). It is believed local foods is the fastest growing food sector now. Meyerson suggested the KCSFC consider writing more articles for the newspaper to build public awareness. Rosemeier invited Wade Gustafson to join the KCSFC, which meets once a month. Rosemeier stated they have found the number one reason why people buy locally-grown foods is to support the local farmer they know for local economic development. The KCSFC has found the infrastructure as a road block for distribution, access and supply as the demand is increasing. They are wondering whether institutions requesting the locally-grown supply could possibly share in the risk. Renquist recommended Gustafson and Renquist move this topic to the front of their job list and help organize a meeting; perhaps after harvest in mid- to late November or December. Reuss sees the KCSFC providing the leadership and this committee providing support and help with contacts. Winckler and Rosemeier thanked this committee.

[Glenn Arfstrom, Dorothy Rosemeier and Donn Winckler were excused.]

Gustafson distributed an article published in the Fall 2008 edition of *Global Corporate Xpansion* (see copy attached to the original minutes) in which Steve Renquist.

PRIORITY INITIATIVES/ACTION PLAN

- a. **Research renewable energy opportunities to sustain and contain costs.** No report.

Marketing Website. Gustafson circulated a copy of the draft web pages (see copy attached to the original minutes) prepared by Nancy Birkeland of LAA. The pages are not visible on www.kandiyohi.com at this time, but will be soon. Meyerson asked that the wind energy effort be changed to note there are two wind energy groups now in existence; LAA will make this change. Gustafson asked committee members to review the information and provide any suggestions or changes to Gustafson, Renquist or LAA. Renquist reported he met with Diane Buzzeo of Marketing Concepts, who will review the EDC's website and offer tips on how to have the site viewed more frequently.

- b. **Position Kandiyohi County to turn wind energy into anhydrous ammonia as a way to store energy.** Reuss stated the Anhydrous Ammonia Subcommittee met September 10, 2008. Reuss reported Fagen is interested in anhydrous ammonia and were bidders on the Morris project with the requirement that Fagen receive intellectual property rights. It is believed a bid has not been let at this time. Reuss reported the subcommittee is waiting to see how Morris responds to its RFP. Fagen has resources to do a feasibility study for this, if they become involved. The subcommittee is waiting to see what happens with Fagen and then hopefully work with them. It may be possible to tie anhydrous ammonia with wind, but it is possible to do one without the other. Reuss suggested Whirlwind Energy LLC and Fagen be involved in a meeting to be held with Representative Collin Peterson after November to talk about anhydrous ammonia, ways it can work with or without wind, tax energy credits and other possible common issues.

- c. **Explore development of a soybean collection or processing facility.** No report.

- d. **Establish a renewable energy commercialization center.** Renquist reported the EDC has been approached by the University of Minnesota about possibly sharing an office position for renewable resource development. Renquist invited a University of Minnesota representative to a meeting of this committee to share their proposal.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Strategic Animal Ag Conference. Gustafson reported the conference will be held the evening of Thursday, January 15, 2009 and all day Friday, January 16, 2009. The conference theme is "The Health of Animal Agriculture." Gustafson distributed "Save the Date" postcards (see copy attached to the original minutes). Jolene Brown is confirmed to speak on farm transition to the next generation Thursday followed by a social hour. Renquist thanked Gustafson, LAA and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for preplanning the conference and the "Save the Date." Hopefully, it will generate additional attendance for this conference.

Morris Tour. Gustafson asked for RSVPs to attend the September 22 tour of a dairy operation located near Morris.

Renville County Economic Development meeting. Gustafson stated he has not received a return call from Renville County Economic Development. Renquist stated the meeting was originally requested by Renville County Economic Development and he will work on this.

International 2008 Bioenergy Days. Renquist circulated a brochure about the International 2008 Bioenergy Days (see copy attached to the original minutes) to be held September 28 through October 3. Renquist noted that September 28-30 in Mankato the EDC will have a booth and asked for volunteers to help staff it September 29 and 30. Renquist stated he, Jean Spaulding and Chris Huisinga of the MinnWest Technology Campus will also be helping. The EDC Ag Committee will pay volunteers for their mileage, hotel room if staying overnight and a modest food allowance. Renquist asked that those interested talk with him, Spaulding or the EDC's administrative assistant.

There was no other unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS—There was no new business.

REPORTS—

Ag Specialist. No additional report.

Wind Energy subcommittee. Meyerson shared some recent activity of Whirlwind Energy LLC, including a small meeting held this week to inform neighbors. Erpelding stated lots of good questions were asked and answered to the best of their knowledge. Gordon Behm reported Lake Country Wind Energy erected their MET tower. Members of the two wind energy groups shared some comments from recent meetings; mostly positive comments were received. Erpelding reported there was a large article in the September 12 edition of the *Star Tribune* about wind energy; it stated the biggest wind turbine in Minnesota is 2.5 megawatt turbines. It was mentioned that with newer technology in Europe, they are developing up to 5 megawatt generators. The EDC could host a webinar; **Meyerson** will forward an email to Renquist about this. Consensus of the committee was to host a webinar relating to wind.

Other. Erpelding thanked Reuss for his knowledge on several matters, i.e., zoning process, wind, anhydrous ammonia and leadership with this committee.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **7:30 a.m., Thursday, November 20, 2008 at the EDC Office, 333 Litchfield Avenue SW, Suite 100, Willmar.** There will be no meeting in October due to harvest.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:10 a.m.