

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)
BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE
TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
September 18, 2009
EDC Office, Willmar

Present: Dean Bouta and Kathy Dillon
Excused: Don McGrath and Jeff Tengwall
Staff: Jean Spaulding, Assistant Director
Secretarial: Jennifer Ebert, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Jean Spaulding called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 a.m.

MINUTES—Approval of the minutes of the June 5, 2009 meeting was tabled until the December 4, 2009 meeting as there was not a quorum.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Members. Spaulding read the names of current members of this Technology Advisory Committee and explained the connections/availability of said members. The committee needs to determine its mission before discussing additional members.

Website grant update. Spaulding reminded the committee there were 17 participants in the website grant program in 2009. Some funds from 2008 were not used in a timely basis resulting in funds being paid to recipients who were ready to move forward with their projects. Looking at the 2010 budget request, the EDCOB feels there are other areas in technology and business retention and expansion/recruitment that may need the money as well. This means the Technology Advisory Committee will not have access to \$8,000 as it did in 2009 and will possibly be working with \$5,000 for 2010. The Willmar Airport is one of the initiatives that has been on the EDC's goals for quite some time waiting for it to be planned and completed. The EDC BRE Committee has a separate group working with the City of Willmar on how to market the airport and will need some funds to do so.

The 2009 program grants will be closed out in December 2009. With Blandin's funding, things get more complicated if one year goes into the next. Overall, completing funding in the budget year is easier for all purposes.

Spaulding feels that if the opportunity for more website grants is advertised, they will be applied for. Dean Bouta suggested having recipients complete a survey as to the outcome of the funds they received and to specify what the grant did to help their company grow. **Spaulding** will work with **staff** to put together a short survey to be emailed to everyone who has completed the grant process and received their funding. This will determine where they are at with their projects as well as determining the value of the grant.

Spaulding will follow up with Blandin on funding sources and will contact Kathy Schwantes at Ridgewater College as far as new grants and opportunities that may be available. **Spaulding** will also check with the schools as far as technology and where they are at to get feedback to bring to the December meeting. At that time the committee will decide on priorities and direction based on dollars

available. Additional membership will be decided based on the priorities. Additional ideas for finding grants and funding were discussed, including possibly hiring a grant writer.

Partnership with Ridgewater College takes a significant amount of time and money and, the committee will need to weigh the value of that with the value of starting this new project. The Ridgewater seminar numbers were not as strong as previous years, which is very well a reflection of the economy. The seminars held at Ridgewater may have been better attended if they had been held at the MinnWest Technology Campus. Dillon reminded the committee of a previous meeting discussion regarding breaking the seminars into shorter segments at different times. They may be better attended if they are not an entire day. **Spaulding** will contact Justin Mattern and Famous Davis to get their input on what they feel are the needs in the community for seminars regarding technology.

NEW BUSINESS—

Smart or Intelligent Communities. Spaulding explained the process to be followed to participate in the Smart or Intelligent Communities program and shared a printout from their website (see copy attached). Blandin is hoping to get four projects from each community with which they partner. They would like different entities, especially government (i.e. city, county, education and healthcare) as primary entities. The role of this committee is to get people to talk about these possibilities. Bouta commented that Willmar has all of the above-mentioned and it is just a time factor and getting people involved. There is a lot of opportunity to share resources. Spaulding is looking for this committee to be a catalyst or convener to find at least four different ideas or projects within the health and/or emergency services fields. Kathy Dillon explained the Willmar Ambulance service is looking for funding technological equipment capable of transmitting EKG readings from the vehicles directly to the hospital so all the information is there by the time the patient arrives. Spaulding shared information she obtained at a conference regarding a website where fire departments can apply online for grants to pay for new equipment. **Spaulding** will provide Dillon with the website link. Discussion was held on whether or not this committee should be the source or vehicle for reaching out and starting something like this as it would take time, money and more volunteers. This will be discussed more at the next meeting.

Spaulding will check with Bill Coleman (Blandin) as he initiated contact with the EDC as a Demonstration Community in a grant being written by Blandin to the United States Department of Agriculture/National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA) for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program. The grant was submitted mid-August and a letter of support was written by the EDC as being interested in the program so we should be notified of the outcome. If the Blandin opportunity is not an option, there are other options available. Senator Amy Klobuchar is strong in pushing federal funds into improving areas of technology and her office may be a source of information. Finances are a major holdup for many entities in advancing technology within organizations. Although there are many grant sources available, it is hard to find ways for them to work for the private sector. Spaulding explained that finding funding for technology is easier for a governmental entity first then filter it down to the private sector.

In preparation for the December meeting, the committee was asked to think about priorities.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:26 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **7:30-9:00 a.m., Friday, December 4, 2009** at the EDC office.