

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)  
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB) MEETING  
MINUTES  
June 8, 2017  
EDC Office, Willmar**

Present: Art Benson, Rollie Boll, Donna Boonstra, Robert Carlson, Les Heitke and Kelly TerWisscha

Ex Officio: Bruce Peterson and Roger Imdieke

Excused: Gary Gilman

Guest: Betsy Bonnema, REDstar Creative/WORKUP

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director and Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

Media: Carolyn Lange, West Central Tribune

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

President Donna Boonstra called the meeting to order at approximately 11:02 a.m.

**AGENDA**—Added to the Agenda under New Business was County Tourism Development Account.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Boll, SECONDED BY Bob Carlson, to approve the revised Agenda and the Consent Agenda. MOTION CARRIED.

**CONSENT AGENDA**—

- Approve:
1. Minutes of May 11, 2017 meeting
  2. Financial reports as of May 31, 2017
  3. Payment of bills:
    - a. \$1,050 to LDMarketing as budgeted for facilitating the boards' planning session
  4. Removal of Ashley Queenan from the Marketing and Public Relations Committee
- Accept:
- Committee/Subcommittee Minutes
    1. Broadband and Advanced Technology 5/1/2017
    2. Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment 3/17/2017
    3. Finance 3/14/2017

## PROGRESS REPORTS

**REDstar Creative/WORKUP.** Aaron Backman reviewed marketing materials completed by REDstar Creative for the EDC and noted REDstar Creative is a loan recipient under the EDC's Revolving Loan Fund Program. Betsy Bonnema thanked the board for the collaborative support offered to REDstar Creative and WORKUP. Bonnema provided information on her business REDstar Creative, a marketing agency started in 1990 and WORKUP, a coworking space. A program through WORKUP is STARTUP Boot Camp, which focuses on teaching, collaborating and supporting entrepreneurs and businesses. STARTUP Boot Camps are 17 hours in length and offered as either a week-long session of 3.5 hours each day plus homework or a weekend from Friday noon through Sunday noon and open to three to four companies at a time at a cost of \$1,250. Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) offers a scholarship for the program and pays up to one-half of the fee plus Bonnema barter with the attendees for services. Boot Camps are generally held every other month. Bonnema distributed a list of past STARTUP Boot Camp participants (see attached). Bonnema invited the EDC's board to WORKUP's pitch night at 6:00 p.m., June 20, where four to five STARTUP participants practice pitching their companies using concepts learned during Boot Camp and the audience offers support, feedback and assistance.

**Willmar/Willmar Industrial Park.** Bruce Peterson reported the Willmar City Council approved the Business Subsidy Agreement for GM Development and land sale and Business Subsidy Agreement for Buhler. Buhler plans to hire 35 new manufacturing positions. The City Council also gave preliminary approval for the 47-unit housing project proposed by Commonwealth Development. The project will include two-story apartment units in the four-story building. Peterson and Backman met with a potential developer for a First Street project in the downtown Willmar area and with a business on a potential use of space at the MinnWest Technology Campus (MWTC). Peterson received information on a proposed Highway 23 project; finalized grants for the Willmar Airport; and received plans for the three-unit strip center on the Kandi Mall property. Peterson met with the Kandi Mall on expanding allowable uses of the mall. The City is also working intently on its five-year capital improvement program and potential changes to the land write-down policy for the Willmar Industrial Park.

**Business Retention and Expansion Grant for Diverse Businesses.** Backman reported in the last month he did site visits with eight diverse businesses. He has visited a total of 15 out of the required 16 businesses to date. The goal is to complete the site visits this month and provide a written report to SWIF. Some business owners have been hesitant to speak with him and with some Somali businesses he has used an interpreter. Some Latino businesses have been in business more than ten years and Somali businesses are generally under ten years. A great majority of the business owners like Willmar and feel welcome. The nine Somali businesses removed from the Centre Point Mall when the property was sold are remembered by the Somali community, but they generally are moving forward with their businesses.

**Highway 23 Coalition.** Backman reported Governor Dayton signed the Transportation Bill, which included \$300 million for Corridors of Commerce and may help get funding to complete the Highway 23 gaps. A Coalition meeting was held May 18<sup>th</sup> in New London with approximately 30 attending, including representatives from Stearns County. The consensus of the attendees was to formalize the coalition. The officers elected were Bob Mathiasen, chair; Jeff Thompson, vice chair; Backman, secretary/treasurer and Bob Dols, past chair. An Executive Committee meeting was held

this morning. The consensus is to look at a corridor from Marshall to I-94 with the primary focus being to complete the two gaps between New London and Richmond. The Bonding Bill had a couple of sections that were favorable to the Willmar area. The Master Agreement for the Wye project is getting close to being completed with construction to begin next spring. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) will be making decisions on projects for its funding. Roger Imdieke stated MnDOT's Local Road Improvement Program funds can be used outside the Wye project area. The Highway 23 Coalition will need to make a case to MnDOT for funding as other corridors will also be requesting funds. Imdieke reported a traffic safety survey is being done on Highway 23 at the intersections of Highway 9, County Road 40 and 153<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. Backman stated a TED (Transportation Economic Development) grant meeting will be held June 20<sup>th</sup> at MnDOT's District 8 office from 1-3 p.m.

**Business Visits and Meetings.** Backman reported he attended the Willmar Airport Master Plan meeting; an update meeting with MWTC and the Wye design build meeting. Backman gave a presentation to the Stearns County Municipal League in Kimball on collaboration. He and Peterson met with the owner of Commonwealth Development about the direction of the housing project. Backman was on Open Mic; toured a business prospect in Dassel; attended a meeting on a possible development on First Street property; and attended a pre-application visit with Minnesota Housing Finance Agency with Commonwealth Development and the HRA. He has been assisting the owner of the Spurs restaurant; met with the Kandi Mall and the Mid-Town Plaza project; and toured the city with Ike Holland. Connie Schmoll reported the afternoon session with the Pakistani business people was very good; they were interested in ag. She helped with the Destination Playground build and toured a Dassel ag business, DRYMAX Solutions, which has developed a method for drying corn with radio waves rather than propane. She also met with a possible aeroponics franchise business that may locate in New London; assisted a business that purchased the old Schwartz building; and toured the Hampton Inn in Spicer, which is booked for the summer. The majority of Schmoll's time has been spent on the broadband project and the Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development Committee.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**—There was no unfinished business.

**NEW BUSINESS**—

**Commonwealth Development 15<sup>th</sup> Street Flats.** Backman reported Commonwealth Development's housing project will be built on 15<sup>th</sup> Street next to the Pizza Ranch. The project will be privately-owned rental housing and hopefully will be built in 2018. Commonwealth Development will apply for federal tax credits next week. The project will include 47 units, some of which will be accessible and some will have two levels with three bedrooms.

**County Tourism Development Account.** Backman reported the county was awarded the 2018 Governor's Fishing Opener, which costs approximately \$350,000 to host. Backman suggested some of the funds in the Tourism Development Account be used to sponsor the fishing opener. The account was established in 1992 and was initially intended for building a tourism information center. Use of the funds must be approved by the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners and can only be used for tourism-related activities. The EDC's auditor has recommended spending the

funds. Backman suggested the following uses of the funds: sponsor the 2018 Governor's Fishing Opener at the silver (Walleye) level for \$5,000; creation and installation of bike signs in Willmar, New London and Spicer at \$978 per sign; or redo the billboard on the north end of Kandiyohi County at a potential cost of \$1,800. Board members questioned why the auditor is recommending the funds be spent. Kelly TerWisscha asked if any promotion is done for kayak routes in the county. Imdieke stated Kandiyohi County does have a water trail, but it is not marketed or marked well. Board members suggested the water trail be explored as it would be a new use for the tourism funds.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development.** Schmoll reported the committee is responding to the results of the Ag Producer BRE Report and is hosting a Speak for Agriculture Workshop on June 19, 2017 (see attached). The ag flyer is being finalized and will be printed for use at tradeshow. The committee would like to consider doing a feasibility study on a new industry. The committee will have a guest speaker at its next meeting on industrial hemp. Schmoll is creating a summary of the Ag Producer BRE Report to present to local groups. Schmoll is also working with the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce's (WLACC) Agri Business Committee. Dairy Days is this week and the committee is serving at the Cash Wise tent at 1:30 tomorrow and an open house will be held at Youngren Dairy Farms June 10. WLACC's Aggie Open golf tournament is June 26, 2017 at Island Pine Golf Course. Schmoll stated West Central Ag Sales is deciding whether to hold another Ag Show and the Ag Committee is visiting West Central Bait today to tour its shrimp production.

**Broadband and Advanced Technology.** Schmoll reported the Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee continues to sign up users in the broadband grant area. Currently, 580 have registered. Consolidated Telecommunications Company (CTC) must sign the grant agreement with the State of Minnesota by July 1. Imdieke spoke with an individual in Westland Park, who is willing to champion her neighborhood and told him that CTC's marketing materials have been very confusing. Schmoll stated door knocking and personal contacts have been the most effective in getting people to sign up. Local marketing has included paid radio ads by Kandiyohi County and the EDC; live radio shows; and attending Lake Association meetings. It was noted the *West Central Tribune* had an article in yesterday's newspaper and an editorial in today's paper. Schmoll will attend upcoming Lake Association meetings and will send an email to those who have registered requesting they pay the \$25 deposit. It was noted that communication from the EDC has been much more effective than CTC's marketing. Schmoll stated CTC has been dropping off door signs, but has had little response to their efforts.

**Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment.** Backman showed a proposed floor plan for the Spurs restaurant in Historic 313. Progress is being made, but no opening date has been set. The owner applied for and received approval from the City of Willmar for outside seating.

**Marketing and Public Relations.** Schmoll reported the Marketing and Public Relations Committee welcomed Melissa Knott as a new member. The committee reviewed a social media marketing plan and is contemplating placing an ad in the *Thriving in the North* magazine published by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) office. The EDC has

had an ad on the inside back cover of the publication for the past two years. DEED distributes 12,500 copies of the magazine to communities, industry sectors and at tradeshow.

[Bob Carlson was excused from the meeting.]

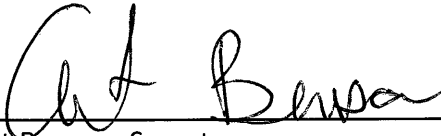
The committee recommended a vertical half page ad be placed, however, the cost is \$4,255 and Backman is not convinced the cost is worth it. Board members suggested trying other marketing avenues, including social media.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next board meeting is **11:00 a.m., Thursday, July 13, 2017**, at the EDC Office, Willmar.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business,

IT WAS MOVED AND SECONDED to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:53 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Art Benson, Secretary

APPROVED: 7/13/2017:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Donna Boonstra, President

STARTUP Bootcamp Participants	Type of Business	Age at Workshop	Location
1. <b>CORE Trailers</b>	Patented Panel System / Manufacturing	2 years	Litchfield
2. <b>DI Labs</b>	Engineering / Product Development / 3D Printing	4 years	Spicer
3. <b>Geistwerks</b>	Custom Camping Tractor / Manufacturing	Starting	New London
4. <b>Headstands Everywhere</b>	Yoga Class, Workshops & Events	Starting	Willmar
5. <b>Precision Windings</b>	Custom Built Windings Technology	Starting	Montevideo
6. <b>Fladeboe Auctions</b>	Land Sales, Auctions & Consulting	30+ years	Willmar
7. <b>Seager</b>	Software IOT	Soon	Willmar
8. <b>Ridgewater College</b>	Post Secondary Education	30+ years	Willmar & Hutch
10. <b>Greenwater Garage</b>	Retail / Art Workshops / Consulting	5 years	New London
11. <b>WORKUP</b>	Coworking Space / Meetings / Events	2 years	Willmar
12. <b>MWTC</b>	Business Campus	8+ years	Willmar
13. <b>Delano Bats</b>	Custom Manufactured Wood Baseball Bats	2 years	Delano
14. <b>Fit by Mandy</b>	Fitness & Wellness Coaching / Online Community	Starting	Willmar
15. <b>Vantage Point Marketing</b>	Marketing Consultants	2 years	Morgan
16. <b>K. Madsen Consulting</b>	Training / Leadership Development / Coaching	Starting	Willmar
17. <b>Moxie</b>	Movement & Mindfulness for Education	Starting	Willmar/Mpls
18. <b>B. VanDerBill Consulting</b>	Marketing Consultant	Starting	Willmar
19. <b>Nova-Tech Engineering</b>	Animal Ag Technology	15+ years	Willmar
20. <b>Southwest Initiative Foundation</b>	Community Foundation	30+ years	Hutchinson
21. <b>Dawn Gilman</b>	Personal & Business Wellnes	Starting	Tassel
22. <b>Stage One Marketing</b>	Digital Marketing for Golf Courses	Starting	New London
23. <b>Vela Strategy</b>	Non-profit Consulting	2 years	Willmar
24. <b>Talking Waters Brewing Co.</b>	Craft Beer	2 years	Montevideo

# SPEAK FOR AGRICULTURE WORKSHOP



This interactive session will talk you through how to have tough conversations with consumers about topics relating to agriculture while providing the information and resources to back up what you believe! Agriculture topics can be volatile, but keeping your cool and keeping the conversation values based and factual will help you make a true difference in others' opinions about production agriculture. We will discuss how all farmers, processors and support businesses for agriculture need to tell their story! Your story is easier than you think to tell others! By the end of this workshop, you will be ready!

## Presenter

### Natasha Mortenson

Senior Mentor

Agricultural Education, Communication and Marketing  
University of Minnesota

Natasha Mortenson grew up on a small crop farm in West Central Minnesota. Currently, Natasha lives in rural Swift County, along with her husband Matt and two children, Grace and Cowan. Her involvement in FFA and 4-H all through her childhood ignited an interest in working in agriculture. She graduated from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities with her B.S. and M.A. in Agricultural Education. She taught Agriculture and advised FFA Programming for 14 years in Morris, MN. In May 2014, Natasha began her work with Riverview LLP, in Morris, MN. She works with Community Relations in the communities that Riverview touches geographically, promotes agriculture everywhere she is able, and works with youth to build enthusiasm for agriculture.



SPONSORED BY THE EDC  
AGRICULTURE &  
RENEWABLE ENERGY  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

JUNE 19, 2017

12 NOON-1:30 P.M.

COMMUNITY ROOM  
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