

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)  
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB) MEETING  
MINUTES  
July 8, 2021  
Community Room, Heritage Bank, Willmar**

Present: Art Benson, Rollie Boll, Donna Boonstra, Jesse Gislason, Les Heitke and Kelly TerWisscha

Ex Officio: Julie Asmus

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director and Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Excused: Dave Ramstad

Media: Shelby Lindrud, West Central Tribune

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

President Kelly TerWisscha called the meeting to order at approximately 11:05 a.m. and declared a quorum was present.

**AGENDA**—Added to the Agenda under New Business was item 2, Amend 2021 Budget and add to the 2022 Budget a Technology Maintenance Contract.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Boll, SECONDED BY Jesse Gislason, to approve the revised Agenda and following Consent Agenda. MOTION CARRIED.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- Approve: 1. Minutes of June 10, 2021 meeting  
2. Financial reports as of June 30, 2021, subject to audit
- Accept: Committee/Subcommittee Minutes
1. Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development 5/20/2021
  2. Broadband and Advanced Technology 6/7/2021
  3. Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment (BRE) 6/4/2021
  4. Finance 5/11/2021
  5. Marketing and Public Relations 5/24/2021
- Committee member resignations/additions
1. Resignation of Les Nelson from the BRE and Finance Committees
  2. Addition of Liz Dyrdal to the Marketing and Public Relations Committee

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**Executive Director's Annual Review.** President TerWisscha reported the task force is meeting this afternoon to review the compilation of board member responses and will meet with Aaron Backman next Thursday.

## NEW BUSINESS

**Employee Handbook Changes.** Backman reminded the board that the Marketing and Communications Specialist position was approved at the last meeting. Thus, he recommends the Employee Handbook be revised relative to the definition of a full-time employee and as to health insurance benefits.

[Les Heitke joined the meeting.]

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll, to approve the following changes to Section IV, Personnel, in the Employee Handbook:

A. **DEFINITIONS.**

4. **Full-time Employee** means an employee who works at least ~~40~~ **32 or more** hours per week on a regular basis.
8. **Hourly Rate of Pay** means an employee's annual salary divided by 2080 hours **(if 40 hours per week) or 1664 hours (if 32 hours per week)** and rounded to the nearest whole cent.

I. **EMPLOYEE INSURANCE.**

1. Employees working ~~40~~ **32** hours or more per week shall be provided group medical insurance. The EDC will pay a percentage of the premium for single coverage for the employee as determined annually. An employee may at his/her option purchase additional or dependent coverage through payroll deductions. Temporary full-time employees shall not receive health coverage.

MOTION CARRIED.

**Amend 2021 Budget and Add Technology Maintenance Contract to 2022 Budget.** Backman informed the board a Maintenance Agreement was entered into with Bennett Office Technologies for regular maintenance of the EDC's server and individual computers, which increases expenses by \$395 per month. Backman noted there will be no change to the total expenses for 2021. President TerWisscha asked that the EDC's insurance policy be reviewed as to cybersecurity coverage.

IT WAS MOVED BY Les Heitke, SECONDED BY Jesse Gislason, to approve adding \$2,100 to the 2021 budget under Office Expenses/Equipment Maintenance and

Rental/Technology Maintenance Contract and \$4,200 to the 2022 budget.

MOTION CARRIED.

## REPORTS

**Willmar/Willmar Industrial Park.** Backman reported diagrams of the building for the logistics company have been received, as well as a signed letter of intent. A Purchase Agreement is being negotiated and an additional 6.3 acres of unplatted land in the Willmar Industrial Park is being included in the negotiations and is being surveyed. He continues to work on the bioenergy project and a signed letter of intent and Part 77 map (regarding proposed construction in navigable airspace) have been received. The Phase I Environmental survey this board approved last month has been completed and submitted to the developer and the City of Willmar will reimburse the EDC for the cost. Asmus questioned if there will be public input allowed as to the type of business. Sarah Swedburg stated it may require a Conditional Use Permit for landowners in the area and it will require city approval as to the city's land so the public could express their opinion at that time.

[Art Benson joined the meeting.]

Lumber One is progressing with its Block 25 Lofts, a \$10 million investment and the first major project in Willmar's Renaissance Zone. Lumber One also purchased the private property to the east. The Willmar Planning Commission unanimously approved a Conditional Use Permit. The project will have 57 apartment units with 70 parking stalls at ground level. Available parking downtown was discussed and it was noted there is enough public parking available downtown.

Swedburg reported Chaw's Asian Market is moving forward with its redevelopment of the former Jerry's Liquor building and is awaiting arrival of equipment. The EDC closed its loan to Chaw's. The City Planning Commission also approved the new location for Amin Grocery on Litchfield Avenue. Swedburg reported the City of Willmar has started discussions with Bolton & Menk relative to streetscape improvements, such as sidewalks, bumpouts and street lights. The downtown art sculpture is anticipated to be done soon.

**Elevate.** Swedburg reported plans have started for a fall Elevate class and she is working on reserving locations. Hybrid classes will be from 5:30-8:30 p.m. from September 16 through December 9, 2021 with Thanksgiving week off. All marketing materials should be done by next Friday. With this class, the EDC will be seeking investors for the program; however, Backman believes Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) will continue to offer some financial support. Swedburg noted the first graduation was held June 16 with over 50 people in attendance. A front-page article was printed in the *West Central Tribune* and Pioneer PBS did a video. Swedburg has started her training to be an instructor. The program is very focused and hands-on for new entrepreneurs or those who are already in business, but looking for additional knowledge. Heitke commented the graduation was very well done. Following the newspaper article, Swedburg noted the EDC has been contacted by local business people willing to provide technical support. Benson suggested this program may attract new types of businesses to the area.

**Township Broadband Projects.** Swedburg reported the state allocated \$70 million for broadband over the next biennium; no policy changes were made. Connie Schmoll continues to work with the four townships and will be mailing informational material to the residents soon. She is also working on an NTIA (National Telecommunications and Information Administration) grant for Norway Lake, Lake Andrew and Colfax Townships with Federated Telephone Cooperative. NTIA is a federal grant that covers 90% of a project with 10% being paid by the provider or cost shared with property owners. Federated is calculating the cost of this new project. Public meetings have been scheduled for the townships. The City of Prinsburg is also looking at doing a project in conjunction with Community Christian School. Kandiyohi County is very supportive of 70-75% of its ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds being allocated for broadband projects and approved funds for the state Border-to-Border Grant. The EDC has notified the townships they must apply for the ARPA funds.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development.** Swedburg is working on finding speakers to give presentations to the committee. Marketing is being done for the July 29 Partners in Ag Innovation Conference. At the June meeting, Justice Walker of Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) gave a presentation on halal meat production. He will be doing a study on supply and demand. At present, most halal meat is imported into the county. Benson stated Kandiyohi County is the first county in the state to join a national conservation program to plant milkweed to maintain Monarch butterfly habitat. The board discussed local crops and the availability of building materials.

**Broadband and Advanced Technology.** There was no additional report.

**Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment.** Backman reported two subcommittees were formed—Workforce Development, which will meet tomorrow at 11 a.m. at Ridgewater College and Business Support, which will meet July 23 at the EDC.

**Finance.** Swedburg provided information on loan applicant Amin Grocery. The EDC was approached by the Co-Op Credit Union to do a loan guaranty, but when the committee met, it recommended approval of a Revolving Loan Fund loan. The Co-Op Credit Union is providing a \$120,000 loan for the building and will hold a first mortgage. SWIF is also providing funding and technical assistance.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Boll, SECONDED BY Art Benson, to approve the Finance Committee's recommendation to do a 10-year \$45,000.00 loan to Amin Grocery, LLC under the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Revolving Loan Fund Program at 4.5% interest, subject to a second mortgage in the real estate and building and contingent upon receiving funding from the Co-Op Credit Union and Southwest Initiative Foundation. MOTION CARRIED.

**Marketing and Public Relations.** Backman reported the EDC's trifold brochure has been updated and is being printed. Swedburg noted the updates that were made. Swedburg will be

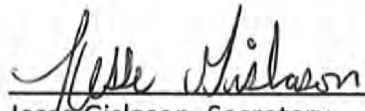
attending a site selector conference next week in Detroit, Michigan, and will bring with her the updated brochure.

**Leisure Travel.** Backman believes the Willmar Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau is down about 30% in lodging tax receipts. Events have been increasing at the Willmar Conference Center. Benson reported lodging reservations are down, but events that were cancelled last year are happening this year.


**WHAT'S UP?** Boll reported the Kandiyohi County Fair will be held August 11-14. President TerWisscha reported his company is working with Simply Shrimp on converting a building into a hatchery. Abdullahi Awale showed appreciation for the board's approval of the loan to Amin Grocery. Heitke reported earth is being moved at the Flags of Honor; pavers can still be purchased; and the project will be completed this fall. Gislason reported the City of Spicer is working on its comprehensive plan with the assistance of Justice Walker of MMDC; the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration in Spicer went well; and Spicer is looking for a new City Administrator. Boonstra reported she has five remodel projects going; the Highway 23 Coalition is installing six signs, "4 Lanes 4 You," along the corridor; buildings are being moved for the north gap project. Asmus reported the bridge on Highway 40 is open; Willmar Fests was a great success; the City of Willmar held a groundbreaking for the event center; a groundbreaking will be held July 14<sup>th</sup> at Swansson Field; and Rockin' Robbins starts July 13<sup>th</sup>.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next board meeting is **11:00 a.m., Thursday, August 12, 2021** at the Community Room of Heritage Bank, Willmar and via Zoom.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.

  
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Jesse Gislason, Secretary

APPROVED: 8/12/2021:

  
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Kelly TerWisscha, President