

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
January 25, 2016
WORKUP, Willmar

Present: Donna Boonstra, Shari Courtney, Jean Geselius, Sarah Isdal, Ann Winge Johnson, Mike Negen and Julie Redepenning

Excused: Caroline Chan and Heather Koffler

Absent: Lindsey Donner

Guests: Barb Abrams and Jayme Sczublewski

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

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

Connie Schmoll called the meeting to order at approximately 12:04 p.m. Added to the agenda under New Business was item c. Job Fair.

MINUTES—The December 28, 2015 minutes will be corrected to include Sarah Isdal as being present.

IT WAS MOVED BY Julie Redepenning, SECONDED BY Shari Courtney, to approve the minutes of the November 23, 2015 meeting as emailed and the corrected minutes of the December 28, 2015 meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Website. Schmoll reported the EDC's new website is live. Donna Boonstra informed the committee that a candidate for the EDC's Executive Director position suggested the EDC review Hutchinson's website as to items missing from the EDC's website that should maybe be included. Comments on the EDC's new site included:

- add links on the Willmar Industrial Park page;
- remove extra information under each community as to utilities, etc.;
- the links under SCORE do not work;
- a new map was added to the home page and to the Cities page;
- need to add a regional map to the Data page for population;
- add information to the Major Employers page that the information provided is the top 15 employers according to Reference USA;

- move the Major Employers information from the Industry section to the Business section; and
- email Julie Redepenning with any additional information on local employers.

2015 MARKETING PLAN PROJECTS

Newsletter insert. Schmoll stated Amy Doyle of the West Central Tribune suggested the EDC's insert be published the first Tuesday of the month when the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce has its section in the paper. The following comments were made as to the draft insert (see attached):

- Redepenning stated she was unable to read the italicized headings on the special sections and suggested a different font be used
- eliminate all end-of-line hyphenations or minimize them as much as possible

Page 1

- change title from "New Coworking Space Opens" to "EDC Advocates for Coworking"
- remove the block regarding Bemidji
- remove LinkedIn as the EDC does not have a LinkedIn page

Page 2

- second paragraph, change conflicting 10 megabits per second download and 3 megabits per second upload speed and replace with state measure of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload
- third paragraph, third sentence, change "Physicians, new graduates and other professionals" to "Professionals, graduates and entrepreneurs"

Page 3

- remove 3 Ways to Save Money box and replace with test your broadband speed
- add school buses and change public buses to Central Community Transit
- spell out TIGER in the box and Wye should be consistent in being in initial caps

Last page

- remove LinkedIn reference

Schmoll noted Rambow and Jennie-O were featured in the last newsletter, but it was felt the information gives an update on those projects so they can be left in the insert. Any other changes should be directed to Jayme Sczublewski.

The committee reviewed the information provided by the West Central Tribune as to its circulation zones and costs. Isdal noted the West Central Tribune is working on sorting by zip code rather than by zone. Schmoll indicated Amy Doyle, the EDC's sale representative at the West Central Tribune is interested in attending a future committee meeting. As to the zones, Julie Redepenning sees growth in the Dassel/Cokato area and along the Highway 12 corridor between Benson and Willmar. The committee recommended obtaining bids from local printers and proceeding with the low bid. The first printing is a four-page insert and subsequent printings will be one page. It was noted some local printers may not use the type of paper Betsy Bonnema suggests. For the next newsletter, it was suggested to do a call to

action so the EDC can track who is responding and from what circulation zone. Schmoll will confirm the deadline to get the insert to the West Central Tribune, but believes they need it by February 1 or 2.

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY Ann Winge Johnson, to publish the four-page insert for the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission in the *West Central Tribune* and include it in the entire circulation of 12,348. MOTION CARRIED.

Chamber ADvantage. Sczublewski showed the flyer created to promote the EDC's new website, which will be included in the February 1 Chamber ADvantage (see attached). It was suggested to do one-page newsletters in upcoming Chamber ADvantage mailings. The next ADvantage insert could introduce the new Executive Director. This will be determined at next month's meeting.

Job Fair. Redepenning announced the annual Job Fair will be held March 22, 2016. Historically, the EDC has done the promotional materials for the Job Fair. REDstar Creative is updating the marketing materials, including the EDC's logo and was also asked to look at changing the Job Fair photo to a more broad-based culturally-diverse photo.

2016 Marketing Plan. Updating the Marketing Plan will be placed on next month's agenda.

Other. Sczublewski announced TEDxWillmarLive will be held February 16, 2016. Tickets are limited so everyone is encouraged to sign up early. Schmoll noted the EDC will sponsor TEDxWillmarLive for \$500.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:13 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is 12 noon, Monday, February 22, 2016 at the EDC Board Room, 222 20th Street SE, Willmar.



NEW COWORKING SPACE OPENS

ADVOCACY
RETENTION
EXPANSION
MARKETING

In its quest to be a catalyst for economic growth in the greater Kandiyohi County area, the EDC was one of the first backers of WORKUP, a new coworking space on the MinnWest Technology Campus.

Coworking is work and meeting space shared by a community of individuals. It's a movement that's catching on around the world, thanks in part to the growing number of freelancers, independent contractors and entrepreneurs. In fact, by 2020, those individuals will account for 40% of the workforce in the United States, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Several factors go into a successful coworking space: a love for the community, a love of work, a culture of learning, a diverse membership and a great space to make it all happen. WORKUP has all five.

WORKUP owner Betsy Bonnema says the advocacy of the EDC has been invaluable in getting the business off and running.

"The EDC has been an incredible source of support and help in starting WORKUP. In fact, I'm not sure we would be here without them. They not only approved a low interest loan to help with startup expenses, but have been advocates and active participants in the success of our launch!"

- Betsy Bonnema



New Executive Director Named

You'll be seeing a new face around the EDC offices very soon. The search for a new Executive Director is over. Aaron Backman, currently the Executive Director of the Economic Development Authority of Windom, MN, has accepted the position. He will begin on February 24.



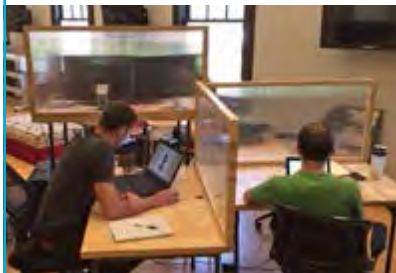
Aaron Backman

A huge thanks to retired director, Steve Renquist, who graciously agreed to continue his advocacy for economic development while the search was underway.



Photo credit: WLA Chamber of Commerce

The 4,200 square foot cottage that WORKUP occupies was built in the early 1900s and still has many of its original features. It now also boasts a modern design with funky furniture, cutting edge technology, conference space, a kitchen, coffee bar, and unique work and meeting spaces.



But it isn't just about the building. To promote a culture of learning, WORKUP offers its members numerous networking opportunities along with the area business community to take part in workshops, classes and roundtable discussions. The EDC contributes to those training opportunities whenever possible.

One of the goals of the EDC is to increase business development at the MinnWest Technology Campus. WORKUP is not only a result of that goal, the coworking space is also doing its part to bring businesses in, and then keep them in the area once they're established. If a start-up company utilizing WORKUP grows and needs to expand into its own office space, they don't have to leave the campus, but can work with MinnWest to create their own unique space in another historic building on the more than 100-acre campus. WORKUP is also a member of the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce. For more information about WORKUP and coworking opportunities, visit workup.cc.



website | www.kandiyohi.com
email | edc@kandiyohi.com
twitter | [@KandiWillmarEDC](https://twitter.com/KandiWillmarEDC)
find us on facebook & linkedin



A Neighbor's Story: Bemidji

How important is coworking to economic development? So important, that the Bemidji area EDC, Greater Bemidji, Inc., owns its own coworking space that opened in May of 2015. The space is called LaunchPad and is designed to be just that - an innovative way to get startups off the ground and provide cutting edge space for freelancers and entrepreneurs. For more information, visit launchpadbemidji.com.





BROADBAND: THE NEW CORE UTILITY

It's this year's hot button topic and being touted as the new core utility, just as important as water and electricity. But what exactly is broadband and why is it so important to so many people?

In a nutshell, broadband is high-speed Internet, usually via fiber optic cables. New technology is always on the horizon, but most experts agree that fiber is still the best option for broadband. Broadband offers high speed download and upload capabilities. Download speeds are important to most home users, but upload speeds are equally important, especially for those in the field of agriculture technology. Current industry standards for download speeds are 10 megabits per second and 3 megabits per second for upload speeds.



What does this mean for Kandiyohi County as a whole? There is a huge need for broadband countywide. It is a key component in economic development, both in bringing new business to the area, and also in keeping businesses here long-term. Physicians, new graduates and other professionals who want to live in the lakes area and work remotely need broadband. In some cases, precision ag specialists currently have to drive into city limits to process farm data. Rural business managers are reporting

difficulty in accessing email, online videos and online marketing opportunities. The list goes on.

What does the immediate future hold? The EDC has been working on the broadband issue for years and is currently in talks with various providers who agree the need is great. One interested party would provide broadband speeds of 1 gigabyte per second for both download and upload, well above industry standards.

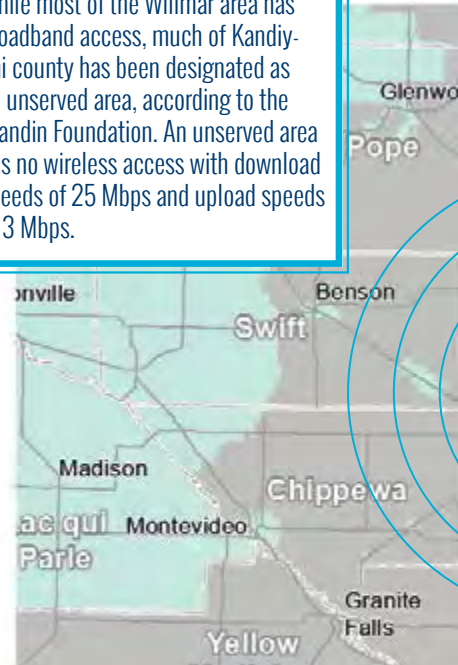


\$62,500 has been secured to do a feasibility study in Kandiyohi County. The Blandin Foundation recently awarded the EDC a \$25,000 grant and the county will supply another \$25,000 in matching funds. Federated Telephone Cooperative offered \$12,500 for the study as well. It will take three to six months to complete and is a necessary step before applying for money from Minnesota's Border to Border Broadband Program. That grant application must be submitted by an Internet provider, not the county or the EDC, which makes the study an important component. It will give the providers the information they need in the application process.

Representative Dave Baker is not only pushing for more grant money to be freed up at the state level, but is taking his message to the streets in an effort to drum up support. "I have held a few listening sessions this summer with businesses, local farmers and residents and had the Speaker of the House join with me to hear local concerns," Baker said. "We can't lose more residents and businesses to higher populated areas because the Internet is 'too slow.'"

Kandiyohi County is Designated as an Unserved Area

While most of the Willmar area has broadband access, much of Kandiyohi county has been designated as an unserved area, according to the Blandin Foundation. An unserved area has no wireless access with download speeds of 25 Mbps and upload speeds of 3 Mbps.



Broadband in the News

The Minnesota Broadband Task Force met in January and finalized its recommendations to the Governor. The two hottest topics? Funding and speeds. The recommendations include \$200 million over two years for broadband funding and universal access and high speeds (25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload) for all Minnesota businesses, homes and institutions, including public schools, colleges and universities no later than 2022.

(Source: Blandin on Broadband)

Check out our **NEW** website:

The EDC has a new look online! Visit www.kandiyohi.com to see our new website, complete with the latest demographics and business stats, searchable databases for buildings and property, and the latest news on economic development in Kandiyohi County.



3 Ways to Save Money Using Broadband

- 1 Food** -- Using coupon sites like www.couponmom.com and www.coupons.com, you could save more than \$1000 annually on groceries.
- 2 Bill Pay** -- Save more than \$40 every year on postage by using an online bill pay service.
- 3 Entertainment** -- Using apps like Groupon and Living Social, you can cut the cost of eating out, concerts tickets and leisure activities. Another savings avenue is using a streaming service like Netflix. Estimated annual savings is more than \$3,400.

For more ideas on how to put broadband to work for you, visit www.internetinnovation.org/savings.



The Blandin Foundation - Who are they?

Established in 1941, the Blandin Foundation is headquartered in Grand Rapids, Minnesota and addresses issues in rural communities in an effort to enhance economic viability and quality of life. One focus of the foundation is the Blandin Community Broadband Program. The goal is to increase rural broadband access and use, which will ultimately enrich the quality of life for residents in rural areas and boost economic development.



The Blandin Foundation and Kandiyohi County

Kandiyohi County has already benefited from grant money from the Blandin Foundation. In July of 2015, they awarded a \$17,680 grant to create Wi-Fi access points on public buses, the Growmobile and at the Willmar Civic Center. Another \$10,000 grant provided funds for the Hack:0 conference at WORKUP in September, and technology experts from Blandin were on hand to assist in the hackathon. The event was designed to give like-minded people a chance to work together to create new technologies and applications that will benefit the local area.



Broadband in Healthcare

Kandiyohi County has always invested in cutting edge technology for healthcare. Broadband is the next obvious step. Craig Settles, a broadband industry analyst, consultant, blog writer and radio host recently discovered firsthand what broadband means in healthcare after suffering a stroke. "When someone has a stroke, there is a three-hour window in which to get them serious treatment - and a person living alone in a community that lacks broadband means the start of their treatment has a high probability of falling outside of that window," he says. To read more about his story, visit www.govtech.com/opinion/Community-Broadband-Easily-Explained.html.



In the Area

Swift County is investing heavily in broadband. The Minnesota Office of Broadband Development granted \$4.9 million to the Federated Telephone Cooperative to build a fiber infrastructure in Swift County. The county is also pitching in, giving the FTC a \$7.5 million loan to complete the \$12.4 million upgrade. The project is expected to bring in more than 500 jobs related to farming, business start-ups and commercial expansion.



Willmar Receives \$10 Million TIGER Grant

Out of 627 applicants for this year's federal TIGER grants, only 39 were selected. The Willmar Wye project was one of the lucky few. The Willmar WYE project is a railroad bypass and proposed industrial park rail spur. In addition to the \$10 million TIGER grant provided by the US Department of Transportation, another \$40 million will be invested by BNSF Railway, MNDOT, Kandiyohi County, the City of Willmar and the EDC.



BUSINESS UPDATES | PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Willmar Industrial Park

The expansion of the Willmar Industrial Park is complete with more than 150 acres available for development. The shovel-ready park has great access to transportation networks, including future rail access thanks to a nearly \$50 million collaborative public-private project to add a rail switch into the park, making it one of the only industrial parks in the state to offer direct rail access. The EDC has been actively working with the City to attract businesses to the Industrial Park and advocated to keep the former airport land to expand Kandiyohi County's Industrial Park availability.



Foxhole Brewery in Willmar and Goat Ridge Brewery in New London



The chances of your next drink order being a craft beer have gone up considerably in Kandiyohi County, with the grand opening of not one, but two microbreweries. Goat Ridge Brewery and the Dam Taproom opened in New London in mid-April which seats 45 people. Foxhole Brewhouse opened in the Historic 313 Building in downtown Willmar in the fall of 2015. Foxhole's taproom seats 65 with additional seating outside during warmer weather. The EDC assisted Goat Ridge in creating business planning documents and securing funding. The EDC was also instrumental in securing funding for the redevelopment of the Historic 313 building, allowing for new tenants, one of which was Foxhole Brewery.



Rambow's New Facility

An additional 15 full time jobs and more than 12,000 square feet of space are a done deal at Rambow Inc. The New London-based company that specializes in custom embroidery and screen-printed apparel and promotional items, invested more than half a million dollars in the project. The EDC assisted by writing an application to DEED for the Job Creation Fund which allowed them to expand the scope of the project.



Jennie-O Expansion

The 35,000 square foot expansion of the corporate offices of the Jennie-O Turkey Store is complete. The more than \$8 million project added office space and parking, allowing Jennie-O to get their corporate employees under one roof. The EDC worked with Jennie-O and the City of Willmar to advocate for a tax increment financing program to make the project more feasible.



Meadow Star Dairy

With 8,500 cows producing eight semi-tankers of milk daily, Meadow Star Dairy near Pennock is the largest dairy farm in Kandiyohi County. Meadow Star opened for business in late October of 2015. To advocate for economic development, EDC staff participated in township community meetings, assisted with

permits at both the township and county levels, and worked with township officials to secure road improvement funding.



**Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

website | www.kandiyohi.com

email | edc@kandiyohi.com

twitter | [@KandiWillmarEDC](https://twitter.com/KandiWillmarEDC)

find us on facebook & linkedin



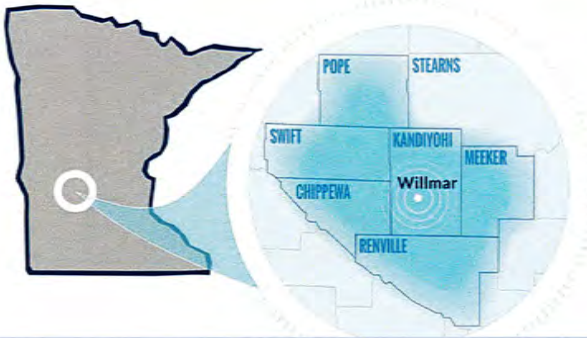
Check out our NEW website!

News
Get the latest on what's happening in Economic Development from our news page.

Site & Building Searches
Looking for a building or piece of property for your growing business? Use the Site and Building search to find the perfect spot.

Regional Hub Data
Kandiyohi County attracts workforce and consumers from a broad region. Check out the latest U.S. Census stats for our regional hub.

Industry
From Ag Technology to Advanced Manufacturing, Kandiyohi County is home to a diverse and skilled set of companies with global reach.



WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA'S BUSINESS HUB

Open for Business

Kandiyohi County is the heart of West Central Minnesota's Business hub. Our thriving economy draws commerce and workforce from all six surrounding counties, creating a vibrant and growing business community. The Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's mission is to be a catalyst for economic growth, and we are "open for business!"