

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

**January 5, 2018
EDC Board Room**

- Present:** Sam Bowen, Jim Ellingson, Les Heitke (teleconference), Roger Imdieke, Les Nelson and Dean Steinwand
- Excused:** Bob Carlson, Ranae Rahn and Kelly TerWisscha
- Guest:** Christiana Pflueger, M.A., Business Service Specialist, Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services (CMJTS)
- Staff:** Aaron Backman, Executive Director
- Secretarial:** Diane Beck, Legal & Administrative Assistants (LAA)

Chairperson Sam Bowen called the meeting to order at approximately 9:05 a.m. Self-introductions were conducted. Aaron Backman introduced Christina Pflueger, Business Service Specialist with CMJTS. Pflueger reported she works with Cathy Baumgartner and provided information on her work-based training coordinator position working with on-the job training funding (see attached) and grant and initiative funding throughout 11 counties in Minnesota. She also works closely with Chair Sam Bowen at Ridgewater College in customized training opportunities for clients.

AGENDA—The agenda was approved as emailed.

MINUTES—Chair Bowen presented the December 1, 2017 minutes.

IT WAS MOVED BY Les Nelson, SECONDED BY Roger Imdieke, to approve the December 1, 2017 minutes as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

REPORTS/PROJECT UPDATES

Midtown Plaza. Backman reported some tenants have begun moving into Midtown Plaza. In addition to the grocery store, other tenants will include a clothing store, hair salon, fragrance store and a tailor shop. Several stores will be open for business by the end of January. Backman suggested holding the BRE/R Committee meeting at Midtown Plaza in the near future.

15th Street Flats. Backman gave an update of the 15th Street Flats affordable housing project where 47 multi-family rental units will be built behind Pizza Ranch. Tax credits have been approved and the plan review will go before the Willmar Planning Commission in January.

Jim Ellingson inquired on the progress of Spurs Restaurant. Backman stated the commons area is mostly complete and work slowly continues on the Spurs Restaurant. No date has been set for opening the restaurant. Backman reported on the Historic 313 financial statement as of December 13, 2017. There was a slight loss due to the costs of the build out.

Highway 23 Coalition/Minnesota Senate Committee Presentation. Backman reported there are a total of 67 members (including 42 businesses and at the 15 platinum level). Backman complimented Senator Andrew Lang for convincing the Senate Capital Investment Committee to conduct a capital projects visit in the Willmar area on Monday, January 8th in the Student Center at Ridgewater College. The Committee will hear presentations from 1) The Highway 23 Coalition; 2) Ridgewater College representatives will present the HEAPR projects and 3) Mel Odens, Kandiyohi County Public Works Director will present on the Willmar Bridge Project. Following the presentations and lunch, the Committee will travel to Montevideo to hear a Veterans Home presentation. Backman will prepare a PowerPoint presentation and share quotes about the need to complete the two four-lane gaps. Businesses providing quotes so far are Coldspring, Jennie-O Turkey Store, Dooley's Petroleum, Rambow and Anderson Trucking in St. Cloud. Ellingson commented it may be beneficial to include a graphic showing traffic counts between Willmar and I-94. Chair Bowen inquired if assistance is needed from the BRE/R Committee for the presentation. Backman responded there will be other opportunities for the BRE/R Committee's assistance either in Willmar or St. Paul.

Business Visits/Tours. Backman shared interesting highlights of his trip to Peru in December.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

West Central Job Fair Update. Chair Bowen reported a meeting was held approximately two or three weeks ago with a West Central Job Fair partners and Doug Hanson of KDJS to discuss the possibility of moving one of the job fairs to Ridgewater College in order to generate more enthusiasm and better attract students and job seekers. Mr. Hanson expressed concerns with the building and parking space and Chair Bowen assured him there is adequate space in the building as well as parking. Concern was expressed of job seekers finding Ridgewater College and signage from the parking lot to the job fair. Chair Bowen feels both these concerns can be addressed easily. Next steps: Mr. Hanson will develop a list of questions and concerns and another meeting will be scheduled to discuss the pros and cons. Chair Bowen shared that Mr. Hanson is contracted with the Willmar Conference Center for 2018 and asked the BRE/R members if planning should continue for a 2019 job fair or push for a job fair in 2018. Backman supports having a job fair at Ridgewater College that highlights healthcare and agricultural careers. Chair Bowen stated he hears from businesses on a regular basis to present their company information to students. Imdieke suggested pursuing a job fair at Ridgewater College, but honoring Doug Hanson's 2018 contract with Willmar

Conference Center. Les Heitke suggested contacting Ken Warner at Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce for their opinion on the location of the job fair. Chair Bowen will contact Ken Warner. **CMJTS Support Services Grant Proposal Update.** Christina Pflueger, Business Service Specialist with CMJTS, deals with on-the-job training and dislocated workers (see attached). She also meets with businesses to determine their employment needs. There is a focus on a wide range of career opportunities with a great need for healthcare and manufacturing employees. Pflueger stated CMJTS is a resource for businesses.

NEW BUSINESS

Community Integration Center (CIC). Backman shared information on the CIC located at 201 5th Street in downtown Willmar. The CIC is a non-profit group formed by immigrants from east Africa to assist members of the Willmar community to learn more about each other. They assist immigrants with literacy issues and will offer English classes. Other plans include working with youth, advice on nutrition and health styles, finding jobs, etc. Bob Bonawitz, SCORE counselor at the EDC, has met with CIC representatives and is assisting as a SCORE counselor to the CIC.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:20 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **9:00 a.m., February 2, 2018**, in the EDC Board Room.



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Christina Pflueger
Business Service Specialist
cpflueger@cmjts.org ■ 763-271-3712 ■ 320-250-9537

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BUSINESS SERVICES

Administrative Office

Monticello
406 East 7th Street, P.O. Box 720
Monticello, MN 55362-0720
763.271.3700
763.271.3742 (TTY)

Branch Offices

Cambridge
140 Buchanan Street, Suite 152
Cambridge, MN 55008
763.279.4492

Forest Lake
19955 Forest Road N
Forest Lake, MN 55025
651.275.7247

Hutchinson
Ridgewater College
2 Century Ave. SE
Hutchinson, MN 55350
320.587.4740

Litchfield
114 N. Holcombe Ave., Suite 170
Litchfield, MN 55355
320.593.1056

Milaca
Mille Lacs County Community
and Veterans Services
525 2nd Street SE
Milaca, MN 56353
800.284.7425

Mora
903 East Forest Ave.
Mora, MN 55051
320.679.6484

Olivia
Renville County Government Service Center
105 South 5th St., Suite 203H
Olivia, MN 56277
800.284.7425

Pine City
Pine Technical College
900 Fourth Street SE
Pine City, MN 55063
320.629.4555

Willmar
Ridgewater College
Student Services Building A123B/A123C
2101 15th Ave. NW
Willmar, MN 56201
800.284.7425

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