

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

**MINUTES  
October 5, 2018  
EDC Board Room**

Present: Sam Bowen, Jim Ellingson, Les Heitke (via teleconference), Ranae Rahn, Dan Tempel and Kelly TerWisscha

Excused: Roger Imdieke and Les Nelson

Absent: Dean Steinwand

Guest: Jennifer Mendoza, CLUES Navigator

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

Secretarial: Diane Beck, Legal & Administrative Assistants

Chair Sam Bowen called the meeting to order at approximately 9:10 a.m.

**AGENDA—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Ranae Rahn, SECONDED BY Kelly TerWisscha, to approve the Agenda as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Kelly TerWisscha, SECONDED BY Jim Ellingson, to approve the September 7, 2018 Minutes as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**REPORTS/PROJECT UPDATES**

Connie Schmoll mentioned two upcoming childcare events: 1) October 19<sup>th</sup>: Childcare Recognition and Appreciation event at Bethesda; and 2) November 29: Community Conversation on Childcare at the Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building (6:00 p.m. dinner/6:30 meeting).

**BRE Survey.** Schmoll gave an overview of the 2015-16 EDC's BRE survey visitation program, leadership team roles and tasks and shared a letter mailed to businesses announcing the survey visit (see attached). Chair Bowen inquired the difference between the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce (WLACC) GrowMN! Survey and the EDC's BRE Survey. Schmoll

shared the GrowMN! survey is conducted by chambers across Minnesota each year to understand the needs and concerns of Minnesota businesses as a whole, as well as identify specific opportunities to help individual businesses stay and grow in the state. The EDC's BRE survey is focused on local businesses and gives a snapshot in time of the needs of the local business community. Schmoll discussed the possibility of conducting another BRE survey and recommended forming a small group to research if a survey should move forward. If the survey moves forward, teams of volunteers would be formed to conduct business interviews. The interview forms would also be available online. Kelly TerWisscha and Dan Tempel volunteered to serve on the subcommittee, along with Schmoll, to research if another BRE survey should be conducted.

[Schmoll was excused from the meeting.]

**September Business Visits/Tours.** Backman reported his attendance at the following:

- Coop Credit Union groundbreaking ceremony
- West Central Job Fair
- International Trade & Tariffs Informational meeting hosted by the WLACC and the EDC
- A Transportation Forum sponsored by the Minnesota Public Transit Association and WLLACC. Backman reported excellent attendance at both events
- Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers (MAPCED) quarterly meeting
- Ag & Animal Science Conference
- Willmar City Council work session regarding Samuel Herzog's request for 280 multi-family housing units and tax increment financing; the Council set a hearing for December 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Two grand openings for Kwik Trip—one on East Highway 12 and the other on First Street. Kwik Trip is planning to construct another facility in downtown Willmar at the former Mills site in 2019 and possibly on the west side of Willmar near the intersection of County Road 5 and Highway 12.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Minnesota Education Fair.** Backman shared each year some colleges conduct a Minnesota Education Fair (MEF). Chair Bowen reported the MEF is held at Ridgewater College each year. This year's event was held in September with 70 booths and approximately 500-700 high school and college students attended the event.

**West Central Job Fair.** Chair Bowen shared he invited the West Central Job Fair committee to attend MEF and observe the event in preparation for the West Central Job Fair being held at Ridgewater College next spring. Next steps were discussed. Chair Bowen will look at reserving dates in March 2019 and will schedule a committee meeting within the next two weeks. TerWisscha inquired if MEF and the West Central Job Fair could be combined. Chair Bowen responded it is a good concept; however, he was not sure it would be possible, but it may be

possible to combine the West Central Job Fair with another event at Ridgewater College in the future.

Backman reported approximately 130 people attended the West Central Job Fair on September 19<sup>th</sup> at the Willmar Conference Center. The number of vendors was in the low 30s compared with approximately 50-70 vendors in the past. Discussion was held as to possible reasons for the lower visitor and vendor turnout.

**Willmar Area Multicultural Business Center Update.** Backman reported dissolution of the Willmar Area Multicultural Business Center (WAM-BC) is nearing completion. The legal dissolution documents have been signed. One of the non-performing loans was resolved with a good-faith payment from the borrower and a new loan agreement entered into with the EDC. Backman mentioned there is also another non-performing loan that will be heard in Conciliation Court.

**CLUES UPDATE**—Jennifer Mendoza, CLUES Navigator, reported CLUES is looking to rent a space in downtown Willmar adjacent to Rick’s Cycling & Sports Center. Her supervisor is currently discussing the option with Rick’s. Some improvements will be needed.

**Diverse CNA.** Mendoza reported there are 10 students enrolled (9 females and 1 male) in the program which started on September 24<sup>th</sup> and will conclude on November 20<sup>th</sup>. The majority of students are from Willmar, one is from the Pennock area and three are from Renville County.

**Diverse Welding.** Mendoza shared there are 13 students enrolled in the program (3 females and 10 males), which began in October and will conclude on December 4<sup>th</sup>. The majority of the students are from Willmar with one from Yellow Medicine County. CLUES would like to acquire lockers for the students to store their equipment.

Some students in the CNA and welding cohort have some difficulty with reading and writing English. CLUES is working to find a solution to overcome this barrier. Mendoza reported CLUES is working on having CNA and welding students attend a finance presentation to learn ways to improve their credit rating. Mendoza reported she is working on new class rosters for CNA and welding classes. Currently she has received three applications for the welding class, which may start in April 2019. Discussion was held on a meet and greet session for businesses and students. The location and timing will be discussed.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Career Solutions Event.** Chair Bowen recently attended an event in St. Cloud organized by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) where information on recruiting new employees was presented to employers. A rotation exercise with agencies

was held to discuss workforce development, i.e., apprenticeship, worker training programs, and ways to help grow workforce. Chair Bowen suggested doing something similar at Ridgewater College and reported DEED is willing to bring such an event to Willmar (possibly in January or March 2019) to present information to employers to assist with acquiring the needed workforce. Chair Bowen would like support from the EDC and this committee and will bring information on the DEED event, including costs, etc. to the next committee meeting.

[Mendoza were excused from the meeting.]

**Other.** Backman shared information on today's Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) event at the MinnWest Technology Campus for community partners to learn more about a significant opportunity to expand how NDC serves micro and small businesses in the area (see attached). Approximately 24 are registered to attend.

Backman also highlighted the agenda of the Local Government Workplace Symposium scheduled for October 18<sup>th</sup> at the Willmar Conference Center. The keynote speaker is Rick Trontvet, Vice President, Administration at Digi-Key Electronics in Thief River Falls, MN. Currently there are 70 attendees registered. Backman will send the committee information on attending the keynote speaker portion of the symposium.

The Highway 23 General Membership meeting will be held on October 26<sup>th</sup> at Little Crow Golf Resort. Representative Paul Torkelson, Chair of the Minnesota House Transportation Finance Committee will be the keynote speaker. He was heavily involved in the transportation funding that passed during the 2018 legislative session. Depending on membership levels, attendees participate at no cost. Non-members pay \$15 per person for the meal.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:56 a.m.

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

## **Kandiyohi County Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program Leadership Team Roles & Tasks**

### **Directors –Connie, EDC and Ken Warner of Chamber Grow MN!**

#### Tasks:

1. The Program Directors decide on the timeline, survey forms, and list of businesses to be visited. They work closely with the Coordinators to create and distribute letters to the businesses informing them of the program and calls they will receive to be interviewed.
2. The Program Directors take the lead in securing a Leadership Team and Volunteers to conduct visits.
3. They also ensure training of all business visitors.
4. The Program Directors, along with the Coordinators, schedule and plan meetings and send out meeting notices.
5. Program Directors (admin staff) enter survey data.
6. Program Directors conduct business visits.
7. Program Directors provide training for the Warning Flag Review Team at their first review meeting.
8. Program Directors plan and lead meetings to review the collaborated data and make decisions about projects that could be done to improve the overall climate for businesses in the area.

## **Kandiyohi County Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program Leadership Team Roles & Tasks**

I. **Coordinators**          **Les Nelson**    

    **Diane O'Leary**    

1. The Coordinators provide direction and assistance to the leadership team to ensure a coordinated process.
2. The Coordinators assist in securing a leadership team and volunteers to conduct visits and with the scheduling and planning of meetings.
3. The Coordinators meet with program directors to assist in creating a program timeline, survey forms, and list of businesses to be visited. They work closely with the Directors to create and distribute letters to the businesses informing them of the program and calls they will receive to be interviewed.
4. The Coordinators prepare materials for the business visitors including copies of the survey forms, an interview introduction sheet, and a copy of the letter that was sent to the businesses.
5. The Coordinators work with the Visitation Committee to decide where business packets are to be dropped off after visits are completed and how copies will be made and forwarded to the warning flag review team. The Coordinators track the warning sign response follow-up work.
6. The Coordinators conduct business visits.
7. The Coordinators will be part of the overall leadership team which reviews the collaborated data and makes suggestions about projects that could be done to improve the overall climate for businesses in the area.

## **Kandiyohi County Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program Leadership Team Roles & Tasks**

### **II. Visitation Committee**

**Sam Bowen - chair**  
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**Bruce Peterson**  
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**Kerry Johnson**  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Tasks to complete:

1. The Visitation Committee will decide on a method to distribute the businesses to the visitation volunteers. Committee members will conduct the distribution at the training meetings.
2. This committee will develop a process to track the teams and the businesses they will visit.
3. The Visitation Committee will work with the Coordinators to decide where business packets are to be dropped off after visits are completed and how copies will be made and forwarded to the Warning Flag Review Team.
4. This committee will also field issues of businesses declining the survey by assigning a new business to the team if they are willing.
5. This committee will keep a running total on visits completed and surveys turned in.
6. Committee members conduct business visits.
7. Committee members will be part of the Leadership Team which reviews the collaborated data and makes suggestions about projects that could be done to improve the overall climate for businesses in the area.

## **Kandiyohi County Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program Leadership Team Roles & Tasks**

### **III. Warning Sign Response Committee**

**Julie Redepenning - chair**

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**Jim Ellingson**

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**Ross Magnuson**

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**Tom Gilbertson**

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1. The Warning Sign Response Committee creates a list of community resources for team members to consider when reviewing business surveys. (Draft resource list is available)
2. The Committee schedules meetings to be conducted as the surveys are turned in, and then meets to review each survey and make notes about needed responses (training provided at first review meeting or in advance of first meeting). The review forms will be turned in to the Coordinators for processing.
3. Committee members conduct business visits.
4. Committee members will be part of the Leadership Team which reviews the collaborated data and makes suggestions about projects that could be done to improve the overall climate for businesses in the area.

## **Kandiyohi County Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program Leadership Team Roles & Tasks**

**IV. Media Coordinators (2) - Ranae Rahn**

**Steve Ammerman**

1. The Media Coordinators establish contacts with media personnel and keep them informed about the program accomplishments.
2. The Media Coordinators prepare and distribute press releases about the program. (samples available).
3. The Media Coordinators conduct business visits.
4. The Media Coordinators will be part of the Leadership Team which reviews the collaborated data and makes suggestions about projects that could be done to improve the overall climate for businesses in the area.

May 27, 2014

Betsy Bonnema  
Red Star  
1717 16<sup>th</sup> Street NE  
Willmar, MN 56201

Dear Betsy,

The Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission and the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce are working together on the Kandiyohi County BR&E Visitation Program. Our goal is to meet with 100 businesses beginning in November.

Your business has been selected for a visit. Visits will be conducted between November 17 and December 12, 2014. During the visit two members of the committee will meet with you, for no more than one hour, to: 1) thank you for locating your business in the Willmar Lakes Area and Minnesota; 2) to discuss any concerns you may have; 3) and to get your opinion on the economy and the local and state business climate. All information is kept confidential and is used to shape our community and public policy agenda to better represent business interests. Information you provide will help us understand the local and state's economy better, and provide a clearer roadmap to maximizing future prosperity for all. The EDC and WLACC work closely with local and city government and has addressed several issues from these types of visits.

I hope that you will consider visiting with a couple members of the Kandiyohi County BR&E Visitation Program. A member of the committee will be calling you in the next week to schedule a visit with you, or to see if you have any questions regarding the enclosed information.

If you have any additional questions or concerns before they call to schedule an appointment, feel free to contact one of us at the numbers below. We look forward to scheduling a visit with you soon.

Sincerely,

Connie Schmoll  
Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC  
(320) 235-7370

Diane O'Leary  
Office Manager  
Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce  
(320) 231-0271

Enclosure: ??????

Kandiyohi County  
& City of Willmar  
**Economic Development Commission**



## **Guidelines for Conducting your Visit**

### **Scheduling the firm visit**

- You set the schedule for the firm visit!
- You decide on a “script” for the telephone or email contact
  - Introduce yourself
  - Reference the sponsor
  - Explain the volunteer visiting process and survey
  - What would be a convenient time for us to visit you?
- Call within one week and visit within two weeks
  - Schedule October ????
  - Visit November ?????
- Interview owner or operator of business
- Visit at the business’ office, if possible
- Most visits take about 60 minutes
- If the firm refuses a visit, graciously accept their regrets
  - Inform organizers (Connie, ???)

### **Interview Introduction**

- Introduce yourself (break the ice)
- Express community’s appreciation for the business’ time commitment to BR&E
- Review goals of survey
- Be sure person being interviewed has a copy of the survey
- **Survey results are completely confidential!**
- Review the “Skip it” rule

### **Interviewer Tips**

- Ask **every** question
- Ask questions **exactly as worded**
- **Listen carefully** (count silently to 10 while waiting for an answer)
- **Repeat** the question if the respondent is **unclear** about the purpose of the question
- **Never** suggest an answer!
- **Probe** for answer of open-ended questions
  - “Could you tell us a little more about that?”
- **Don’t**
  - get defensive
  - take offense at opinions or answers
  - promise solutions to problems

### **Recorder Tips**

- **Circle** responses (or make a clear **check in single box**)
- Take **complete** notes
- **List** name and telephone number of interviewer and recorder on front of survey
- **Write clearly.** Write as the speaker talks to get most accurate information

### **Immediate After the Visit**

- Discuss, **note and summarize** immediate concerns
- **Return the survey** to local organizers (Connie, ???)

## Invitation to Collaborate with Community Partners

October 5, 2018  
10:00AM to 1:00PM

Commons Meeting Room on the MinnWest Technology Campus  
1707 Technology Dr. NE, Willmar, MN 56201

“How are we doing?” and “What can we do better?” According to Michael LeBoeuf, Ph.D. author of How to Win Customers and Keep Them for Life, these are the two most important questions that we should ask ourselves as business owners. As providers of services or passionate community members, who support a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem in our community, we are charged with reflecting on these same two questions as well.

### *How are we doing? What can we do better?*

We are extending an invitation to you, your organization and other passionate community leaders to come together, to not only reflect on these questions, but also to learn more about a significant opportunity to expand how we serve micro and small businesses in the Region.

Over the past 2 years, Neighborhood Development Center has reached out to diverse groups of key decision-makers and stakeholders from various Greater Minnesota areas with the purpose of shared learning. The attached Statewide Flier provides additional information on this process.

Kandiyohi Economic Development Commission has been engaged in this process to learn how the work fits within our service area. We believe that the NDC approach can be adopted or adapted to fit the needs of our growing and diverse community.

On October 5, 2018, you are invited to join with other collaborative partners and entrepreneurs to learn more about the NDC Approach of placed-based, entrepreneur-focused economic development and share about your work and how it can fit to create a local approach.

#### Who should attend

- Business Owners
  - Entrepreneurial People
  - Business Developers
  - Arts, cultural & food groups
  - Educators & Schools
  - Housing Services
  - Community Leaders
  - Lenders, Bankers and Financial Resources
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## Agenda

- 10:00 AM     **Welcome**  
The Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) Story
- 10:15 AM     **The Four Pillars of Entrepreneurial Development**  
Training, Technical Assistance, Lending and Real Estate.
- 10:30 AM     **Mapping of Entrepreneurial Development Assets**  
*Sharing with collaborative partners. What services are provided, by whom and for whom? How does the NDC approach fit in the community?*
- 11:00 PM     **Visioning the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem**  
*Gap Analysis – Solution Identification. What is their vision for small business development in this community? What is needed? Who in the community could step-in and help? How do the collaborating partners align, communicate and create “collective impact?”*  
<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/collective-impact>
- 11:30 PM     **Lunch**  
Questions and Answers
- 12:00 PM     **Building and Sustaining Programming**
  - Existing resources
  - Resources that could be realigned
  - New resources required
- 12:50 PM     **Opportunity and Next steps**
- 1:00 PM     **Adjourn**

To plan for lunch, please respond via email with your acceptance of this invitation. If you would like to know more, but are unable to attend, please let us know as well.

### **For more details and to rsvp, contact:**

Connie Schmoll

Business Development Specialist

Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission

222 20<sup>th</sup> St. SE, PO Box 1783, Willmar, MN 56201

Office: 320-235-7370    Mobile: 320-522-1805

[Connie@Kandiyohi.com](mailto:Connie@Kandiyohi.com)

[www.kandiyohi.com](http://www.kandiyohi.com)





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## *Thursday, October 18*

- 8:30-9:30am**      **Registration & Breakfast**  
*Willmar Conference Center, 240 23rd Street SE, Willmar, MN 56201*
- 9:00am**            **Welcome to Willmar, Dave Baker, MN State Representative**
- 9:45am**            **Buses depart for MinnWest Technology Campus Auditorium**  
*Arranged by the Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau*
- 10:00am**          **Welcome & History of MinnWest Technology Campus**  
*Joanna Schrupp, Business Development Officer for MinnWest Tech*
- 10:45am**          **Morning Keynote: Attract, Retain, Engage, & Lead the Next Generation**  
*Ryan "Buck" Thielen, Director of Customer Support at [Procore](#)  
Tyler Gehring, Director of [Kandiyohi CEO](#) High School Program*
- 11:45am**          **Lunch with Colleagues & KCEO Students**
- 12:30pm**          **MinnWest Technology Campus Tours**  
*Procore, MCROC, Mr. B's, WorkUP, Nova-Tech Engineering, Epitopix, and more!*
- 2:45pm**            **TED-talk style Presentations from Local Innovators**
- Jay Halliday, President of [neXT – Developing Networks. Advancing Careers.](#)**  
*neXT is a local organization formed to attract and retain young talent in the community, while developing the next generation of leaders.*
- Betsy Bonnema, Owner of [Redstar](#) and [WorkUP](#)**  
*The Redstar team is the anchor tenant and founder of WorkUP. It is a one-of-a-kind shared office and meeting space, and serves as a hub for a wide variety of freelancers, consultants, entrepreneurs, and businesses.*
- Jessica Beyer, Business Development Manager at [First Children's Finance](#)**  
*First Children's Finance helps children, families and communities thrive by increasing the availability, affordability, and quality of early care and education.*

- 3:45pm**                    **Buses depart for Willmar Conference Center**  
*Lodging Check-in at the Willmar Conference Center*
- 5:00pm**                    **Reception and Dinner**  
*Willmar Conference Center Ballroom*
- 6:00-6:45pm**            **Evening Keynote**  
*Rick Trontvet, Vice President, Administration at [Digi-Key Electronics](#)*
- 6:45pm**                    **Evening on your Own: Green Mill or Ruff's Wings & Sports Bar**

*Friday, October 19*

- 7:30am**                    **Continental Breakfast & Colleague Conversations**  
*Willmar Conference Center, 240 23rd Street SE, Willmar, MN 56201*
- 8:00am**                    **Child Care Panel: Regional Models & Local Strategies that Work**  
*Moderator: Anna Gruber, Manager of City and County Solutions, [Sourcewell](#)*  
*Panelists:*  
*Jessica Beyer, Business Development Manager, [First Children's Finance](#)*  
*Maureen Hams, Community Services Director, [Tri-Valley Opportunity Council](#)*  
*Briana Mumme, Economic Development Coordinator, [Redwood County](#)*  
*Missy Okeson, Program Officer – Community Impact, [NW MN Foundation](#)*
- Topics:
- Child Care business types and community options;
  - Impacts of Child Care shortages on the local workforce;
  - Models of "right-sized" Child Care solutions for Minnesota communities;
  - Tools for families to find quality Child Care;
  - Professional development options for Child Care providers; and,
  - Resources for government leaders to support Child Care decisions.

- 10:00am**                    **NACo Workshop: Building a Culture of Employee Engagement in Government**  
*Bob Lavigna, Director of the [Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement](#)*

These are tough times. Across the nation, heated budget battles and talk about the size, function, scope, and effectiveness of government have generated criticism not just of the public sector, but also of the public servants who deliver government services. As a result, local governments are under pressure to maintain and improve performance, while also doing more with less.

This workshop will explore one proven response: Employee engagement. After all, the primary resource we have in local government is talent. If our people are engaged and perform well, government will also perform well.

- 12:00pm**                    **Closing & Thanks**