

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
December 28, 2015
Board Room, EDC Office, Willmar

Present: Caroline Chan (via phone), Shari Courtney, Ann Winge Johnson, Heather Koffler (via phone) and Mike Negen

Excused: Ann Winge Johnson, Lindsey Donner, Jean Geselius and Julie Redepenning

Absent: Donna Boonstra and Jean Geselius

Consultant: Betsy Bonnema, REDstar Creative

Guest: Jayme Sczublewski

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

Secretarial: Diane Beck, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Connie Schmoll called the meeting to order at approximately 12:04 p.m.

MINUTES—As there was not a quorum present, the November 23, 2015 minutes were received, but not approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Website. Betsy Bonnema gave an overview of the EDC website which is 95% complete and extended kudos to Barb Abrams and Jayme Sczublewski for their hard work. Bonnema highlighted the updates, formatting has been improved and is consistent, pictures added and board page fixed. There is room for more content on the Board page and stated at this point, the website is definitely presentable and professional; changes will be ongoing. The Broadband and Advanced Technology minutes will be added to the Board page. Bonnema stated originally the plan was to include data from all surrounding counties to present data from the region. St. Cloud in Stearns County, however, skewed the data so Stearns County is not included in the regional stats. Schmoll likes the regional aspect and suggested a map pointing to the region to clarify the data area on the page. Sczublewski commented the census numbers will be updated and reviewed the major employers and stated more employers will be added as needed.

Schmoll will talk with Bonnema regarding added information to the location search page. Bonnema asked committee members to keep reviewing the website and let her or Schmoll know if there are needed updates or changes. The committee complimented Bonnema, Sczublewski and Abrams for their hard work on the EDC website.

2015 MARKETING PLAN PROJECTS

Newsletter insert. Schmoll stated she and Steve Renquist recently met with Barb Abrams and Kristin Allen to discuss content for the newsletter insert. Bonnema shared Allen's two front page design examples and a mock-up of the inside spread which will focus on broadband. The committee concurred with the front page design that aligns with the EDC website format and incorporate the three circles design from the second example somewhere on the front page. Another committee suggestion was to place 'open for business' at the top of the front page. Schmoll reported that Abrams and Allen suggested highlighting one of the EDC key words (advocacy, retention, expansion and marketing) in each of newsletter inserts. Discussion held regarding a four-page insert versus a two-page and costs. Committee members concurred to have a four-page insert for the February mailing and discuss a plan for the other three issues at the Marketing and Public Relations Committee meeting on January 25, 2016. Once a decision is reached on the newsletter insert, it will be brought to the new EDC Executive Director and board. Printing of the insert will be kept local, i.e., PrintMasters, Speedy Print or another local printer. Schmoll will invite Amy Doyle of West Central Tribune to the January 25 meeting to discuss costs. The content for the next insert will include:

- Front page: WORKUP, announcement of new EDC Executive Director hiring process and Tiger Grant
- Center section: Broadband and EDC Website
- Back page: new businesses

A more specific proof will be set up by Bonnema and staff and shared with committee members prior to the January 25, 2016 meeting, if possible. Target date for the insert will be the first part of February (a Tuesday). Schmoll will contact Amy Doyle at the West Central Tribune to secure the best Tuesday.

Chamber ADvantage. Committee concurred to send the Chamber ADvantage four times a year aligned with the newsletter insert dates.

Other. Bonnema comments there may be a TEDx in February and inquired if EDC would be one of the sponsors. Sponsorship costs range from \$500-\$1,000. Heather Koffler suggested EDC be one of the \$500 sponsors. Committee members in attendance concurred with the suggestion. Schmoll will bring to the EDC Joint Operations Board on January 14, 2016. Bonnema stated a planning meeting will be scheduled soon and will notify the EDC of the date.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:05 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, January 25, 2016** at the EDC Board Room, 222 20th Street SE, Willmar.

New Executive Director Update

You will be seeing a new face around the EDC offices very soon! The board has started the interview process and hopes to make an offer to the new Executive Director by mid-January. A huge thanks to 'retired' director, Steve Renquist, who graciously agreed to continue his advocacy for economic development in the meantime.

Priorities

- Advocacy
- Retention
- Expansion
- Marketing

Coworking Makes Debut in Kandiyohi County Through WORKUP

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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 US 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!"

The 4,200 square foot cottage that WORKUP occupies was built in the early 1900's 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.

Visit workup.cc for more information.

(Bemidji Sidebar...)

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.

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.

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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. 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. The Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners recently approved applying for a grant from the Blandin Foundation to study the feasibility of strengthening the broadband infrastructure in Kandiyohi County. Along with the grant application, the board also approved up to \$25,000 in matching funds.

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.'"

Sidebar stories:

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.

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 \$5,000 grant provided seed money for the Hack2o 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.

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 Industrial Park

The expansion of the Willmar Industrial Park is complete with more than 130 acres available for development. The shovel-ready park has great access to transportation networks, including future rail access thanks to nearly \$50 million collaborative public-private project to add a rail spur into the park, making it one of the only industrial parks in the state to offer direct rail access. The EDC has been active with 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.

Microbreweries– Foxhole in Willmar and Goat Ridge 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 and 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.

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, worked with township officials to improve the roads around the dairy and helped secure support for the project from the dairy's neighbors.

Secondary:

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.



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

WINTER 2015-2016

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RETENTION
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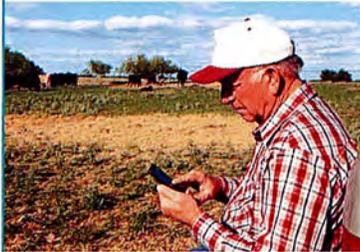
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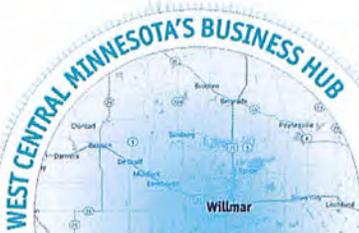
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