

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
AGRICULTURE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

February 15, 2018

Christianson PLLP, Willmar

Present: Rollie Boll, Ian Graue, Kevin Halvorson, Larry Konsterlie, Dustin Kotrba, Keith Poier,

Excused: Dan Lippert, Bruce Reuss and Dan Tepfer

Absent: Jon Folkedahl and Kim Larson

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

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

Vice Chair Larry Konsterlie called the meeting to order at approximately 7:32 a.m.

County Ordinance as to Feedlots. Connie Schmoll reviewed the notes of the January 11, 2018 meeting held with county representatives as to the ordinance on feedlots. Schmoll will present the 2004 Resolution for renewal at the County Board meeting on February 20, 2018.

AGENDA—The agenda was approved as emailed.

REPORTS

Marketing and Event Planning Subcommittee. Schmoll reported the Marketing Subcommittee met yesterday regarding a workshop in August. The workshop will focus on workforce issues, hiring and retaining staff; technology and crop production; and an educational component, such as the video that was viewed, is being considered. Sustainability of farm businesses was brought up as an educational topic. They have also considered doing something with Ridgewater College, such as the Soil Social. Mike Henke has been secured to speak on securing and maintaining employees. Henke will interview some farmers prior to the workshop. Kristie Haefner of Christianson, PLLP, will do a presentation on regulations and human resources. They continue to work with Case IH and Ridgewater College on technology topics. The subcommittee discussed holding workshops over one or two days and decided on one. The date selected is the morning of August 13, 2018. A fee will be charged.

[Dustin Kotrba joined the meeting.]

Vice Chair Konsterlie stated the Kandiyohi County Corn Growers Association is also looking at sustainability; he will discuss this with the group to see if they want to join in. Schmoll stated the

focus of the workshops will be on ag producers in response to the Ag BRE Survey. Jean Geselius reviewed the Ag BRE Survey results for workshop planning. The subcommittee is looking at a budget and anticipates spending \$3,000 on advertising, \$1,000 for the speaker, \$1,000 for food and \$100 for the room. They will obtain a few sponsors at \$1,000 and \$500 each to cover the costs. Konsterlie stated the Minnesota Corn Growers Association has speakers available and also college-based individuals who could possibly speak on ag technology. The Kandiyohi County Corn Growers Association will meet March 2nd at 8:00 a.m. at McMillan's. Dustin Kotrba and Schmoll will present to the group. Kotrba stated the subcommittee felt public education seemed too large of a topic to tackle so they decided to focus on ag producers. If the right topic is found for public education, they would consider it. Konsterlie recommended Minnesota Farm Bureau as a sponsor. Christianson, PLLP has offered to be a sponsor.

MINUTES

IT WAS MOVED BY Dustin Kotrba, SECONDED BY Kevin Halvorson, to approve the January 18, 2018 Minutes as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2018 Goals. Schmoll reported she made the requested changes to the goals following last month's discussion, including the addition of number 6 as a new goal (see attached). As to goal 4, Schmoll reported a number of wireless companies have started doing business in the county. Advertised speeds are 10Mbps download and 3Mbps upload, which is not a lot, but it is better than some may have. MVTV Wireless has upgraded some of its systems, but it is still wireless and they must have a clear line of sight for their antennas. Wireless service slows down as more users are added so the EDC is still looking for fiber and has had discussions with Hiawatha Broadband Communications (HBC) and Federated Telephone. TDS upgraded its system in a portion of the area that was being considered by Consolidated Telecommunications Company. Federated would start near Swift County as it has projects there and HBC would come from the southern end of the county. A legislative roundtable on broadband was held on Tuesday at the Meeker County Courthouse. Schmoll gave a presentation on what Kandiyohi County experienced in its work to get fiber to the county and the lessons learned in working with CTC and the state broadband grant process. Bill Coleman (a consultant with the Blandin Foundation) spoke on what is broadband. The federal standard is 25Mbps download and 3Mbps upload. Frontier Communications is upgrading its system, but it is leaving gaps around its nodes. HBC would not apply for the state grant. Frontier Communications and TDS are doing their projects with federal and state funds. Cooperatives that are getting into broadband are not eligible for federal funds. Schmoll stated CenturyLink did 400 drops around Willmar, which is enhanced copper coming from fiber.

IT WAS MOVED BY Ian Graue, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll, to approve the 2018 Goals as presented. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS

Schmoll reported she spoke with Jamey Cline of Christianson PLLP, who would like to give a presentation to this committee on grants and resources for renewable energy projects and ag-related projects. Schmoll will schedule him for a future meeting.

Schmoll attended the MN AG EXPO in Mankato and spoke with a seed and equipment company about Kandiyohi County. One company is new to Minnesota and is looking for a distribution center. The other company is located in Willmar and may be expanding. Konsterlie noted there was a lot to see at the EXPO; it was a very good event with good speakers. Schmoll passed around brochures on GreenSEAM of the greater Mankato area. Its brochures contain a lot of data on how effective agriculture is in its area. GreenSEAM is bringing attention to its region as being an Ag center. Schmoll may invite them to present at a future meeting. Ian Graue suggested GreenSEAM may be a good group to work with for getting connected with other counties. Schmoll suggested the committee look at GreenSEAM's website. It appears to have a diverse membership. Schmoll will also bring this information to West Central Ag Sales. It was felt its brochure showing a connection to Wall Street from the center of the United States is effective. Schmoll will contact GreenSEAM and invite them to a future meeting.

Graue questioned if this committee could also serve niche businesses and how to go about inviting others to join this committee, such as value-added Ag businesses, organic farmers, etc. Schmoll stated this committee supports any Ag and renewable energy business and others may invite those in value-added Ag to attend a meeting or to speak at a meeting.

Konsterlie noted one presentation at the EXPO, stated the 2018 election will be the first election where there are more voters in the millennial group than baby boomers. Millennials base purchasing decisions on social media influences. Newer Ag businesses may start to thrive from millennial shoppers. Konsterlie recommended this committee be forward thinking in its membership. Keith Poier stated as Ag has become more technical, it has been detrimental to community building and suggested the smaller niche Ag businesses will bring community building back. It was the consensus that everyone is welcome to invite others to join this committee or to speak at a meeting.

Konsterlie stated CarbonWorks spoke at the EXPO about restoring carbon to the soil. The company is from Florida and wants to move north. Researchers had booths at the EXPO and showed grant funds being used for Ag projects. The Minnesota Corn Growers Association held meetings and its delegates went through resolution books. Once resolutions are approved they are distributed to legislators. The Association discussed the U.S. Farm Bill and the fact that the next bill may not include Congressman Collin Peterson as an author, which would affect the Ag field. The Association expect changes in the Farm Bill. It was noted the producer part of the Farm Bill is not the largest part and it also includes food programs. Congressman Peterson has been good at working on a bipartisan manner.

Schmoll reported she recently visited Kevin Ortenblad's new business, Lettuce Abound Farms near New London. Ortenblad has reached out to the EDC for information. Kevin Halvorson stated the committee needs to be aware of the public's concern for GMOs and peanut and gluten allergies.

The committee discussed social trends that are occurring and how agriculture can get its fair share of the cost of food. Millennials are willing to spend more for food items they want and grocers have noted that by expanding their organic sections. Current trends include eating healthy and cage-free chickens. There is a need for both conventional and organic farms.

Ag/Renewable Energy Community Events/Projects. Schmoll reported on February 21 at 8:00 a.m. a presentation will be given by Dr. David Kohl at the Willmar Education and Arts Center.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no other business,

IT WAS MOVED, SECONDED AND CARRIED to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:42 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is 7:30 a.m., March 15, 2018 at Christianson PLLP, 302 Fifth Street SW, Willmar.



Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development Committee 2018 Goals

Mission

To sustain, identify and develop agriculture, agribusiness and renewable energy opportunities.

Overall Goal of the Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development (Ag) Committee

Target activities that leverage Kandiyohi County's assets in agriculture, with a special emphasis on Ag business, manufacturing, bioscience, technology, renewable energy and research.

1. Bring agriculture or renewable energy related projects to the West Central Angel Fund I for consideration throughout the year.
2. Plan and implement projects in response to the strategies identified in the 2017 Ag Producers Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program
3. Conduct education and marketing highlighting local agriculture
 - a. Work with the EDC's Marketing and Public Relations Committee
 - b. Keep the Marketing and Event Planning Subcommittee active to lead the efforts
 - c. Promote our region as an area that supports renewable energy development
4. Assist with deployment of broadband into rural unserved areas of Kandiyohi County
 - a. Continue to identify specific needs among agriculture and renewable energy for broadband access and speed, including current and future communication needs
5. Invite and support development of value-added agriculture and renewable energy projects and businesses in Kandiyohi County.
6. Work to advance research and development of agriculture and renewable energy related industries; specifically, the Hemp Industry in the region.
7. Continue to monitor and promote Kandiyohi County's involvement in the Minnesota Turkey Research and Development Facility and Minnesota Dairy Training, Research and Consumer Education Facility