

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)  
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE  
**MINUTES**  
February 22, 2021  
Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Donna Boonstra, Jesse Gislason, Melissa Knott, Pam Rosenau and Joanna Schrupp

Excused: Emily Lien and Brittany VanDerBill

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Melissa Knott called the meeting to order at approximately 12:02 p.m.

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY Jesse Gislason, to approve the Minutes of the November 23, 2020 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**Social Media Statistics.** Aaron Backman provided the following Facebook statistics from January 22 to February 18, 2021: Total page likes 741, new page likes 7 (▲40%), post reach 337 (▼87%), page views 96 (▲28%), post engagement 23 (▼91%), new page followers 6 (▲20%) and total page followers 872. The top posts between January 16 and February 19, 2021 were:

- Ag to Energy Biofuels Workshop (promoted) 1,571 people reached;
- Aeration systems creating open water and thin ice—454 people reached;
- EDC's Minnesota Pandemic Relief Grant Program—234 people reached;
- SCORE Simple Steps to Starting Your Business five-week series workshop—162 people reached;
- University of Extension farm safety webinars—162 people reached;
- Senior LinkAge Line—158 people reached; and
- 2021 Spicer Winterfest—151 people reached.

Backman presented website statistics from January 1-February 18, 2021 noting there was a spike on January 16<sup>th</sup>, which was a few days after the launch of the Minnesota Pandemic Relief (MPR) Grant Program.

Page views—4,073; unique page views—3,340; average time on page—00:01:33; bounce rate—71.89%. Top pages viewed: COVID-19 response, Your Team, article on spearfishing, News and Major Employers.

Backman reported the EDC received 87 applications for the MPR Grant Program with 64 being recommended for approval at an average award of \$12,800. The County Board will approve the final batch of applications on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

It was noted the EDC's reach on its Facebook page is higher when there is a human element involved. Nancy Birkeland noted there were less posts than normal in January and February due to the EDC's focus on its grant programs. Knott asked if some MPR Grant applicants would be willing to submit a statement on their interaction with the EDC for posting on Facebook or the website.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS—**

**Partners In Ag Innovation Conference.** Joanna Schrupp stated the conference will be held July 29, 2021 (see attached flyer) and will start with the keynote speaker on "What's Driving Agriculture in the Year Ahead," along with challenges and changes due to the pandemic. There are four levels of sponsorship from platinum at \$6,000 to supporting at \$1,500. Topics will include legislative session highlights, storytelling, exploring strategies and growth alternatives. It will be a hybrid conference with virtual and in-person attendance. The conference had high attendance last year from a cross section of attendees and it is hoped this year will be the same. Backman noted last year there were 20 sponsors. Schrupp stated some sponsors are in-kind and some advertising is done in that fashion as they send the information to their memberships. They have also built up a mailing list over the past 11 years. An ad was placed in the *West Central Tribune's* "Rooted" insert.

**Elevate Business Academy.** Backman announced the EDC is starting a new program for entrepreneurs, Elevate Business Academy, that Connie Schmoll has been helping develop along with Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) (see attached). SWIF is providing financial assistance so there is no charge to the attendees this year. Currently, 15 have registered with 10-12 being an ideal class size. Classes are offered at different times during the year. The first training will be virtual, but it is hoped it will eventually be in-person classes. Backman reviewed the classes that will be held. Knott likes that photos of local business owners were used in the flyer rather than stock photos. A website is being developed, but is not yet live other than a page for attendees to register for the class. Another class will be held this fall.

**Marketing Materials for Willmar Renaissance Zone.** Backman reviewed the Renaissance Zone handouts (see attached). Knott asked if the EDC's logo could be included on the flyers since it is also involved and recommended the top sentence be centered rather than right justified. Knott suggested Sarah Swedburg be asked to join this committee as she would be valuable. It was suggested the flyer be more visually appealing with minimal text that directs people to a website to get more information. Under "Forgivable Loans" it was suggested to place the asterisk after the colon. The website address should be changed to go direct to zoning.

**NEW BUSINESS—**Backman informed the committee that Schmoll will be retiring May 31<sup>st</sup> and her position is being advertised.

Backman reported broadband is continuing in the county and may need some marketing assistance in the future. Donna Boonstra reported there are townships interested in doing a broadband project and Federated Telephone Cooperative is interested in doing a project in Kandiyohi County and providing 25% of the project cost. There is still some interest by Arvig and by Clara City Telephone. Schmoll recently gave a presentation to the County Board after which the county agreed to provide \$25,000 per township involved in a project. The EDC's Broadband

Committee continues to work with legislators about incumbents being able to challenge a project through the state grant process. Schmoll has been speaking with township supervisors to submit a state grant application this fall. The state has not yet determined funding for the grant program.

Knott asked if other individuals should be added to the committee. Discussion was held on when to begin in-person meetings and where those could take place. Schrupp stated there could be available space once renovations are completed at MinnWest Technology Campus.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, March 22, 2021** via ZOOM video conference.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:57 p.m.

# AG Innovation

Partners in Ag Innovation Conference | 07.29.21

**Thursday, July 29, 2021**

**Don't miss this important event!**

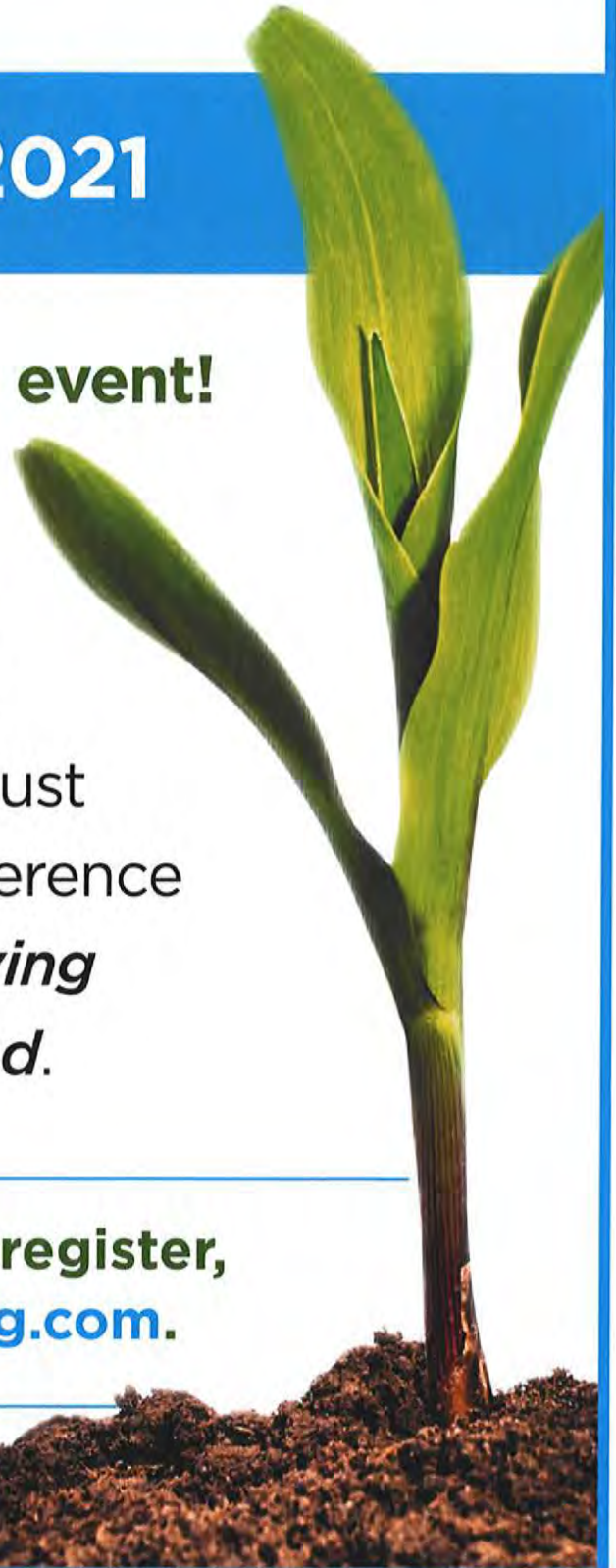
*Sign up to hear timely topics and expert speakers.*

Let us take what we learned from 2020 and learn to not just survive...*but thrive*. The conference will kick off with ***What's Driving Agriculture in the Year Ahead***.

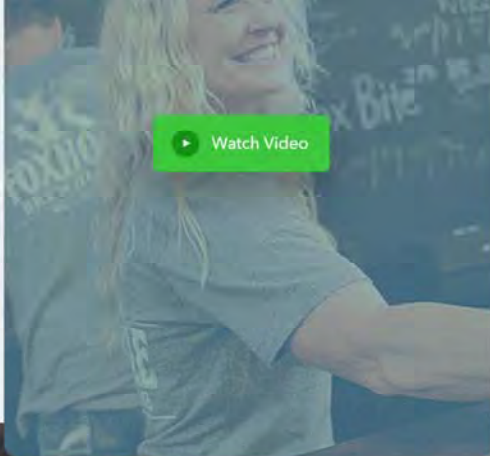
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**For more information and to register, please visit [www.partnersinag.com](http://www.partnersinag.com).**

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Watch Video



## Owners For Success

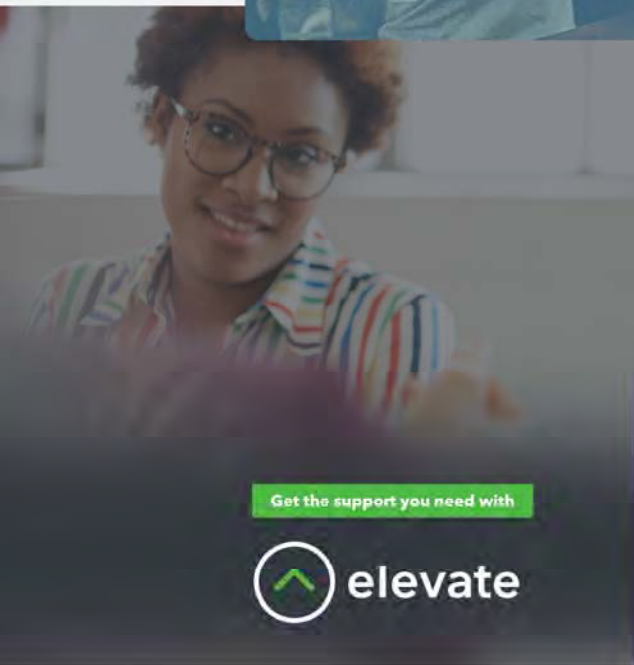
Elevate provides business education and coaching specifically tailored to underserved minority entrepreneurs, with the guiding objective of creating economic opportunity for all. The program offers hands-on training in business planning and management. Elevate allows new or growing businesses to engage with established community members and leaders and build a network of support and accountability.



The program is free to entrepreneurs compliments of



SOUTHWEST INITIATIVE  
FOUNDATION



Get the support you need with



elevate

Have a **great idea for a business** but not sure where to start?

Already in business but need a **network of support and mentorship** along your entrepreneurship journey?

- ✓ Tools to get you started on a new business venture
- ✓ Financial forms and the training to use them.
- ✓ A completed business plan to take to potential funders.
- ✓ Fun and interactive role playing to get used to effective business practices.
- ✓ Ideas for business marketing
- ✓ Knowledge of cash flow, legal structures, insurance and intellectual property to safeguard a new business.
- ✓ An academy completion certificate and graduate ceremony.

## Join the elevate Business Academy



### Take the Classes

Join the Elevate classes to match your needs and goals.



### Meet the Mentors

Meet the mentors that will support you on your business journey.



### Put your new skills to work!

Start using your new skills and elevated ability to manage a successful business!

Register Now



## Meet Others Like You & Learn About Their Success

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## Renaissance Zone (RZ)

*An economic development initiative to spur creativity, construct new housing, enhance diversity, and improve the quality of urban life in the heart of Willmar.*

### What monetary incentives are available in the RZ?

- Free City Permits
- Free Sewer Access Charges & Water Access Charges
- Forgivable Matching Loans for Façade Renovations
- Free City-Owned Land
- TIF or Tax Abatement
- 50% Reduction in WMU New Service Fees

#### Free City Permits:

Includes all Building Permits, Land-Use, and Sign Permits (nominal State fees still apply).

#### Free Sewer Access Charges & Water Access Charges:

Significant savings, as SAC and WAC is charged on a per plumbing fixture unit basis.

#### Forgivable Loans for Façade Renovations\*:

Commercial property owners may apply for \$5,000 or \$10,000 matching forgivable loans that are payment free and forgiven 20% each year over their five-year term.

#### Free City-Owned Land\*:

Awarded based on project satisfaction of RZ goals: Meets significant demand, Creativity, Provides Mixed-Income Housing, Feasibility, and Enhancement of pedestrian experience.

#### TIF or Tax Abatement\*:

Projects must meet minimum thresholds:

- At least 10,000 square feet (gross)
- At least 3 stories
- At least 4 dwelling-units (mixed-use with housing component) or 10 dwelling-units (residential only)
- Projects with housing components must designate at least 5% or 1-unit

(whichever is greater - 25% max.) for households earning up to 80% Area Median Income. These affordable housing units must have rents set at Fair Market Rent for Kandiyohi County as defined by HUD.

- Renovation project costs must be at least 50% of current assessed value.

*\*Subject to approvals by Planning Commission and City Council.*

To apply, visit [https://willmarmn.gov/departments/planning\\_and\\_development/](https://willmarmn.gov/departments/planning_and_development/)

### Every project is unique!

Likewise, this handout cannot cover every detail of the Renaissance Zone program. Please meet with City staff to discuss your project and explore the possibilities.

#### Contact Us:

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Aaron Backman  
Executive Director  
Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC  
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#### 2020 Minimum Investment Thresholds

Term	Renovation	New Construction	Abatement Percentage
5 Years	\$30 SF	\$50 SF	100%, Years 1-5
10 Years	\$45 SF	\$75 SF	100%, Years 1-5 75%, Years 6-10
15 Years	\$60+ SF	\$100 + SF	100%, Years 1-5 75%, Years 6-10 50%, Years 11-15



## 50% Reduction in Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU)

### New Service Fees:

	<b>Fee 100%</b>	<b>Fee 50%</b>
Electric <200 Amp Service	\$300.00	\$150.00
Electric >200 Amp Service	\$800.00	\$400.00
Water 5/8" Supply	\$425.00	\$237.50
Water 3/4" Supply	\$475.00	\$212.50
Water 1" Supply	\$600.00	\$300.00
Water 1-1/2" Supply	\$1,175.00	\$587.50
Water 2" Supply	\$1,325.00	\$662.50

## Ready to access incentives?

Free permits are automatically applied to all projects within the RZ.

All other incentives require submission of an application, found on the City's website. Staff present applications to Planning Commission & City Council for final determination, based on an Evaluation Rubric defining minimum project thresholds.

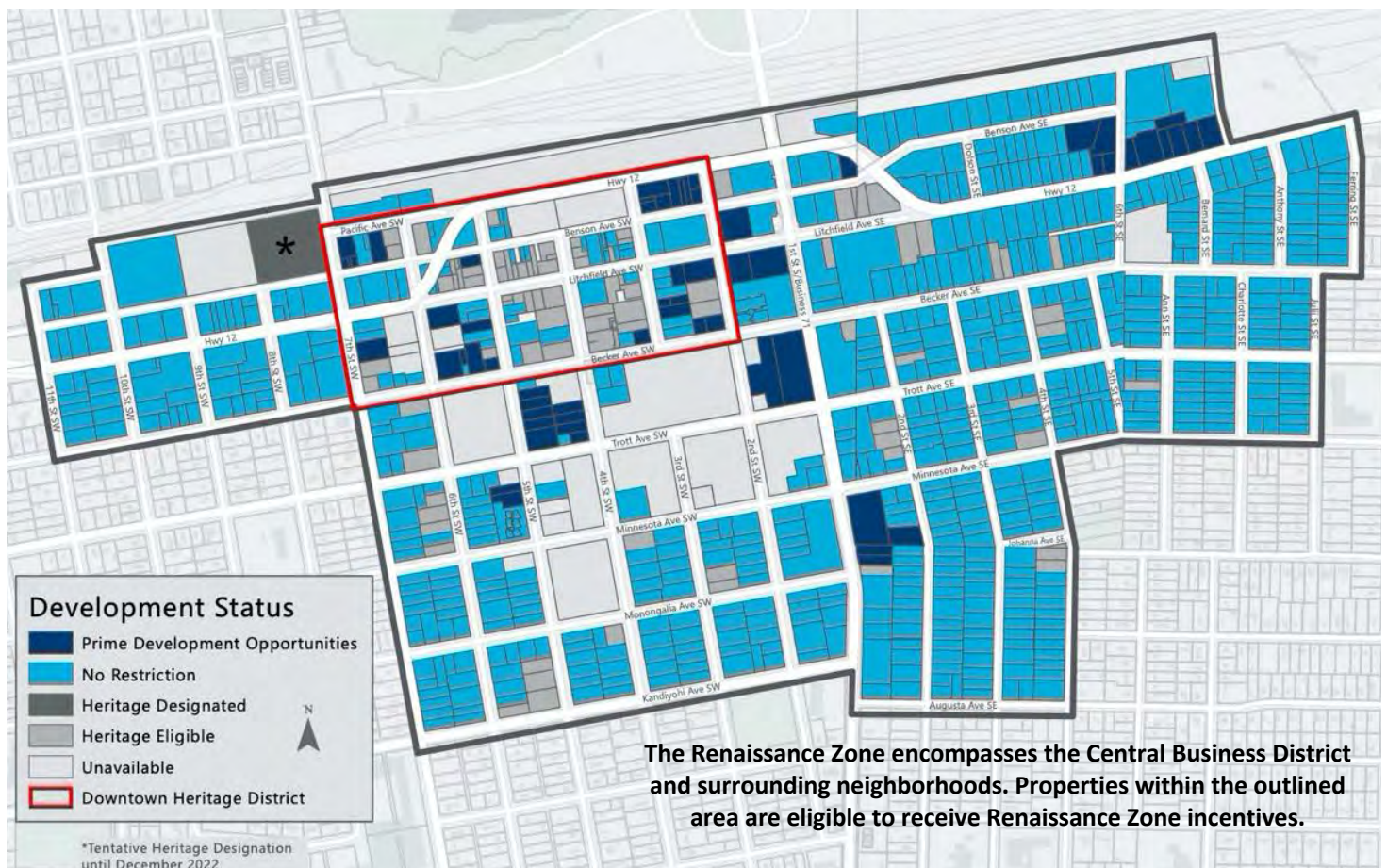
Additionally, the RZ removes development barriers & protects the historic business district and buildings:

### "Open" Zoning:

- Special Conditional Use Permit
- Few Use Restrictions
- Encourage pedestrian-oriented design
  - reduced setbacks
  - increased density
- Reduced parking requirements via "credits"

### Heritage Designation:

- Creation of Heritage Preservation Commission
- Voluntary program for property owners
  - Protect historic buildings
  - Preference for storefront incentive
  - New construction contextual sensitivity within downtown district



The Renaissance Zone encompasses the Central Business District and surrounding neighborhoods. Properties within the outlined area are eligible to receive Renaissance Zone incentives.

To apply, visit [https://willmarmn.gov/departments/planning\\_and\\_development/](https://willmarmn.gov/departments/planning_and_development/)

# ESTIMATED PROJECT COSTS INSIDE & OUTSIDE RENAISSANCE ZONE

## Sample Project: Multifamily Housing w/ Commercial Space



- \$7M Total Project Cost
- 60,000 SF
- 48-Units
- 4-Stories, Enclosed Parking
- 1-Acre Site

Outside Renaissance Zone (Without RZ incentives)	
Construction Costs	\$7M
Land Acquisition	\$100K
Utilities - New Service	\$25K
Permit Fees (Building, Mech, Plumbing, SAC & WAC)	\$135K
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>\$7.26M</b>

Inside Renaissance Zone (With maximum RZ incentives)	
Construction Costs	\$7M
Land Acquisition (If city-owned land)	\$0
Utilities - New Service (50% off new Elect & Water Serv. and Hookup)	\$17K
Permit Fees (Free)	\$0
TIF (Priority Approval)	(\$500K)
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>\$6.52M</b>
<b>SAVINGS:</b>	<b>\$740K</b>

Projected cost savings are estimates, based solely on hypothetical project and financial information. All examples of project costs, expenses, or other estimated numbers are completely hypothetical in nature. Calculations are not intended to represent actual project costs and savings, but are estimates based on reasonable assumptions and currently available incentives. Actual results will vary based on project, type of incentives, and amounts of awards.