

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

MINUTES

April 15, 2021

Via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Rollie Boll, Kevin Halvorson, Dustin Kotrba, Kim Larson, Dan Lippert, Michelle Marotzke, Keith Poier and Dan Tepfer

Absent: Larry Konsterlie

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager

Secretarial: Diane Beck, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chairperson Kevin Halvorson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:34 a.m.

AGENDA—Chair Halvorson added to the agenda, item 6, Ag Committee meeting schedule.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Boll, SECONDED BY Michelle Marotzke, to approve the revised Agenda. MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Boll, SECONDED BY Kim Larson, to approve the Minutes of the February 18, 2021 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

REPORTS

Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee. Connie Schmoll reported the Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee meets quarterly and will meet next on May 10, 2021. She continues to forward pertinent industrial hemp and upcoming conference information to the subcommittee. Letters were mailed to legislators, the Department of Commerce and Department of Agriculture regarding industrial hemp regulations. Schmoll suggested scheduling a meeting with Senator Michelle Fischbach's staff at the Willmar office to discuss industrial hemp regulations. Marotzke and Keith Poier volunteered to attend with Schmoll. They will put together a list of industrial hemp discussion items prior to scheduling the meeting. Schmoll mentioned an industrial hemp conference was held recently in Vermont noting that state is staying on top of industrial hemp issues. As to an inquiry about PRODucers in Olivia, Schmoll stated regulations are keeping that company's progress on hold. Poier shared that he continues to talk with PRODucers and reported it has down-sized its proposed operation, but plans to

process fiber this year as there is adequate inventory from last year and it has approximately three or four growers for 2021.

Ag to Energy Biofuels Workshop Update. Chair Halvorson asked for input from the virtual workshop held in March. Schmoll commented the workshop was sponsored by Christianson PLLP. Chair Halvorson shared approximately 25 attended the virtual workshop. The presentation and discussion were mainly on ethanol and carbon credits. Chair Halvorson shared some ethanol plants dissolved during 2020. Dustin Kotrba provided an update on electric vehicles (EVs) and the future of ethanol demand due to increased production of EVs. Schmoll thanked Christianson PLLP for sponsoring the workshop.

Partners in Ag Innovation Conference Update. Kotrba reported the planning team invited John Cosgrove to the last meeting to share information on Remo, virtual meeting technology he developed. The technology enables participants to view the entire conference area, including participant tables. There are a few restrictions with the technology, one being the number of attendees.

[Dan Lippert joined the meeting.]

Kotrba commented it is an interesting technology and stated due to the hybrid conference, the technology may not be possible to use. The planning team has discussed including prizes for attendees; however, approval from the sponsors is needed. The planning team continues to secure additional sponsors. Kotrba shared some of the speakers, including the Johnson family, John Christianson (financial planning) and Fladeboe Land (farmland). Representative Dave Baker or U.S. Representative Michelle Fischbach may be invited to give a legislative update. Breakout sessions may also be included. The conference will be held July 29, 2021 from 7:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at MinnWest Technology Campus. Kotrba will serve as emcee.

EDC BOARDS' STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION. Chair Halvorson shared the EDC held its annual boards' strategic planning session on April 14th. Approximately 26 attended, including EDC staff, EDC Joint Powers Board, EDC Joint Operations Board, committee chairs/vice chairs, community leaders (Ridgewater College, MinnWest Technology Campus, Somali representatives and Sarah Swedburg, Willmar City Planner). Swedburg has been hired to replace Schmoll when she retires at the end of May. Schmoll shared the major focus areas identified for 2021 are: 1) business support; 2) broadband; and 3) workforce development. Housing may be added as a fourth focus area or placed under business support. Schmoll shared agriculture will be placed under business support. The planning session facilitator suggested selecting three or four focus areas for 2021 as more would be too many to support. Schmoll commented the facilitator will compile the discussion/suggestions from the planning session for staff and board review and approval.

AG/RENEWABLE ENERGY COMMUNITY EVENTS/PROJECTS. Schmoll shared she submitted a proposed agreement to the EDC boards to continue working on broadband on a contract basis through year end. A lengthy discussion on broadband was held. Schmoll commented the need for higher broadband speeds is needed for rural areas, but the cost is significant. A project is underway to bring high-speed broadband access to Arctander, Dovre, Mamre and St. Johns

Townships at an estimated cost of over \$6 million. Rollie Boll stated working with Ridgewater College will be helpful in offering training opportunities to aide in expanding the county's workforce.

AG COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE. Chair Halvorson inquired if the committee is willing to meet on May 20th in order to meet Sarah Swedburg before Schmoll retires and to discuss meeting structure and goals. Committee members concurred with meeting in May; however, attendance may vary depending on the weather. Schmoll commented in-person Ag Committee meetings may begin in June.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **7:30 a.m., Thursday, May 20, 2021** via Zoom video conference.

ADJOURNMENT—

IT WAS MOVED BY Kim Larson, SECONDED BY Dustin Kotrba, to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:46 a.m.