

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

May 24, 2021

Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Jesse Gislason, Melissa Knott, Emily Lien, Pam Rosenau, Joanna Schrupp and Brittany VanDerBill

Excused: Donna Boonstra

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director; Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager and Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Secretarial: Cathy Skindelien, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chairperson Emily Lien called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m.

Introduction of Sarah Swedburg. Connie Schmoll introduced her replacement, Sarah Swedburg. Swedburg worked previously for the City of Willmar Planning and Development Department and started at the EDC on May 6th. She has worked with the EDC on many of the EDC's Willmar projects and is well-integrated already.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Jesse Gislason, SECONDED BY Brittany VanDerBill, to approve the Minutes of the February 22, 2021 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

Social Media Statistics. Aaron Backman provided the following Facebook statistics from April 22 to May 19, 2021: The most highly viewed post was 738 for Schmoll's retirement open house. Backman reminded the committee that everyone is welcome to attend Schmoll's open house between 3:00 and 5:00 on Tuesday May 25th. The second highest post had 636 views pertaining to a six-part marketing series for businesses by the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce.

Backman asked Swedburg to comment on her new position. Swedburg commented that she has been concentrating on industrial hemp, learning about the Elevate program and doing preparatory work for the Elevate classes. She will take the facilitator training for Elevate in the summer. She has been helping to gather information for business developments coming into Willmar. They are working on diverse small businesses, including a new Asian grocery store and the expansion of an existing Somali grocery store.

Backman presented website statistics, stating there were peaks on April 26th, May 11th and May 13th. It was a mixture of things that were possibly COVID related, but there was nothing dominant.

There were approximately 1900 pageviews and 1600 unique pageviews. There were 1100 users in the April 22-May 19 timeframe.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Elevate Business Academy. Schmoll reported that Elevate is a 12-week program under Rising Tide Capital, for entrepreneurs and start-up businesses about leadership and developing business leaders. There are 5 participants and only one has missed one class, the others have had 100% attendance. Every class has homework and prework, which builds up to the formation of a business plan. It is completely funded by Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) at this time, but if the program continues it will need sponsors. The last class is on June 2nd, with graduation on June 16th. The ceremony will be held at the rehearsal hall of the Willmar Education and Arts Center (WEAC). Schmoll and Abdusalaam Hirsi are trained facilitators. The feedback has been wonderful. It has been very timely for the grocery store owners to attend the class as they work on their expansions. Schmoll advised if committee members know anyone who is interested in starting their own business, they should refer them to Sarah Swedburg to sign up for Elevate classes.

Backman commented that as a direct result of Elevate, several business entrepreneurs are moving into the second phase of implementation. The Asian grocery store owner, Hteh Rue, was concerned about joining Elevate because of her English skills, which have developed well during the class time. Swedburg commented that today Rue was approved for an EDC Microenterprise loan and a matching loan from SWIF for capital to finance her new business. She will be renting a building on the west side of Willmar. She grew up working in a grocery store in Burma, however, the permitting process in the United States is completely different. Rue's grocery store is located on the edge of the Renaissance Zone, which qualified her for a waiver on sign permits and renovation permits. Because Rue participated in Elevate, SWIF waived the fees on her loan, and her interest rate dropped from 6% to 4%. She will also receive technical assistance with QuickBooks training.

Broadband. Schmoll reported that broadband is currently a busy topic. Funds from pandemic relief and help from the state of Minnesota is available so the EDC's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee needs to do everything it can to get Kandiyohi County completely covered. Federated Telephone Cooperative will be a provider, along with Arvig, Charter, and Vibrant Broadband. The next two years will be critical. Schmoll will keep in touch with this Marketing Committee for any help needed.

NEW BUSINESS—

EDC Brochure. Swedburg reported the EDC brochure will be updated to include her contact information while removing Schmoll's due to her retirement. Overall, there are pictures that should be updated with newer images. Backman stated that even though there are extra copies of the EDC brochure on hand the updates should be done right away. He requested input on the new flyers.

Industrial Hemp flyer. Swedburg reported the Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee is moving forward on promoting the county for the production and processing of industrial hemp. Subcommittee member Laura Arne attended the Florida Industrial Hemp Conference and Exhibition on May 19-21.

The subcommittee discussed creating a flyer for educational and promotional purposes. Swedburg is working on the flyer using the EDC's Agriculture flyer as a basis. Later the Agriculture flyer will need to be updated as well. Schmoll commented the flyers will be useful when working with site selectors. Site selectors want to be contacted no more than twice a year so it is important to have something new to show them that brings attention to our area. Swedburg will be attending a site selectors conference in July so the flyers will need to be ready.

Marketing position. Backman reported the EDC is currently working on several ongoing projects, all of which consume a fair amount of time. Given the staff transition and broadband activity demands, now is the time to look for a marketing person. Backman developed a job description for a Marketing and Communications Specialist. This position would support the team's programs and activities. There will be administrative duties and interaction with Backman and Swedburg.

Job responsibilities would include:

- Overall responsibility for the EDC's website including maintaining content, search engine optimization, and working with staff and partners on updates.
- Manage all social media content on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and any new platforms that are impactful to engage our clients and promote our services.
- Research, acquire and schedule a variety of relevant content to post on these platforms using tools such as Google Alerts and Buffer with a schedule of engagement one to two times weekly.
- Execute Constant Contact (for email campaigns) and direct mail campaigns.
- Responsible for writing, editing and designing the EDC quarterly newsletter.
- EDC staff liaison to the EDC's Marketing & Public Relations Committee, one of five standing committees for the organization.
- Coordinating or assisting with special events as needed, including the Elevate Program and the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference. Set up and run booths at twice annual local job fairs.
- Provide assistance to the EDC staff in creating marketing materials and strategies to position the greater Kandiyohi County area for growth and as a great place to do business.
- Provide in-house design support and expertise as needed for presentations, brochures, ads, flyers and occasional e-blasts, etc. Create, edit and manage online blogs and short videos.
- Provide media/public relations support and guidance to staff members.
- Promptly and courteously answer questions received from the public and/or referring them to the appropriate person or agency.
- Have a strong knowledge of a variety of software that includes Word, Outlook, InDesign, Photoshop, Adobe, etc.
- Attend networking events as needed.

The minimum requirements for the position include:

- Bachelor's degree in Marketing, Communications, Public Relations or related degree.
- Two or more years of experience in marketing/communications responsibilities, including social media marketing, website maintenance and print marketing.
- Proficiency in social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter), website platforms (WordPress), Adobe Suite, Acrobat, InDesign and Photoshop.
- Strong verbal and written communications skills.

Expectations are:

- Strong desire to learn along with professional drive.
- Collaborative with staff and the EDC's partners.
- Team player and open to feedback.
- Proactive, anticipates needs and able to evaluate alternatives.

Salary and related:

- 75% Time (30 hours a week) at \$30.00 per hour. \$46,800/year (\$30 x 1560 hours)
- 80% Time (32 hours a week) at \$30.00 per hour. \$49,920/year (\$30 x 1664 hours)
- Assuming a 20% salary range, the range for this position would then be:
 - \$42,120 to \$51,480 at the 75% Option
 - \$44,928 to \$54,912 at the 80% Option

Benefits will apply if the applicant is hired for 32 hours per week. The proposed salary was determined by looking at eight comparable positions in the Twin Cities area and outside Minnesota. The median salaries for these positions were approximately \$33.00 per hour. Because the cost of living in Kandiyohi County is lower, the EDC will offer 10% less than the median, which is \$30.00 per hour. When annualized the 75% time equates to \$46,800, and 80% would be \$49,920. On an annualized basis the salary would be \$68,000 per year if the employee were full time.

To keep costs down initially Backman would prefer to hire for 30-32 hours per week and could adjust to full time in the future. This is good timing because the EDC will be starting the budget process for 2022. For units of government budget instructions have already started for June and July. Backman asked for comments. Schrupp stated this makes sense based on the conversations that happened at the planning session. Schmoll said it is extremely busy right now. This position would take pressure off everyone at the EDC. Schmoll was fully supportive, stating the timing is perfect. Knott thought the task list was great, it will help the person understand what needs to be done.

Backman asked how much information should be put in the job description. Should we have a recruitment tool kit already available that we can modify for each development? Backman asked for comments on the educational requirements for the new position. Gislason said if they don't have some experience it would take too much time to do the training. Knott thought the salary should be higher if two years of experience is required; if the EDC hired someone with less experience the salary would be more in line. Backman responded that \$30.00 was right at the median. The variable is that this position is not full-time. At 32 hours the benefits could be available, that will give flexibility to the hire. Some of the work can be done remotely. Pam Rosenau suggested adding flexibility of the work place to the job description. Everything else looked fine, there should be boundaries so you don't get unqualified applicants and it was summarized well. Schrupp commented there should be flexibility on the experience required as there are some businesses that don't have established roles in marketing.

It would also be helpful to have the marketing expense numbers from the past few years available for the Joint Powers Board. Backman responded that the EDC's marketing expenses have been \$60-65,000 for each of the last four years. The Willmar Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)

receives \$34,000 and the other \$25,000 +/- has gone to REDstar, Golden Shovel, etc. That \$25,000 is already in the budget and the EDC would need to find an additional \$30,000 in the budget. This is a reasonable goal. This could be the EDC's best opportunity given the large projects that are currently active and the staff transition. The EDC's trends have been positive over the past couple years. The resources have grown by 50% since 2016, and loan portfolio is five times higher than what it was in 2012. The EDC needs to grow along with these trends. Rosenau asked whether mileage would be included. Backman responded they are reimbursed at IRS reimbursement rates.

Backman stated the ad would highlight some of this information, including benefits and the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) retirement plan. Lien commented that the opportunity for benefits needs to be emphasized, it would pull in more applicants. Brittany VanDerBill agreed, stating she liked that the salary was included, as to not waste everyone's time. Trainability will be the key, and she suggested that the EDC could be a little more flexible on the four-year degree, possibly accepting equivalent experience. Knott thought that people look at two things, the tasks and responsibilities from a technological standpoint and whether they fit the criteria. Keep it simple.

Backman wanted to know if the committee would like to meet in person or by Zoom in June. VanDerBill preferred in-person meetings. The EDC will review its preparedness plan in June and would still have masks available. Schrupp commented that some places are offering hybrid capabilities. Backman responded the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce has an Owl camera that the EDC may test, but the question is whether it is worth the investment. Lien preferred in-person meetings. Rosenau is looking forward to seeing everyone in person. Schrupp said she could work with the EDC on a location. Backman requested e-mails from anyone with additional suggestions on the job description.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, June 28, 2021** in person at a location to be determined.

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

facebook

Results from April 22 to May 19, 2021

 783 Total Page Likes	 1,552 Post Reach ↑28%	 110 Page Views ↑33%
 8 Page Likes ↑0%	 368 Post Engagement ↑81%	 8 Page Followers ↑0%
		930 Total Page Followers

TOP 6 POSTS 4/22 to 5/19/2021

Post Details

EDC Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC
2d

Please join the EDC as we recognize Connie Schmall at a retirement open house on Tuesday, May 25, 2021 from 3-5 p.m. at the EDC office.

Please join us at an
OPEN HOUSE
honoring
Business Development Manager
Connie Schmall
who will be retiring on May 31st, 2021.
Tuesday, May 25, 2021
3:00-5:00 p.m.
At the Economic Development
Commission Office



Performance for Your Post

738 People Reached

51 Reactions, Comments & Shares

32 Like	32 On Post
5 Love	5 On Post
14 Comments	14 On Post
0 Shares	0 On Post

74 Post Clicks

25 Photo Views	0 Link Clicks
-----------------------	----------------------

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

1 Hide Post	1 Hide All Posts
0 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what app

EDC Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC
April 23

Beginning May 4th and continuing every other week through July 15th, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Vivid Image are hosting a six-part marketing series designed for businesses in the Willmar Lakes Area with a focus on pandemic recovery and growth. Find more information and register for one or all of the webinars here <https://willmar.vimm.com/>.

WLA Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
VIVID IMAGE

Join us
for the upcoming six-part marketing series
designed for businesses in the Willmar Lakes Area with a focus on pandemic recovery and growth

SAVE THESE DATES!

Attend these live webinars to get timely business and marketing help during these unprecedented times.

You'll receive practical resources related to the course material.

<p>How to Adapt Your Local Business Marketing to Quickly Attract and Activate Customers Who Still Want Your Products and Services Even in an Unpredictable Market</p> <p>TUESDAY, MAY 4</p>	<p>10 Easy Steps to Drive Traffic to Your Website, Starting with Google My Business</p> <p>TUESDAY, MAY 18</p>	<p>Facebook: Dominating the World's #1 Social Media Platform</p> <p>TUESDAY, JUNE 1</p>
<p>Google Ads for Small Budgets: How to Find Customers & Get Leads</p> <p>TUESDAY, JUNE 15</p>	<p>Speed Up Your Hiring Process & Fill Your Open Positions</p> <p>TUESDAY, JUNE 29</p>	<p>Get Online Reviews to Drive Sales & Build a Great Brand Reputation</p> <p>THURSDAY, JULY 15</p>

Register for 1 or as many webinars as you'd like to attend.

This small business marketing series is in response, in part, to the CARES Act and economic recovery from the pandemic.

Reserve Your Spot Today willmar.vimm.com

Sponsored by: **MMDC**

636 People Reached

18 Likes, Comments & Shares

12 Likes	6 On Post	6 On Shares
0 Comments	0 On Post	0 On Shares
6 Shares	6 On Post	0 On Shares

7 Post Clicks

1 Photo Views	1 Link Clicks	5 Other Clicks
----------------------	----------------------	-----------------------

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

1 Hide Post	0 Hide All Posts
0 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

EDC Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC
May 11

Beginning May 4th and continuing every other week through July 15th, Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Vivid Image are hosting a six-part marketing series designed for businesses in the Willmar Lakes Area with a focus on pandemic recovery and growth. Find more information and register for one or all of the webinars here <https://willmar.vimm.com/>.

WLA Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
VIVID IMAGE

Join us
for the upcoming six-part marketing series
designed for businesses in the Willmar Lakes Area with a focus on pandemic recovery and growth

SAVE THESE DATES!

Attend these live webinars to get timely business and marketing help during these unprecedented times.

You'll receive practical resources related to the course material.

<p>How to Adapt Your Local Business Marketing to Quickly Attract and Activate Customers Who Still Want Your Products and Services Even in an Unpredictable Market</p> <p>TUESDAY, MAY 4</p>	<p>10 Easy Steps to Drive Traffic to Your Website, Starting with Google My Business</p> <p>TUESDAY, MAY 18</p>	<p>Facebook: Dominating the World's #1 Social Media Platform</p> <p>TUESDAY, JUNE 1</p>
<p>Google Ads for Small Budgets: How to Find Customers & Get Leads</p> <p>TUESDAY, JUNE 15</p>	<p>Speed Up Your Hiring Process & Fill Your Open Positions</p> <p>TUESDAY, JUNE 29</p>	<p>Get Online Reviews to Drive Sales & Build a Great Brand Reputation</p> <p>THURSDAY, JULY 15</p>

Register for 1 or as many webinars as you'd like to attend.

This small business marketing series is in response, in part, to the CARES Act and economic recovery from the pandemic.

Reserve Your Spot Today willmar.vimm.com

Sponsored by: **MMDC**

138 People Reached

3 Likes, Comments & Shares

1 Likes	1 On Post	0 On Shares
0 Comments	0 On Post	0 On Shares
2 Shares	2 On Post	0 On Shares

1 Post Clicks

0 Photo Views	0 Link Clicks	1 Other Clicks
----------------------	----------------------	-----------------------

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide Post	0 Hide All Posts
0 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

Post Details

EDC Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC
6d · 🌐

Minnesota is a place where entrepreneurs come to innovate, experiment and change the world. We're the proud home of the 12th best U.S. city for entrepreneurship. Check out joinusmn.com/blitz-6 to explore more #JoinUsMN #EDW2021 #EconDevWeek



The Future is Bright in MINNESOTA
[JoinUsMN.com](https://joinusmn.com)

RANKED 12TH BEST CITY FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP
(U.S. News & World Report, 2021)

Get More Likes, Comments and Shares
When you boost this post, you'll show it to more people.

130 People Reached **62** Engagements [Boost Post](#)

1 Comment

Like Comment Share EDC

Performance for Your Post

130 People Reached

2 Likes, Comments & Shares

0 Likes	0 On Post	0 On Shares
2 Comments	2 On Post	0 On Shares
0 Shares	0 On Post	0 On Shares

60 Post Clicks

1 Photo Views	0 Link Clicks	59 Other Clicks
---------------	---------------	-----------------

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide Post	1 Hide All Posts
0 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

EDC Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC
April 23 · 🌐

Tomorrow, April 24, is Free Park Day.
All 75 Minnesota state parks and state recreation areas will offer free admission to everyone.
It's a great opportunity to get outside & explore someplace new...
[See More](#)



FREE PARK DAYS
Free entrance to all Minnesota state parks and recreation areas.

DNR.STATE.MN.US

Free entrance days to all Minnesota state parks
Four days each year, all Minnesota state parks and recreation areas are

Performance for Your Post

84 People Reached

5 Likes, Comments & Shares

3 Likes	1 On Post	2 On Shares
0 Comments	0 On Post	0 On Shares
2 Shares	2 On Post	0 On Shares

2 Post Clicks

0 Photo Views	1 Link Clicks	1 Other Clicks
---------------	---------------	----------------

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide Post	0 Hide All Posts
0 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

EDC Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC
5d · 🌐

If the pandemic has shown us anything, it's that parents are essential to our state's workforce. MN is the second best state for working parents, and we're darn proud of it. Check out joinusmn.com/blitz-7 to explore more. #JoinUsMN #EDW2021 #EconDevWeek



The Future is Bright in MINNESOTA
[JoinUsMN.com](https://joinusmn.com)

RANKED 2ND BEST STATE FOR WORKING PARENTS
(Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021)

Performance for Your Post

84 People Reached

1 Likes, Comments & Shares

0 Likes	0 On Post	0 On Shares
1 Comments	0 On Post	1 On Shares
0 Shares	0 On Post	0 On Shares

16 Post Clicks

0 Photo Views	0 Link Clicks	16 Other Clicks
---------------	---------------	-----------------

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide Post	0 Hide All Posts
-------------	------------------

Website Statistics April 22-May 19, 2021

Marketing Committee Meeting report

Apr 22, 2021 - May 19, 2021

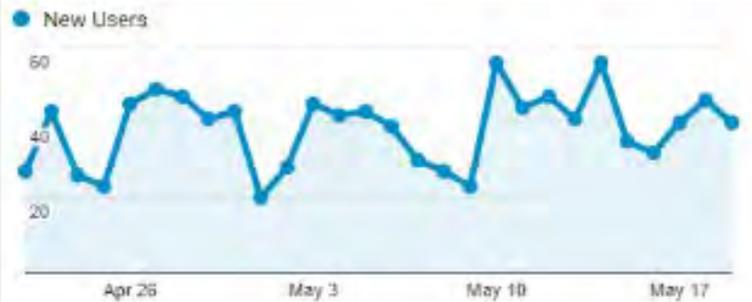
+ Add Widget Share Email Export

Customize Dashboard Delete Dashboard

All Users
100.00% Sessions

+ Add Segment

New Users



Users



Avg. Session Duration and Pages / Session



Bounce Rate



Audience Overview ✔

SAVE EXPORT SHARE INSIGHTS

All Users
100.00% Users

+ Add Segment

Apr 22, 2021 - May 19, 2021

Overview

Users VS. Select a metric

Hourly Day Week Month



Users

1,119

New Users

1,078

Sessions

1,230

Number of Sessions per User

1.10

Pageviews

1,884

Pages / Session

1.53

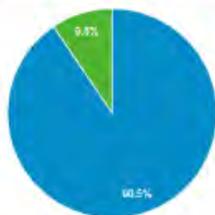
Avg. Session Duration

00:00:50

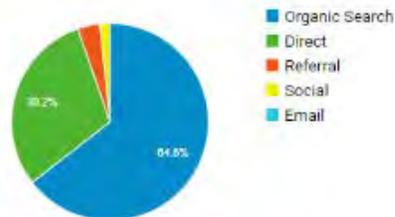
Bounce Rate

77.72%

New Visitor Returning Visitor



Top Channels



Users



Acquisition

Behavior

	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration
	1,119	1,078	1,230	77.72%	1.53	00:00:50
1 Organic Search	726			76.19%		
2 Direct	340			79.95%		
3 Referral	41			81.82%		
4 Social	18			88.89%		
5 Email	1			100.00%		

To see all 5 Channels click here



Pageviews 1,884	Unique Pageviews 1,616	Avg. Time on Page 00:01:34	Bounce Rate 77.72%	% Exit 65.23%
----------------------------------	---	---	-------------------------------------	--------------------------------

- Site Content**
- Page
- Page Title
- Site Search**
- Search Term
- Events**
- Event Category

Page	Pageviews	% Pageviews
1. /	401	21.28%
2. /your-team/	58	3.08%
3. /business/transportation/	57	3.03%
4. /cities/willmar/	52	2.76%
5. /news/	42	2.23%
6. /cities/sunburg/	39	2.07%
7. /business/major-employers/	36	1.91%
8. /living/lakes-recreation/	33	1.75%
9. /5544-2/	32	1.70%
10. /cities/atwater/	32	1.70%

[view full report](#)