

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

**MINUTES**

June 18, 2020

Via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Rollie Boll, Ian Graue, Kevin Halvorson, Christy Kallevig, Dustin Kotrba, Kim Larson, Michelle Marotzke, Keith Poier and Dan Tepfer

Absent: Larry Konsterlie and Dan Lippert

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager

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

Chairperson Kevin Halvorson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:33 a.m. and declared a quorum was present.

**AGENDA**—Connie Schmoll asked to add to the Agenda under New Business, the University of Minnesota Extension Turkey Research and Education.

**MINUTES**—

IT WAS MOVED BY Dustin Kotrba, SECONDED BY Keith Poier, to approve the January 16 and February 20, 2020 Minutes as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**REPORTS**

**Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee.** Schmoll gave an update of the June 8<sup>th</sup> Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee meeting and noted Kim Larson shared industrial hemp information with subcommittee members. Larson shared he and Keith Poier planned to attend a hemp conference in January, but the conference was rescheduled to August. They now have decided not to attend and wait for another conference. Larson commented the industrial hemp industry is unsettled; one company has gone out of business and a couple other businesses are not doing well. He feels there are opportunities for producing hemp products and stated Tim Seehusen's Prairie PROducers hemp operation in Olivia has promise. The successful hemp companies deal in hempwood for flooring, clothing, building material (hempcrete), etc. Larson reported CBD is more lucrative and a big driver. He noted Kentucky was the leader in industrial hemp farming, but acreage has dropped. Poier stated the history of hemp has not been easy for the United States and mentioned the fight many years ago between cotton and hemp, which is one reason hemp is on the drug list rather than the fiber list. There is a need to redevelop those markets. Larson commented the subcommittee's role is not to develop a company, but to entice a processing company to the area. Larson inquired if the Ag Committee wants to continue putting energies into the industrial hemp effort. Larson suggested the subcommittee be more aggressive in the approach

to agricultural processing in the area. He shared the following links to articles that give background on the expansion of one U.S. company:

1. <https://www.canopygrowth.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/19.01.13-Canopy-NY-Hemp-Final-EN-.pdf>
2. <https://www.pressconnects.com/story/news/local/2019/01/14/hemp-canopy-growth-binghamton-broome-cannibis-processing-center/2568106002/>
3. <https://www.canopygrowth.com/investors/news-releases/new-york-hemp-industrial-park-update/>
4. <https://www.canopygrowth.com/investors/news-releases/canopy-growth-corporation-to-host-guests-at-new-york-state-hemp-production-facility/>

Larson felt it may be beneficial to work with legislators and that Harold Stanislawski of the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI) may assist in contacting legislators to begin the conversation for an aggressive recruiting process to bring an industrial hemp processing company to the area.

A suggestion was made to invite state legislators to a future Industrial Hemp Subcommittee meeting. Poier stated there is a need to have a market in order to move forward on the industrial hemp initiative. Schmoll reported Tim Seehusen and his brother, Paul, will be invited to the July subcommittee meeting and encouraged Ag Committee members to attend. Chair Halvorson shared his brother in Pennsylvania planted 200 acres of hemp for fiber last year; he will contact him for information on investors, etc.

**Ag Marketing and Event Planning Subcommittee.** Kotrba gave an update on the planning for the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference scheduled for July 30<sup>th</sup> at the MinnWest Technology Campus. It will be a virtual live stream with some onsite participation to facilitate speakers, Zoom and YouTube productions. Sara Mikolich, coordinator, has been working on combining the various technologies. Approximately 85 registrations have been received, which is an increase from the 2019 conference. The keynote speaker is Jason Broadwater, who will speak on economic, community and business development. Other speakers are Shannon Schlecht, AURI Executive Director; Jim Sieben, President, Nova-Tech Engineering; Sam Ziegler, Producer and Director of Green Seam; John Christianson, Christianson PLLP and Craig Schmidt, Hydrologist, National Weather Service. Kotrba noted the budget for the conference is \$30,000. With the \$6,000 carryover from the 2019 conference and the \$20,000-\$26,000 received to date, the budget has been met. It was noted the virtual event may save some resources. Schmoll shared the virtual event has brought in attendees from a broader area, i.e., St. Cloud, Minneapolis, etc.

**Legacy Planning Workshop.** Schmoll gave an overview of the free virtual Legacy Planning Workshop held June 2<sup>nd</sup> with more than 30 in attendance. Panel members included John Christianson and Joel Gratz of Christianson PLLP, who presented information on succession planning for next generation farmers.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**University of Minnesota Research Facility.** Schmoll reported she, Kathy Schwantes, West Central Regional Director of University of Minnesota (U of M) Extension and Dr. Tim Johnson of Mid-Central Research and Outreach Center (MCROC) have been discussing steps for a turkey research facility in Willmar. U of M Extension has partnered with Ridgewater College to offer an online poultry certification course to enhance the existing baseline workforce. U of M Extension is also developing a Poultry Health

Certificate for undergraduate and graduate levels. The EDC has set aside \$3,000 to help with the marketing program.

**Community Ag/Renewable Energy Community Events/Projects.** Larson shared he filled an unexpired term on the Dovre Township board. The board will submit a concern to the County regarding its plans for the potential of a bird flu pandemic. He suggested inviting Kim Lindahl, Director of Kandiyohi County Emergency Management, to a future Ag Committee meeting to address the township's concern.

Schmoll shared the criteria of the various loan and grant programs on which the EDC and Southwest Initiative Foundation have been working during the COVID-19 pandemic. She thanked Christianson PLLP for sharing the loan program information on its website.

[Christy Kallevig joined the meeting]

Kotrba shared approximately \$100,000 in loans have been distributed to various entities during the pandemic. He commented there is funding available under the Main Street Lending Program.

Christy Kallevig gave an update of the MARL (Minnesota Agriculture & Rural Leadership) program. Students will graduate in January 2021 and another class may begin in the fall of 2021. Kallevig will present information on this program next month, as well as information on her visit to Cambodia.

Schmoll shared her conversation with Sonja Bogart, new CEO of Kandiyohi Power Cooperative, regarding renewable energy efforts. Michelle Marotzke provided information on Willmar Municipal Utilities' renewable energy efforts and Larson and Ian Graue shared information on alternative energy (solar) efforts for churches and other entities.

**ADJOURNMENT—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Ian Graue, SECONDED BY Kevin Halvorson, to adjourn the meeting.  
MOTION CARRIED.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:32 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING—**The next committee meeting is **7:30 a.m., July 16, 2020** via Zoom or at Christianson PLLP, 302 Fifth Street SW, Willmar.