

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

MINUTES

June 20, 2019

Christianson PLLP, Willmar

Present: Rollie Boll, Ian Graue, Kevin Halvorson, Dustin Kotrba and Kim Larson

Excused: Larry Konsterlie, Dan Lippert and Dan Tepfer

Absent: Keith Poier and Bruce Reuss

Guest: Michelle Marotzke, Willmar Municipal Utilities

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

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

Vice Chairperson Kevin Halvorson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 a.m. and declared a quorum was not present.

AGENDA—The agenda was approved as emailed.

MINUTES—As there was not a quorum in attendance, the April 18, 2019 minutes were received, but not approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Soybeans Update. Connie Schmoll shared there was nothing new to report. She reported Bio-Sunn Technologies, Inc. is planning to build a \$150,000 fiber and graphene plant in Garrison, North Dakota. Graphene is a fiber wash product that can be used as a supercapacitor in batteries. AURI has spoken to Bio-Sunn and is planning a meeting with the developers to see if there is an interest in Minnesota, i.e., Kandiyohi County/Renville County.

REPORTS

Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee. Schmoll shared information from the Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee meeting held on Monday, June 17th. Subcommittee members are actively researching various hemp and CBD issues and bringing back information and ideas. Regulations are pending as each state must set their own regulations that had to be approved by the federal government. Hemp farmers are continually warned on the amount of THC in the plant. Harold Stanislawski is working closely with Bio-Sunn Technologies and AURI continues to research industrial hemp fiber. Schmoll reported the subcommittee narrowed its focus to processing hemp.

The 2019 FarmFest may feature a hemp growing plot. Todd Matthewson, consultant with Just Bio Fiber, will attend the subcommittee meeting in July to speak about producing hempcrete. Schmoll mentioned the TimeZone-CBD store and Potpourri in Willmar sell CBD oils. An inquiry was made if any farmers have planted industrial hemp this year. Kim Larson shared Nate Hultgren was planning to plant; however, with the late spring he was unsure if planting was done. The industrial hemp growing season was discussed.

Ag Marketing and Event Planning Subcommittee. Dustin Kotrba provided an update of the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference scheduled for August 1st at MinnWest Technology. The \$30,000 sponsorship target has been realized. Initially, the registration fee was set at \$30 and currently, there is a promo code to register for free. Schmoll mentioned to contact Kotrba or her for the promo code. Kotrba feels that with the sponsorship level, the \$30 fee may not be needed. Currently registrations are approximately 70-80 and marketing of the event is going well in Facebook and the website. Ads will also be printed in the *West Central Tribune* and the *Sunday Reminder*. Speakers have been secured. Darin Newsom is the keynote speaker and will present information on new markets. Don Carlson, Commodities Manager of Bushmills Ethanol, will speak on factors that influence market trends. Kotrba shared the subcommittee is working to secure a precision ag speaker. Andrea Vaubel, Deputy Commissioner, with Congressman's Collin Peterson's office, will give the opening remarks. Beth McCall, Industrial Hemp Advisor with the BonVivant Group in Colorado, will speak on new opportunities in industrial hemp. Model Citizen Restaurant, a hyper-seasonal, youth farm to table restaurant located at Goat Ridge Brewing in New London will provide and serve the food; Mateo Mackbee, owner, will share information about the restaurant. Schmoll shared the partnership between MinnWest and the EDC has gone well.

NEW BUSINESS—

Ag Visionary Subcommittee. Schmoll shared the subcommittee has not met. At the April Ag Committee meeting, Larson mentioned the AURI New Uses Forum presentation by Tom Vilsack, former Secretary of Agriculture, entitled "Everyone Should Focus on Vision" was excellent and suggested to explore the idea of forming a vision committee comprised of visionary ag leaders and others to narrow the scope/focus/goals of the Ag Committee. Schmoll and Larson will meet to discuss inviting members of the community to join the subcommittee. Graue expressed interest in joining the Ag Visionary Subcommittee. A discussion was held regarding the need for additional electric car charging stations in Willmar. Schmoll will have Aaron Backman contact Kwik Trip to inquire if they are open to having an electric car charging station. During the discussion of renewable energy and clean environment, Graue mention Mark Peterson of Spicer. Graue will send Schmoll Peterson's contact information.

2020 Ag Committee Budget. Schmoll shared the EDC was asked by Kandiyohi County to submit the 2020 budget earlier than last year. Schmoll gathered budget input from Chair, Dan Tepfer; Larry Konsterlie, Chair of the Industrial Hemp Subcommittee; and Dustin Kotrba, Chair of the Ag Marketing Subcommittee. Kotrba requested increases in conferences/seminars/training and mileage/travel line items. Schmoll provided highlights of the proposed 2020 Ag Committee budget and reported the overall proposed 2020 budget increased 1% from 2019. The EDC Joint Operations Board has approved the proposed budget. Kandiyohi County is now reviewing the proposed budget. Schmoll will send the EDC proposed 2020 budget to Ag Committee members.

Ag/Renewable Energy Community Events/Projects. Schmoll shared a meeting was held at the EDC on June 18th with Carson Ouellette from Senator Tina Smith's Office, Aaron Backman, Ian Graue, Dan Tepfer, Dustin Kotrba and another Christianson CPA representative. Several agricultural issues were discussed, including tariffs and the local impact, industrial hemp, broadband and childcare. Ouellette will look into the industrial hemp regulations and send to Backman and Schmoll. Ouellette and a staff member will meet at the Willmar Public Library on June 24th to discuss housing issues.

Graue reported he has viewed the climate change video "Paris to Pittsburgh" and suggested sharing it with the Ag Committee. He mentioned a group called The Voice, comprised of Willmar and New London-Spicer High School students, who want to get their voice out on legislative issues and speak to various groups. Schmoll inquired if they would be interested in speaking at a future Ag Committee meeting. Graue will contact the group and let Schmoll know. Graue also shared a free three-hour workshop entitled "Supporting Farm Youth through Understanding & Intervention" will be held on July 22nd, 9:00 a.m.-Noon, at Ridgewater College. The workshop provides an overview of the stressors unique to growing up on a farm and equips attendees on how to support adolescents in stress.

Michelle Marotzke shared information from an article in the *West Central Tribune* regarding renewable energy certificates. The certificates are available for Willmar Municipal Utilities customers, including businesses. Schmoll provided highlights of Dairy Days at Carlson Dairy in Pennock. Schmoll announced the AgProfessionals group continues to meet and is planning an event on January 31, 2020. The group is currently conducting a raffle to raise funds for grants and scholarships for area agriculture students, educators and programs.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:26 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **7:30 a.m., July 18, 2019** at Christianson PLLP, Willmar.