

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

MINUTES

August 15, 2019

Christianson PLLP, Willmar

Present: Rollie Boll, Ian Graue, Kim Larson, Keith Poier and Dan Tepfer

Excused: Larry Konsterlie and Dan Lippert

Absent: Kevin Halvorson, Dustin Kotrba and Bruce Reuss

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

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

Chairperson Dan Tepfer called the meeting to order at approximately 7:37 a.m. and declared a quorum was not present.

AGENDA—The agenda was approved as emailed.

MINUTES—A quorum was not present.

REPORTS

Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee. Connie Schmoll reported on the last meeting held on August 12th. Tony Cortilet of Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) was in attendance and shared information on what is going on in the area of hemp. Cortilet shared MDA has Ag Research and Innovation Grant application forms on its website. Schmoll commented Renville County is conducting industrial hemp meetings and other communities are talking more about the industrial hemp industry. Schmoll and Kim Larson attended Farm Fest and visited the hemp growing test plot and booths displaying various hemp products. There was a lot of interest in industrial hemp farming during Farm Fest. Discussion was held regarding THC levels in some hemp fields growing for CBD oil and approximately 40% of the growers may need to destroy their crops due to the higher THC level, according to Cortilet. Larson visited with a Canadian representative about the history of growing hemp in Canada. Schmoll shared Bethleen McCall from Colorado, a grower for CBD, spoke on hemp at the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference on August 1st. She shared industrial hemp grows fast, but there is an issue with insects and weeds. Schmoll and Laura Arne visited with Todd Matthewson of Just BioFiber at Farm Fest. He may attend a future Ag Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee meeting to discuss the possibility of a facility in the area. Schmoll shared a group may be formed and include members involved in the formation and building of the Bushmills Ethanol plant to discuss and determine the future of a hemp fiber processing plant in the area. Schmoll shared she and Harold Stanislawski will attend a future West Central Angel Fund meeting to discuss industrial hemp. Larson received a call from a reporter from *Lakes Area Review* after a EDC Ag Hemp Exploratory

Subcommittee meeting and provided him information on the subcommittee makeup and its purpose.

Ag Marketing and Event Planning Subcommittee. Schmoll reported the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference held August 1st at MinnWest Technology Campus was a success with approximately 100 in attendance. Good feedback was received on the speakers Darin Newsom, Bethleen McCall and Bushmills Ethanol. Any Ag Committee members who would want a link to the conference, contact Schmoll. Schmoll mentioned having an event planner, who contracts with MinnWest Technology Campus, was very helpful. MinnWest Technology Campus was pleased to partner with the EDC Ag Committee and encouraged Ag Committee attendees to send back comments on the conference. Rollie Boll inquired if another conference will be held next year; Schmoll reported they are planning to hold another event and asked committee members for topics. She also felt the conference date worked well. One suggestion was tariffs and if the visionary group is formed, it may be an interesting topic for the conference. Chair Tepfer felt the conference went well with mostly bankers, etc. and only a few agriculture producers in attendance. Discussion was held on how to encourage more agriculture producers to attend. Poier asked if the coops were notified. At the next Ag Committee meeting, Schmoll suggested reviewing the conference attendee list for possible future Ag Committee members. Chair Tepfer will schedule a debriefing meeting with the event planner and review the evaluations.

2020 Visionary Subcommittee. Schmoll shared she will speak at the West Central Angel Fund in September and will also share the 2020 Visionary Subcommittee's focus. She visited with John Madsen of Ag Country, who is willing to be a member of the subcommittee. Larson recently attended a Farm Bureau meeting and took the opportunity to share the visioning scope/focus/goals and asked for input and feedback. He also attended the Minnesota Corn Growers Association meeting to share the visioning idea and asked for input and feedback. Schmoll, Larson and Graue will schedule a meeting in September; Graue will send Schmoll available dates.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—Schmoll shared an additional \$500 was taken from the EDC Ag Marketing budget line item for the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference newspaper ads and mentioned space will be purchased for an upcoming Ag publication in March 2020 at a cost of \$350. If ads are purchased in March and November, the cost would be \$325 each publication. Schmoll feels it is an excellent opportunity to share Ag Visioning Subcommittee information, meeting dates, etc.

NEW BUSINESS

Ag Professionals. Prior to the Ag Professionals decision to sunset its organization and the banquet, Schmoll talked with President Russ Peterson. The Ridgewater College Ag Department may pick up the banquet for the professional agricultural students. Discussion held regarding a foundation. Schmoll noted the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce also has a program for professional agriculture students. Boll shared the plan is to pay out scholarships to ag students as the balance in the Ag Professionals account is over \$30,000. Discussion was held regarding where does farming want/need to go? Market crops locally versus overseas. Boll wanted to recognize Schmoll's participation and time spent with the Ag Professionals group. The group felt her time and assistance could be used elsewhere.

Ag/Renewable Energy Community Events/Projects. Graue suggested the local Climate Action group may have ideas for future needs. Chair Tepfer reminded this committee that it is the Ag and Renewable Energy Development Committee; he feels discussion on renewable energy topics should be held at future Ag Committee meetings. Discussion was held regarding renewable energy; Chair Tepfer suggested researching what is something new that will enhance lives and the region in the future. He feels energy storage is an important issue. Chair Tepfer mentioned seed grants are available for underserved, youth groups, school groups and energy conservation projects.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **7:30 a.m., September 19, 2019** at Christianson PLLP, Willmar.