

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

MINUTES

August 20, 2020

Via Zoom Video Conference

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

Absent: Dan Lippert and Dan Tepfer

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 7:31 a.m. and declared a quorum was present.

AGENDA—Chair Halvorson presented the Agenda.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Boll, SECONDED BY Ian Graue, to approve the Agenda as emailed.
MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES—It was noted the July 16 minutes were not listed on the agenda. Connie Schmoll commented they will be included on the September agenda. The June 18, 2020 minutes were approved at the July 16, 2020 Ag meeting.

PRESENTATION ON MARL AND CAMBODIA TRIP. Christy Kallevig gave a presentation on the MARL program (Minnesota Agriculture and Rural Leadership). MARL began in 2000 and is a two-year educational experience featuring nine, three-day in-state seminars, a six-day national study and a 10-to-14-day international study. Kallevig designs the Minnesota MARL program. The class size is approximately 30 participants and in session approximately 50 days over the two-year period. The tenth class recently graduated and the next class will begin in November. MARL is in 48 states and has 300 alumni within the program. The goal of the program is to develop the skills of Minnesota's agriculture and rural leaders so they may maximize their impact and effectiveness in local, state, national and international areas. Each class goes to a different location. In-state seminars are held in various locations of the state which are designed to highlight agriculture for a particular region. The class visits Washington, D.C. each year to meet with congressional delegations. During international visits, the class meets with embassies to discuss agriculture and participate in tours. The class visited Cambodia in February 2020.

Kim Larson inquired if students get sponsorships for tuition costs? Kallevig commented the tuition cost is \$6,000 per person, which covers all expenses and most meals. She reported there are donors and the initiative foundations that support the program. Participants also reach out to local organizations to

assist with costs if employers do not cover the costs. The costs of trips are \$27,000 per person which does not include the \$6,000.

Kallevig reported the 16-hour flight to Phnom Penh, Cambodia began on February 18, 2020 with 23 participants, 3 staff members and 1 MARL alumni. It was the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and they started the trip with no mask requirements; however, they were advised to wear masks when they arrived in Cambodia. The group was fortunate to have a doctor with them the entire tour. Kallevig commented the Chinese government is putting a large amount of money into construction in Phnom Penh and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, construction was at a standstill. The group met with various government leaders and the US Embassy. Discussions regarded having United States investments in Cambodia, i.e., soybean processing as they do not have any processing and investment to enhance their rail system. The MARL visit was covered on the Cambodia national news for three nights. One of their sightseeing tours was to the presidential palace and an audio tour of the Killing Fields where approximately 50% of Cambodians (mainly those with an education) were killed by the Khmer Rouge regime between 1970-1975. One of the favorite tours was to a unique market place. After the tour of Phnom Penh, the group traveled 5 ½ hours to the rural area. Kallevig reported the highways were well paved and maintained; however, driving was not the safest. They toured farming areas and learned how farming is done in Cambodia. Their primary crop is rice and two types of rice is grown; one for human consumption and one for animals. Some corn is planted and several corn plantings are done due to the fast-growing season. The corn plantings are done by hand. Harvesting of crops is done during the dry season between October and March. During the rainy season, they can get up to 12 feet of rain. Houses are built on stilts to protect them from the rain. Currently, there is very little value in agriculture products because it is sold locally. A doctor is working with farmers to add value back into their agricultural products through irrigation to increase production and helping to connect farmers to resources to sell crops. The government has set aside many acres to support larger farms, i.e., cooperatives. The group toured a cooperative where they have their own schools. They also toured a cashew processing plant which is approximately the size of a two-car garage. They traveled to Taiwan to see comparisons between Cambodia and Taiwan agriculture. The agriculture in Taiwan is very limited as most agriculture products are shipped in. They toured a farm where mushrooms are grown in small cylinders. They also toured a hydroponic facility where music is piped in 24-hours a day to help produce healthier plants. The tea culture is huge in Taiwan. They also toured the presidential monument that memorializes their leaders.

Kallevig shared she has been with MARL since June 2018. She schedules all of the tour site visits. Larry Konsterlie inquired about spouses joining the tours. Kallevig stated spouses are invited to join three of the seminars, local tours and special activities for spouses. They are not allowed to attend the overseas trips. Kallevig shared the out of pocket cost. Kallevig commented alumni are engaged in specific activities/seminars and engage with the class. Kallevig stated the average age is approximately 42, but they have had participants from 24 to 68. MARL is open to anyone who is able to enjoy the experience, participate and able to walk. She suggested participants not apply until 22-24 years old.

Schmoll thanked Kallevig for sharing the interesting information on MARL and the trip to Cambodia.

REPORTS

Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee. Schmoll reported the subcommittee visited Tim Seehusen's Prairie PROducers hemp operation in Olivia on August 10th. They were given tours of the equipment and plots. Larson commented there was good attendance from the subcommittee. Approximately 75-100 attended from the area. Halvorson commented it was interesting to see the plots and different stages of growing. Schmoll shared it was interesting to see the different varieties of hemp. Prairie PROducers has purchased decorticator equipment but it wasn't on site. Keith Poier mentioned pneumatics and commented it will be interesting if they can develop the process. Larson further commented Harold Stanislawski gave an interesting hemp update. He is optimistic about the industrial hemp industry.

Ag Marketing and Event Planning Subcommittee/Partners in Ag Innovation Conference Recap.

Dustin Kotrba inquired what committee members thought about the virtual conference. Kallevig enjoyed the event and the recording feature in order to catch what she had missed. Schmoll has heard good comments about the recording feature and the virtual concept. Halvorson felt the content and structure was good and it ran smoothly. Schmoll commented the coordinator did a fantastic job; Schmoll is referring her to other contacts to help plan virtual events. Schmoll said approximately 200 people attended. Kotrba reported 210 participants registered but not as many producers as hoped. Videos are available with links to the sessions. Kotrba shared 20 surveys were received: some preferred to be onsite and would have liked more questions from the audience. The rating range of 1-5 was 3.9 to 4.3 (85%) which is close to the 2019 conference. One recap meeting has been held and another one will be scheduled in the near future. Kotrba shared the same virtual approach may be used in the future with some onsite attendance. He reported conference costs and shared they realized approximately \$1,000 in carryover. Kotrba stated it took a tremendous amount of technology to put on the virtual conference and that MinnWest Technology Campus has a fantastic facility to host this type of conference. Kotrba shared there were some audio challenges for those onsite. Schmoll commented Jason Broadwater was an excellent speaker and may be invited to other speaking engagements. Kotrba mentioned it may be advantageous to bring in younger presenters to talk about their experiences in agriculture. Schmoll encouraged committee members to be thinking of topics and speakers for next year. At the next Ag Committee meeting, discussion will be held on other committee members interest in joining the conference planning team.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Schmoll shared the resignation letter from Ian Grau as he will be moving to the Rochester area at the end of August and then back to Australia. Schmoll thanked Graue for his 10 years of service and wished him good luck in the future.

IT WAS MOVED BY Dustin Kotrba, SECONDED BY Christy Kallevig, to accept Ian Graue's resignation from the Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development (Ag) Committee.
MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS

Community Ag/Renewable Energy Community Events/Projects. Schmoll shared AURI will conduct a webinar on September 9th and encouraged committee members to attend.

ADJOURNMENT—

IT WAS MOVED BY Larry Konsterlie, SECONDED BY, Christy Kallevig, to adjourn the meeting.
MOTION CARRIED.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:58 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **7:30 a.m., September 17, 2020** via Zoom or at Christianson PLLP, 302 Fifth Street SW, Willmar.