

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

MINUTES

February 28, 2022

Community Room, Heritage Bank, Willmar and via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Donna Boonstra, Ben Carlson, Liz Dyrdaahl, Jesse Gislason, Emily Lien, Pam Rosenau and Ann Winge Johnson

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director and Kelsey Olson, Marketing and Communications Specialist

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

Chairperson Emily Lien called the meeting to order at approximately 12:02 p.m.

AGENDA—Olson added the following to the agenda under New Business:

1. Request for a Marketing and Public Relations Committee member to act as liaison to the Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment Committee.
2. Reschedule the Marketing Committee meeting in May.

IT WAS MOVED BY Jesse Gislason, SECONDED BY Donna Boonstra, to approve the revised agenda. MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Jessie Gislason, SECONDED BY Donna Boonstra, to approve the Minutes of the January 24, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS—

Facebook Statistics. Aaron Backman reported post reach for January and February was 4500, up 118% from the previous two months. The peaks occurred for the grand re-opening of Cashwise, Nate Hultgren appointed to U.S. Sugar Beet Association, and the Virtual Job Fair.

LinkedIn. Backman reported limited activity on LinkedIn. Business development was the largest category, followed by operations and human resources.

Twitter. The top Tweet pertained to EDC joining the Industrial Hemp Association. Profile visits were up 31%, while the number of followers remained the same.

YouTube. Drone videos for the FedEx Project and Preserve on 24th were presented. FedEx currently employs approximately 100 people in Willmar, and the new facility will double that amount. Preserve on 24th has a projected completion date of 4th quarter 2022. A discussion was held on how to best utilize the videos. Both videos are about two minutes in length. The captions cannot be changed, but the videos can be edited for length. The EDC has permission to use the Preserve on 24th video and is working on permission for the FedEx

Project. The videos could be posted on Facebook in a weekly “What’s Up” or “What’s Going Down” feature, and on LinkedIn and YouTube. Branding the video with the EDC and construction company’s logos was suggested. The YouTube link will be added to the April EDC newsletter. Other suggestions included adding a beginning and ending slate that describes the project and location, adding an area for questions, including the EDC’s phone number, and including a start date and estimated completion date.

UPDATES—

Upcoming Spring (April) Newsletter. Kelsey Olson reported the next EDC newsletter is scheduled to go out on April 1, 2022. The previous newsletter highlighted the Workforce Solutions Summit, Elevate Community Business Academy and the Virtual Job Fair.

Promotion of Virtual Job Fair, Elevate and Broadband. The Virtual Job Fair was a regional effort partnering with other counties, such as Redwood, Renville and Meeker. Fifty-three organizations participated, well over the internal goal of 24. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) provided the software, and a virtual booth could be set up in less than 30 minutes. Seventy-nine job seekers created profiles. Every business was visited by at least one person. There were 377 chat conversations, totaling over 1300 messages. Forty-five resumes were submitted to employers, which is higher than occurred at the in-person event. Follow-up phone calls will be made to businesses asking if they posted starting wages, and if not, why. The idea was to encourage people who live outside Kandiyohi County to consider working here. Participants heard about the virtual job fair from social media. Posters were available on Google Drive so the partners could share them, and approximately 40 percent made use of them. Email letters for businesses and job seekers were included. The CareerForce Newsletter was a big way to get the word out. Sixty percent of the jobs were offered by six employers, all in different industries. Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center had seasonal jobs available. Ben Carlson recommended a Facebook post giving statistics from the virtual job fair to ensure that people realize it was effective. Businesses could share whether they interviewed or hired anyone, and talk about how they viewed it. High Schools could hand out a questionnaire to participants. For future events Olson created a marketing planning form that will provide the following information:

1. Who are our partners?
2. What is our budget?
3. What is our objective?
4. What is our goal?

Broadband. Vibrant Broadband has requested internet speed tests from the nine eastern townships in Kandiyohi County. Connie Schmoll is leading the effort. One hundred tests have been completed with a goal of 125 (ten percent). Classifieds were run in the *Renville County Register* and the *Lakes Area Review*. Schmoll discussed it on Open Mic. Postcards were sent to the local residents via General Mailing.

Elevate Community Business Academy. The information sessions this week have gone well. The Academy would like to expand to people outside of Willmar. Financial assistance is available. An additional informational session will be scheduled.

Informational ads. EDC ads will be run, including a 1/8 page ad in *Chamber Connections* and a ¼ page in *Rooted*. A ½ page informational ad on Industrial Hemp will be scheduled next year. Two ad examples were presented (see attached). The punctuation will be removed from the Expanding, Growing and Building ad. Carlson reported Mid-Minnesota Development Commission held a photo contest last year and received 260

photos from Kandiyohi County, which could be shared for use in ads. The EDC has purchased the rights to Jared Eischens' photo gallery for \$150.

BRE Survey Results. The EDC Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment (BRE/R) Committee prepared a survey of local businesses to learn how the EDC can be of service. Businesses responded that support in marketing and social media would be helpful. Training sessions on social media will be scheduled for local businesses, possibly a series with many topics. Pam Rosenau suggested the training sessions cover only one topic per meeting, and be hands-on training. Rosenau and Carlson are willing to help. Possible topics include security awareness, privacy, and streaming. Many businesses were interested in doing short promotional videos. Olson plans to do a weekly profile of women business owners during Women's History Month in March.

NEW BUSINESS—

BRE Committee Liaison. Olson requested a volunteer from this committee who would be willing to attend the quarterly BRE/R Committee meetings, with the goal of creating synergy between the Marketing and Public Relations Committee and the BRE/R Committee, since much of the work is replicated. Anyone willing to volunteer should contact Olson.

Website Updates. Olson reported she worked with Redwood Valley Technical Solutions (RVTS) on the Elevate Community Business Academy website. Changes were made very easily. In comparison, the EDC site is very cumbersome and loads extremely slowly. The site is not secured and information goes back ten years. Olson plans to shift the EDC domain to RVTS. It will help with organization of the home page, updating the building sites for sale and updating broadband grant information. Another suggestion was hiding the minutes of the meetings from more than a year ago so they can still be accessed by the EDC, but no one else. RVTS will charge \$99 per month for a level one care plan, with a \$300 annual fee. These are temporary fixes until a new website can be created. It would take eight weeks to have a new site up and running with a cost of \$6-8000. It will be evaluated for addition to the budget in the second half of 2022 or in 2023.

2022 Marketing Plan Draft. Olson cited her main goals as branding, target audience and social media strategy. Other marketing projects planned are promotional and informational handouts, the Opportunity Zone and Renaissance Zone Prospectus, the Willmar Industrial Park flyer and supporting the day-to-day needs of the EDC.

Social Media Plan. Social media strategies were discussed. Nancy Birkeland has been handling social media and Olson will take over eventually. Olson will meet with Carlson to learn how he handles social media for MMDC. Flexibility is important, along with having something consistent you can fall back on in a set schedule. Then you can plug in and share when you need to. A segment called *Finally Friday* works for MVTV Wireless. Many people are winding down on Friday afternoon and checking social media. Facebook's business planner has become an effective source of information, possibly better than Explore Minnesota. The merits of Hootsuite versus Sprout were discussed, along with Social Pilot.

Instagram. Olson is exploring the addition of Instagram to the social media platforms used by the EDC. The demographic is dominated by women in their 30s and 40s and would be beneficial in supporting small businesses.

YouTube Station. The EDC will eventually be represented on YouTube. For now three videos from the Workforce Solutions Summit and the drone videos have been uploaded, but are unlisted.

May meeting date. The meeting scheduled for May 23 is rescheduled to Monday, May 16.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, March 28, 2022** in-person at the Community Room, Heritage Bank and via ZOOM video conference.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:31 p.m.



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DRAFT Marketing Plan 2022

Who we are:

We are a government agency with a mission to be a catalyst for economic growth of the greater Kandiyohi County area. Our focus is on supporting new and existing businesses and marketing our community to companies outside for our region.

Target Audience:

1. City of Willmar / Greater Kandiyohi County Cities, Towns and Townships:

- a. Local, existing businesses
- b. Entrepreneurs
- c. Stakeholders and Community Members

2. Members outside of the Kandiyohi Community

- a. Employers
- b. Businesses
- c. Site Selectors
- d. Developers
- looking to expand or relocate into the county

3. Workforce Development and Jobseekers partners have included:

- a. Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
- b. Ridgewater College
- c. Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
- d. CareerForce
- e. CMJTS (Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services)
- f. DEED (MN Employment and Economic Development)
- g. SWIF (Southwest Initiative Foundation)
- i. United Way
- j. Redwood, Renville, Meeker and Swift Counties
- k. Lakeland Broadcasting

2022 Goals:

1. Develop a strategic social media plan

Tactics:

- a. Create thematic posts for throughout the week, example could be 'What's Going Up Wednesday' promoting construction or development- this would include development occurring with the use of EDC awarded grants
- b. Develop platform unique posts
- c. Develop our messages while also supporting others messages
- d. Create an Instagram account- this is the only platform that has a pretty gender equal reach
- f. Create an EDC YouTube Channel that will be used to share event videos, drone footage, and highlighted interview clips of business owners, Elevate graduates and more!

2. Make forward thinking changes to our website that will channel into a 2022 website re-vamp

Tactics:

- a. Work with Redwood Valley Tech Solutions to evaluate current needs
- b. Clean up the website so it moves faster
- c. Organize the site so there are clear action steps for each of our audience types
- d. Develop a clear message / tag-line that is consistently used both on the website and our promotional ads

3. Update and create promotional and informational hand-outs and flyers

Tactics:

- a. Update Prospectus with current information
- b. Continue with Industrial Park flyer with further recommendations
- c. Develop a logistics and distribution promotional flyer
- d. Develop an Industrial Hemp informational flyer

4. Support day to day marketing and communications needs at the EDC including but not limited to: job fairs, events, elevate, broadband and small business support

Tactics:

- a. Utilize Marketing Planning Guide to organize and plan events
- b. Implement tools like Synchronist, Google Drives, and Microsoft To-Do to make communication consistent and accessible
- c. Participate in relevant Committee meetings to stay up to speed on current and upcoming events and topics