

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

MINUTES

May 16, 2022

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

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

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 12:04 p.m.

AGENDA— The agenda was approved as emailed.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Ben Carlson, SECONDED BY Ann Winge Johnson, to approve the Minutes of the April 25, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE STATISTICS—

Facebook. Aaron Backman reported Facebook page reach was down approximately 20 percent compared to April. Events receiving attention included the high school student job expo, Life Connections, the Highway 23 groundbreaking, the Syttende Mai celebration in Sunburg and Economic Development Week. Forty-three percent of followers were from the Willmar area and approximately seven percent each from New London and Spicer.

LinkedIn. Backman reported very little activity on LinkedIn.

Twitter. Backman reported tweets were up 16 percent while tweet impressions were up 15 percent. Profile visits were up 266 percent. The top tweet in May was related to Sunburg's Syttende Mai celebration and the top mention was in regard to the EDC's recent membership in the Greater Minnesota Partnership, a spinoff from the Greater Minnesota Coalition. The top tweet in April focused on Eagle's Nest Bar and Grill in Regal, while the top media tweet showcased the Goodness Coffee mobile trailer, owned by recent Elevate graduates Nick and Candace Aaker.

Social Media Update (Sprout vs. Hootsuite). Olson will conduct a 30-day trial of Sprout Media to determine if its comparison analytics feature provides a suitable replacement for Olson's handwritten comparisons of the social media platforms. A substantial time savings could justify the cost difference of \$75 per month (Hootsuite) versus \$169 per month (Sprout). Olson will plan posts for an entire month prior to starting the trial.

UPDATES—

Industrial Park & What We Do Handouts. Olson reported the Industrial Park and What We Do handouts are updated. Changes made to the Industrial Park handout include adding the EDC logo, changing all icons to blue and establishing consistent icons throughout all the handouts, which will be in printed form only. An Americans with Disabilities statement on the bottom of the handout was taken from state recommendations, stating that the information is available in alternative formats, such as Braille, digital, audio, or large print. Olson received quotes and contacts to accommodate these requests. There were concerns this statement could get cut off in the printing process, and Olson will make sure a substantial margin exists when printing. The alignment of the icons with the text was discussed and will be adjusted. The What We Do handout now has icons that are consistent with the other handouts. This handout will be used as a guide for website construction and other marketing materials, with recruiting, retaining, educating, advocating and collaborating becoming the common theme. “Follow us” was added above the social media information.

Tri-Fold. An updated draft version of the tri-fold brochure was shown. “Open for Business” and “West Central Minnesota’s Business Hub” have been eliminated. Advocacy, recruitment and retention, collaboration, education and technical assistance will be highlighted. Additional changes will be made before completion of the update.

Summer Fun Ad. The Summer Fun ad will contain a picture taken on the Glacial Lakes bike trail, which will have its grand opening at Sibley State Park this summer. Permission to use the picture was granted from the *Minnesota Trails Magazine*. The picture highlights outdoor recreation in the area. The slogan “Expanding, Growing, Building” will be used.

Planning Follow Up.

Website Update. Olson reported she is focusing on the mission of serving greater Kandiyohi County when updating the EDC website. Information regarding townships and unincorporated communities has been added. There are issues with WordPress, such as Townships being listed alphabetically within the list of cities, and contact information not showing up correctly on smart phones, but that will have to be tolerated for now. The website is now accessible and items can be uploaded. New images have been added. The website can be translated into three common languages. Olson has taken pictures in Blomkest and will visit Regal next. Images are being updated to reflect Kandiyohi County’s population and businesses. The Elevate website now includes information about grant support from the Department of Employment and Economic Development. Carlson mentioned that every time a WordPress update occurs the entire website needs to be checked. Olson will make sure she is receiving email notices about WordPress updates. Other website updates expected are an improved link with the Convention and Visitors Bureau, updated businesses in each community, population changes based on the 2020 census, and information on the county’s unincorporated communities, such as Hawick’s broadband project and Svea being a Family Promise community. Olson is working with Kristen Allen at Greenwater Garage and Gallery on website graphics that reflect where we are in Minnesota with a focus on Kandiyohi County. Allen will supply three or more options. Olson will keep an updated list to show progress on the website.

Budget. Olson reported a budget review will occur at the next committee meeting. Preparations for the 2023 budget will begin to coordinate with the county’s deadlines. All EDC committees will be involved. Backman plans to present a budget proposal to the EDC Joint Operations Board next month. Olson will email budget information to the committee members for their approval. The biggest potential budget item for 2023 is a complete overhaul of the EDC’s website. This is very involved and will cost \$8,000-\$10,000. A quote is needed from Redwood Valley Technical Solutions. The current website will still need to be updated, since much of

the information will be copied and pasted into the new site. A page-by-page audit will be conducted when the website is complete. An unpublished draft is done prior to allowing public access to the site. Financially the EDC is sound, ending last year with just over \$1 million in assets. Backman looks at every line item carefully and gets input from everyone in the office when preparing the budget. Budgets have recurring and one-time expenses, and it is essential to make sure the one-time expenses are covered.

NEW BUSINESS—

Greenwater Garage Logo Work. Olson and Allen held a discussion regarding the EDC logo. Allen commented the logo leaves the impression that the EDC is mainly interested in water. Various ideas for a new logo were discussed. Backman stated board members are more receptive to a logo change than a name change, which prompted further discussion on the organization's name.

Agriculture Support Update. The EDC will co-host the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference on July 26, 2022. Fifteen presenters are scheduled to participate and panel discussions will be held with topics of how to plan a heritage farm site and succession planning. One panel will consist of older farmers, millennial farmers, and new farmers attempting to get started. Olson has been dropping off postcards advertising the conference as she visits area businesses.

Upcoming Projects: Ag Flyer Update, Industrial Hemp Ad in the Fall *Rooted* Magazine. Olson plans to update the EDC ag flyer, with input from Sarah Swedburg and the EDC Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development Committee. An industrial hemp flyer will be created for publication in *Rooted*. Olson has been taking pictures of agriculture and businesses in the Blomkest, Prinsburg and Priam areas to be used in brochures and folders. Smaller quantities of folders will be ordered to avoid excess inventory when the material becomes outdated. On future endeavors she will call ahead to the businesses she plans to photograph and purchase a car magnet that will identify her as an employee of the EDC.

Promotional items and gifts of acknowledgement for loan recipients were discussed. Ideas included chip clips, pens and pizza cutters. Participation in local celebrations by donating napkins, lemonade, or bottled water labelled with the EDC logo was discussed. Olson is considering a half-page handout with the "What We Do" theme that could be distributed at parades or other events. If a change is made to the logo, it should be done prior to ordering any promotional items.

During Economic Development Week the EDC gave away three \$10 coupons. The following questions were asked: What's going on?, What small business have you visited this week?, and What are you doing this weekend? Those answering were eligible for a \$10 coupon from a business in their community. One winner was from Sunburg and received a coupon from Glacial Plains Co-op.

Pam Rosenau reported the Wednesdays in Willmar social media breakfast planning has been delayed until June in hopes of receiving more turnout and feedback on MVTV Wireless's website. MVTV Wireless plans to hold the event once a month on Wednesdays, but which Wednesday has yet to be determined.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, June 27, 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 1:26 p.m.