

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

MINUTES

July 25, 2022

Heritage Bank, 310 First Street South, Willmar and via Zoom Video Conference

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

Excused: Donna Boonstra

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 12:01 p.m.

AGENDA—The agenda was approved as emailed.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Ben Carlson, SECONDED BY Jesse Gislason, to approve the Minutes of the June 20, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE STATISTICS—

Facebook Statistics. Backman reported Facebook had an audience of over 3,000 views, a 160% increase over the last period. Top items were the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference with over 900 views, Earth Angels, a new business in Uptown Willmar, received over 700 views, and the Block 25 video, which included background music and narrative, had over 500 views.

LinkedIn. Two peaks occurred related to Earth Angels and the Block 25 video, which Backman also posted on his personal LinkedIn account and received over 800 views.

Twitter. The top Tweets featured Earth Angels and the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference that will be held on July 26, 2022, at 7:30 a.m. The conference is free to attend. Registration numbers include 109 people attending in person and 49 virtually. Dr. Matt Roberts is the keynote speaker. Brouwer Berries will share its unique story about how heat, storms and bacteria in the soil destroyed their crop, forcing it to close. Because it will take a few years for the bacteria to clear up, its ability to reopen is in question. The Conference will feature a broadband panel which includes Mark Boeschen, Chairman of the EDC's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee. The Fireside Chat will feature stories of next generational farming. An attorney will give an update on carbon and renewables. Throughout the day attendees can answer trivia questions to win prizes.

Olson will begin the 30-day trial of Sprout in August. A strategic approach is planned using the EDC's peak audience times of 7:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. These times do not align with Hootsuite's recommendations, which are based on national observed times that will rarely match a local audience.

“What are we doing” is a popular topic, with great interest shown in Backman’s and Swedburg’s activities. Inviting people to like the page in Facebook has created positive results, both in Facebook and Twitter. Once two good data sets have been obtained, Olson will evaluate whether or not to discontinue Twitter. Committee members commented that Twitter has become more of a news blast, it works well, but only in specific sectors and it shouldn’t be a priority. More emphasis will be placed on LinkedIn, with a goal of building more business-to-business followers. Many viewers log on to LinkedIn for information instead of the EDC website. Johnson commented that LinkedIn works well for business-related items, and opinions are formed by checking LinkedIn for recent activity. Site selectors use it extensively. Carlson added Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) uses LinkedIn only for its job postings. Both LinkedIn and Facebook offer scheduling, which could eliminate the need for Hootsuite or Sprout. Adding TikTok to the social media platforms used by the EDC was discussed, as short, light-hearted videos are becoming increasingly popular. One example was a “guess what’s coming soon” video of the Office Max building that could have been used to spark interest in TJ Maxx. Live videos lasting 20-30 seconds are most effective.

UPDATES—

Frontline Worker Video Updates. The frontline worker video created by the EDC in partnership with MMDC was well-received and prepared the EDC for future multilanguage videos. Translators were paid for their work and Olson located a transcriber capable of handling closed captioning. The video was posted on Facebook.

Website Updates: Major Employer Update. It was determined that Heritage Bank, Rambow, Runnings and Crow River Construction each employ more than 50 people and will be added to the list on the EDC website. Olson hopes to make the additions without outside help.

Folder and Pen Update. Olson received pen samples from Hanson’s Advertising and Rambow, the latter of which needs to submit a price quote. Pens and chip clips will be ordered. The redesigned EDC folder will be standard size and contain an extra pocket for brochures. Hanson’s Advertising will supply them. The front of the folder will feature pictures of each community in Kandiyohi County. The inside will list information for Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as the EDC address and email. The back will feature the EDC logo containing pictures within the letters, and a picture depicting nature in Kandiyohi County. Rosenau suggested outlining the letters or using pictures with a darker background to make it more prominent.

Summer Newsletter Review. Olson arranged the summer newsletter with a series of catch paragraphs containing a link to the entire article. There were 706 recipients with a clickthrough rate of 41-42 percent. Kandi Acres was the top story, followed by Elevate and Amin Grocery. Subscriptions were higher by 17, and the summer edition had a higher open rate and click rate than the spring newsletter. A subscription button on the EDC website was suggested.

Tri-fold Brochure. The tri-fold brochure needs a couple updates and will be ready for committee review at the next meeting.

Elevate Website Updates. The Elevate website now includes photos from the graduation held in June, 2022. Language on the site is updated and quotes from recent graduates will be added. The site includes a description of the program, success stories, and a list of the businesses tied to Elevate alumni. Informational sessions and class starting dates are listed on the events calendar. Swedburg and Scott Marquardt from Southwest Initiative Foundation will attend a partner’s meeting in New Jersey in October.

NEW BUSINESS—

Logo Discussion: Small Kandiyohi County Logo. Olson reported the Business Hub and Open for Business logos have been retired. Olson asked Greenwater Garage to create a logo similar to the Business Hub logo with a map of Kandiyohi County replacing the six-county inset, then discovered one was already done. Another logo that acknowledges workforce partners throughout West Central Minnesota was considered, leading to a discussion of how “West Central Minnesota” is defined. Kandiyohi County attracts workforce from Stearns County as well as people west of Pope and Swift Counties. A logo containing a map of 12 surrounding counties is more inclusive for workforce development. Greenwater Garage will be asked to create it.

Other Marketing Happenings. Olson shared the photo library is coming along well. Swedburg and Michelle Marotzke attended the Norway Lake Township celebration, and Olson joined the 150th Anniversary Celebration at Lake Andrew Township. The township leaders appreciated the attendance and photo archive. Olson recently completed her six-month review, where Backman encouraged her to check available training opportunities in digital marketing, finances and other potential trainings. Olson attended a webinar hosted by the International Economic Development Council in January, a Real Estate Development Conference in Mankato, where she was able to tour several redevelopment projects, and a conference hosted by the Economic Development Association of Minnesota in Nisswa, Minnesota. Olson assisted at the Elevate Community Business Academy graduation, where she took pictures.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, August 22, 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 12:59 p.m.