

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE
MINUTES
October 24, 2022
Cheers Bar & Grill, Raymond, Minnesota**

Present: Jesse Gislason, Ann Winge Johnson, Emily Lien and Pam Rosenau

Excused: Donna Boonstra and Ben Carlson

Absent: Liz Dyrdaahl

Staff: Kelsey Olson, Marketing and Communications Specialist

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

Chairperson Emily Lien called the meeting to order at approximately 12:05 p.m.

AGENDA—Approval of the minutes was moved to the last item on the agenda to ensure a quorum was present.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

2023 Marketing Allocation for Willmar Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). Kelsey Olson reported that after meeting with Beth Fischer, Executive Director of the Willmar Lakes Area CVB, Aaron Backman presented the following CVB funding proposal to the EDC Joint Operations Board (EDCOB): a 50% reduction in CVB funding over three years, specifically moving to \$28,000 in 2023, \$22,000 in 2024 and \$17,000 thereafter. Fischer reported to the EDCOB how the money is spent, including a virtual passport, paying influencers to visit the area, and publications such as the *Willmar Lakes Area Visitor Guide*. While meeting with Fischer, Olson questioned whether the *Visitor Guide* pays for itself through ad sales. The EDC/CVB agreement states the EDC is allowed line-by-line item reports of where the money is spent. Going forward, once funds are determined, meetings will be held between Olson, Backman and Fischer to review the CVB's Leisure Travel Committee budget. The EDC will be asking for details on how funds are spent. The EDCOB plans to discuss the allocation again at its November meeting.

[Jesse Gislason joined the meeting].

Website Quotes. Requests for proposals went out the week of October 17, 2022, with a response deadline of November 9, 2022. 8bitstudio and Redwood Valley Technical Solutions have scheduled meetings to discuss the proposal.

Marketing Ads & Materials Review. The finished trifold brochure was presented (see attached). Two hundred brochures have been printed. Positioning of the icons was discussed, along with re-evaluating whether three aerial photos on the cover is too many. Adding more white space between the photos was suggested.

The Elevate brochure (see attached) has its own branding guide developed by REDStar, which uses the Avenir Next font. The brochure was printed using Avenir instead of Avenir Next, and will be corrected for the next

printing. A Spanish version of the brochure was used by Swedburg when participating in the Willmar Main Street Latino Welcoming Event held in Willmar on October 22, 2022.

Other comments included making the mission statement bold on the What We Do handout (see attached) and replacing the map on the Industrial Park brochures (see attached) with a clearer version. The fifth addition information needs to be added to the text on the map. The two-page brochure with the image of a man on a forklift (see attached) was the preferred option.

Revised Style Guide. Olson created an EDC Style Guide (see attached) which contains the standardized version of the EDC's mission, vision, focus actions, taglines and themes, focus areas and logos of the state of Minnesota with the local area highlighted in a circle. Standardizing the font used in each circle was suggested. The branding guide lists several options for contact information, an accommodation language line, color palettes and fonts. Suggestions included noting that the Gotham black font is used strictly for logos and to add a grammar guide.

Newsletter Review. Olson reported there were 738 newsletters emailed with 249 opened, which is 39 percent. The click rate was 4-5 percent. The newsletter featured September workforce development month and October manufacturing month. Highlighted was Brunswick Corporation out of New York Mills, which opened a satellite in Willmar to produce upholstery for boats. The Willmar location has bilingual leadership and an all-Latino staff made up of temporary employees through Ag Jobs LLC, which works with industries to help Latinos start careers and requires the company to hire an Ag Jobs staff member in a leadership role to ensure the culture is upheld. A mobile version of the newsletter was discussed as pictures don't always connect with the articles when viewed on a smart phone. Olson will do a mobile preview on the next newsletter.

Winter Newsletter Ideas. Ideas for the winter newsletter include a feature on industrial hemp that highlights the opening of the Hemponix store in New London and the Lower Sioux agency using hempcrete in the production of houses. Other ideas included a report on new store openings and an update on how local construction companies have dealt with the large amount of storm damage in the area and rising lumber prices.

DISCUSSION ITEMS—

Premier Virtual Toolkit. Olson reported the EDC has entered into a contract with Premier Virtual for the software used to host virtual career fairs. All counties in West Central Minnesota will be asked to partner with the EDC in this venture; thus far Redwood and Renville Counties have agreed to participate. Partners will be charged \$350 for one event or \$600 for two per year. Olson created a toolkit to help partners play a more active role in marketing the career fair. Partners will be expected to identify three ways to promote the event and set a goal number of employers and job seekers in attendance. The toolkit will contain a Canva template, social media posts that can be shared with businesses, press releases, save-the-date notices, ready-to-go newspaper publications and emails; and radio talking points. Testimonials were suggested to make participation seem less intimidating to job seekers. Partners could work with area chambers of commerce that may have radio contracts to help with advertising.

Community Outreach Questionnaire/Survey. This topic was tabled until the November meeting.

CVB Leisure Travel Committee Update and Involvement Ideas. Olson attended the Leisure Travel Committee meeting held at the Little Theatre in New London, Minnesota, where publication of the next *Visitor Guide* was discussed. An article highlighting the many Willmar businesses with diverse backgrounds was suggested.

Publication of county maps was discussed. Suggestions included avoiding a sponsor-driven map, printing in April or May with a schedule of summer events, and a digital option.

UPDATES—

Workforce Update - Childcare Initiative. Cities and townships in Kandiyohi County are being approached in regard to the childcare initiative, as financial support is needed to match the childcare grant. Once a project is identified cities and townships will be invited to support it. Prior to the pandemic, Kandiyohi County was 651 childcare slots short; today the shortage has risen to 900, which is having a major impact on the workforce.

Workforce Update - Township and City Council Meetings. Olson reported the outreach effort in Kandiyohi County is going well. Swedburg and Olson have attended numerous township and city council meetings, where they are identifying needs beyond broadband. Swedburg connected with a business owner in Sunburg who needs a new roof and plans to open a museum; the community expressed interest in the Elevate Community Business program. Olson thought GPS units may be a need and plans to investigate having the EDC purchase one the townships could check out to aid in mapping culverts for checking on storm damage. Irving Township was approached by a company offering training about skilled road grading to avoid runoff in roads and ditches. Olson thought bringing several townships together to make the training affordable, and having the EDC assist with funding could be a need. Giveaways such as EDC mugs or vests were suggested to increase the EDC's name recognition. Olson is hopeful that the second time each meeting is attended there will be more requests for help.

Highway 23 Coalition Marketing Update. Olson attended the last Highway 23 Coalition Marketing Committee meeting and plans to participate regularly in support of Heather Koffler at VantagePoint Marketing Consultants. Koffler needs material for the Highway 23 Coalition website and social media. Committee members will be asked to report to Koffler any current events and furnish photos.

Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce Remote Ambassador. Olson will be a remote ambassador for the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, covering the area around New London and Spicer. It is an excellent opportunity to obtain human interest stories.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Ann Winge Johnson, SECONDED BY Jesse Gislason, to approve the Minutes of the September 26, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

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

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:27 p.m.