KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC) JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)

MINUTES

March 9, 2023

Community Room, Heritage Bank, N.A., Willmar and Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Art Benson, Abdulcadir Gaal, Jesse Gislason, Les Heitke, Kelly TerWisscha and

Mary Warszynski

Ex Officio: Steve Gardner

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director and Sarah Swedburg, Business Development

Manager

Media: Jennifer Kotila, West Central Tribune

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chair Art Benson called the meeting to order at approximately 11:07 a.m. and declared a quorum was present.

AGENDA—Backman noted under the Consent Agenda Sam Romain will be added to the Marketing & Public Relations Committee and provided his information. He also informed the board that Duane Anderson, Kandiyohi County Commissioner, has recommended Noah Hultgren fill the vacancy on this board; Backman provided his background information. The Joint Powers Board may hold a short special meeting prior to the planning session to appoint Hultgren. Les Heitke asked for an update on tiny homes, which was not available at this meeting.

IT WAS MOVED BY Kelly TerWisscha, seconded by Mary Warszynski, to approve the Agenda and following Consent Agenda:

CONSENT AGENDA—

Approve: 1. Minutes of February 9, 2023

- 2. Financial reports as of February 28, 2023
- 3. Addition of Sam Romain to the Marketing and Public Relations Committee
- 4. Payment of invoices over \$2,500:
 - a. Invoice No. 0307233 from Bolton & Menk in the amount of \$9,658 from the Tiger II/Industrial Park line of the budget
 - b. Invoice No. 4210 from Redwood Valley Technical Solutions in the amount of \$5,375 from the Marketing and Public Relations/Website Development line of the budget

Accept: Committee/Subcommittee Minutes

- 1. Broadband and Advanced Technology 2/6/2023
- 2. Marketing and Public Relations 1/23/2023
- 3. Leisure Travel 1/9/2023

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2023 Planning Session. Backman announced the boards' planning session will be held next Thursday, March 16, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. to approximately 2:30 p.m. at the Willmar Conference Center. At this time 33 have registered to attend. Backman reviewed the proposed agenda for the day (see attached).

NEW BUSINESS

Micropolitan Ranking. Backman announced in the March 2023 edition of *Site Selection* magazine the City of Willmar is ranked 177 in the 2022 Top Micropolitans (<u>see</u> attached). He informed Willmar's Public Policy Committee of this ranking. Backman provided information on the criteria and based on that criteria the FedEx project was a factor in the ranking, as well as another project, possibly Case New Holland or expansion of Northern Radiator. Backman noted *Business View* magazine is interested in doing an article on Willmar in its economic resilience edition.

EDC Intern. Sarah Swedburg reported staff has discussed the number of grants the EDC has received this year and has been approached by individuals interested in doing an internship with the EDC. The childcare grant funds need to be spent by year end. Staff is recommending hiring an intern for 16 hours per week for 12-14 weeks at a maximum cost of \$5,000. The childcare grant has \$2,000 of administrative funds included in the budget. The Minnesota Economic Development Foundation has a \$1,000 grant that can be applied for and the EDC would contribute \$2,000.

IT WAS MOVED BY Mary Warszynski, SECONDED BY Abdulcadir Gaal, to pursue an individual to serve as an intern with the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC) for 12-14 weeks at 16 hours per week at a cost of no more than \$2,000 by the EDC. MOTION CARRIED.

REPORTS

Economic Development Activity. Backman reported on his activities, including infrastructure priorities with the Highway 23 Coalition and the bypass project southwest of Willmar toward Priam. His main work was to obtain letters of support and meet with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, District 8 office. He has made four presentations on the housing study so far and has additional presentations scheduled. The studies have been sent to developers and builders and three developers are considering projects; however, interest

rates are a factor for some. One developer focuses on duplexes and townhomes in smaller communities. He has also been contacted by a developer that does large projects for multifamily and senior housing. An article was in the *West Central Tribune* yesterday on the Lakeland project and the traffic study. The EDC was contacted by Realm5 on the Nexyst 360 project about bringing in an investor to purchase and develop the property, including adding rail. Certification of a portion of the Willmar Industrial Park by BNSF is ongoing; the information requested is very detailed. A virtual site visit may be held in the near future. Discussion was held on the power needed for new developments.

Swedburg reported the Main Street Economic Revitalization grant is receiving a lot of inquiries. The program launched Friday night; an updated application will be done; open office hours will be held next Thursday at the Willmar Public Library with interpreters available. The total funds available is \$750,000 with a maximum grant for a project of \$75,000 or 30% of a project. Grants must be used for physical improvements to buildings within the defined project area. Swedburg has been working with Pen House Boba, a tea house opening in downtown Willmar, Amin Grocery celebrated a ribbon cutting with the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce (WLACC), and Mainstream Boutique received its first dollar from WLACC. The EDC will host a Chamber Connection on March 24 at Mainstream Boutique and highlight the Elevate Community Business Academy. Primrose Boutique opened and TJ Maxx is remodeling the former Office Max building.

Elevate Community Business Academy. Swedburg reported the first class of the next group was held last night with 15 students enrolled and the first-ever Spanish class will be held tonight with 10 students enrolled. We are working on selecting a location and date for graduation.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development. Swedburg reported planning is being done for this year's Partners in Ag Innovation Conference to be held July 25. The planning committee is working on finding a keynote speaker and has good storytellers scheduled. It is hoped someone from BNSF will speak. The committee worked on obtaining sponsors upfront and has most of the funds needed. She continues to work with the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute as to the European company.

Broadband and Advanced Technology. The latest Border-to-Border Development Grant deadline was March 1; the state received 88 applications. The committee supported two applications: a regular application for Harrison Township and a low-density pilot program application for East Lake Lillian and Lake Elizabeth Townships. The state weighs heavily on letters of support, which the EDC was able to obtain for its projects. Charter Spectrum came forward with two proposed projects with high-density populations. The committee applied for a digital equity mini grant to assist our "Digital Connections Committee" in cataloging local digital inclusion strengths, needs and goals. The state confirmed receipt of the application and she may hear tomorrow if the EDC received the \$4,000 maximum. Swedburg explained digital equity, which is access to and affordability of the internet.

Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment (BRE). Backman reported the committee held its quarterly meeting last week where it discussed the next virtual career fair on May 18. Renville, Redwood and Meeker Counties will participate. A job fair will be held at the Willmar High School on May 9th. The partners of the West Central Minnesota Area Job Fair decided not to hold an in-person job fair at Ridgewater College this spring, but may host one in October. They are trying to increase attendance by jobseekers and will be making some changes. The BRE Committee changed its meeting date to the second Wednesday of each month at 1:00 p.m. Sam Bowen of Ridgewater College is working on a commercial driver's license grant through the state.

Finance. The committee will meet next week to consider two loan applications.

Marketing. Backman highlighted areas of Olson's report (see attached).

Leisure Travel. Benson reported the committee did not meet.

Childcare. Swedburg reported the local Rural Child Care Innovation Program reconvened to assist with portion of the childcare grant and held a meeting with area childcare providers. The childcare grant will be a rolling review of applications as they are received and funds will be disbursed on a first come, first served basis. Several new individuals have shown interest in starting a childcare and one Spanish-speaking Elevate student is interested in starting a childcare business. Swedburg may consider holding Elevate-type classes for current childcare providers that are shorter in length. She is working with University of Minnesota Extension on evaluating what is being done with the grant to best understand successes and gaps and what comes next.

WHAT'S UP?

- Les Heitke has seen good improvements on Lakeland Avenue properties and believes Willmar's housing inspector has resulted in improvements around the city.
- Backman announced he is receiving the WLACC MILO award on March 31 at a 7 a.m. breakfast to be held on the MinnWest Technology Campus. If board members wish to attend, the EDC will cover the cost.
- Kelly TerWisscha announced South 71 Veterinary Clinic re-opened at is new location a
 couple of weeks ago and a ribbon cutting was held last week; construction at Highway 7/71
 is moving along; and he will be working with Swedburg on a project for Peterson Funeral
 Home through the Main Street Economic Revitalization Program.
- Swedburg announced the Willmar High School speech team has taken first in the last two
 competitions and will be traveling to Moorhead for their first-ever national qualifying
 competition.
- Gardner reported the County Board introduced an ordinance to create a housing trust fund through the Kandiyohi County Housing and Redevelopment Authority; public hearings will be held. It will be a fund to assist in maintaining existing housing stock and to meet affordable housing needs for low and moderate income households through loans and grants and assist in rehabilitation of smaller rental properties. The County Board also

- passed a resolution in favor of an interchange at New London; the county will contribute \$2.5 million from local option sales tax.
- Benson announced a bonspiel curling tournament will be held this weekend; many
 residents have attended open curling. Monies are slowly coming in for a dedicated curling
 center; \$3.2 million is needed. A grant was applied for with the state.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no business,

IT WAS MOVED BY Les Heitke, SECONDED BY Mary Warszynski, to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:42 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular board meeting is 11:00 a.m., Thursday, April 13, 2023 at the Community Room of Heritage Bank, Willmar, and via Zoom video conference.

Mary Warszynski, Secretary

APPROVED: 4/13/2023

Art Benson, President



Real People. Real Solutions.

Please Remit To: Bolton & Menk, Inc.
1960 Premier Drive | Mankato, MN 56001-5900
507-625-4171 | 507-625-4177 (fax)
Payment by Credit Card Available Online at www.Bolton-Menk.com
To Ensure Proper Credit, Provide Invoice Numbers with Payment

Willmar Economic Development Commission Attn: Aaron Backman 222 20th St SE PO Box 1783 Willmar, MN 56201 February 21, 2023

 Project No:
 0W1.129669

 Invoice No:
 0307233

 Client Account:
 WILLEDC_PR

Willmar EDC/2023 General Engineering

Professional Services from January 1, 2023 through February 3, 2023: **Professional Services**

	Hours	Rate	Amount	
Principal			A TOTAL AND A	
Bongard, Jacob Turn Lane/Acceleration Lane Analysis for TH 40 Project	1.50	175.00	262.50	
Bongard, Jacob MnDOT D8 Coordination to Finalize Concept	1.00	188.00	188.00	
Bongard, Jacob TH 40 Turn Lane Improvements	1.00	188.00	188.00	
Bongard, Jacob Turn Lane/Acceleration Lane Analysis for TH 40 Project	1.00	188.00	188.00	
Voge, Jared TED Layout, MnDOT Correspondence	.50	208.00	104.00	
Voge, Jared TED Project	1.00	208.00	208.00	
Administrative Paulson, Kristina TED	.50	108,00	54.00	
Design Engineer				
Groff, Alex Figures and Cost Estimates	11.50	138.00	1,587.00	
Loyd, Christopher Benefit Cost Analysis for TH 40 Improvement Alternatives	7.00	120.00	840.00	
Project Engineer				
Johnson, Spencer Rail Loop Figure	13.00	143.00	1,859.00	
Johnson, Spencer Rail Loop Figure/TH 40 TED	4.00	143.00	572.00	
Johnson, Spencer Spur Loop Figure	4.00	143.00	572.00	
Senior Technician				
Svavarsson, Jonas Spur Loop Exhibit	10.00	143.00	1,430.00	
Senior Project Engineer	0.00	100	1,000,000	
Arens, Derek TH 40 TED Layouts, Cost Estimates, MnDOT Correspond		169.00	1,605.50	
Totals Total Labor	65.50		9,658.00	

9,658.00

Project 0W1.129669

Willmar EDC/2023 General Engineering

Invoice

0307233

Total this Invoice

\$9,658.00

Redwood Valley Technical Solutions

30442 Co Rd
Redwood Falls, MN 56283 US
(866) 991-7879
sm@rvtechsolutions.com
http://www.rvtechsolutions.com



INVOICE

BILL TO

Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC)

INVOICE

4210

DATE TERMS 03/01/2023

DUE DATE

Due on receipt 03/01/2023

ACTIVITY	QTY	RATE	AMOUNT
Service:Website Project Website Design Project for Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC) - 1st Half Payment	1	5,375.00	5,375.00
Thank you for your business! We look forward to working with you on the	SUBTOTAL		5,375.00
project!	TAX		0.00
	TOTAL		5,375.00
	BALANCE DUE		\$5,375.00



Strategic Planning Session March 16, 2023 Willmar Conference Center

AGENDA

9:00 – 9:05 AM WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Aaron Backman, EDC Executive Director

9:05 – 9:20 AM Framing the Day

Cheryl K. Glaeser, Achieve Consulting

Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

9:20 – 9:50 AM INSIGHTS FROM BUSINESS SUPPORT EFFORTS

Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Guest Businesses:

Stephanie Lopez – **Spurs Bar & Grill**

Ashlyn Hillenbrand & Taylor Schreiner - Salon/Spa Entrepreneurs

9:50 – 11:10 AM STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: 2022 HIGHLIGHTS/2023 INSIGHTS

Aaron Backman, EDC Executive Director

Highlights of past/current efforts

• Insights on trends and opportunities

Kelsey Olson, Marking and Public Relations Specialist

Insights from Kandiyohi County Townships

Cheryl Glaeser, Achieve Consulting

• Facilitated Discussion to Affirm Priorities

11:10 – 11:20 AM BREAK

11:20 AM – 12:00 PM HOUSING STUDY: Analysis and Conclusions

Jay Thompson, Viewpoint Consulting Group

12:00 – 12:40 PM LUNCH

12:40 – 1:15 PM DEVELOPING STRATEGIC GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Facilitated Discussions: What specific goals and objectives will make the most difference AND have the greatest potential impact? What is our

desired outcome for each goal area?

1:15 – 1:25 PM BREAK

1:25 – 2:15 PM ALIGNING AND PRIORITIZING RESOURCES

Review/Discussion of Committee Allocations

Facilitated Discussions: What are the resources needed (human, financial, etc.) to achieve our goals/objectives? How might we prioritize

and align the necessary resources to support this work?

2:15 – 2:30 PM CLOSING REFLECTIONS/COMMENTS





SITESELECTION

2022 TOP MICROPOLITANS

From Site Selection magazine, March 2023

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Findlay On the Move

Northwest Ohio's perennial juggernaut shows how it's done, again.



South Main St. in Findlay, Ohio

Courtesy of Findlay-Hancock County Alliance

by Gary Daughters

t should come as no surprise to Site Selection readers that Findlay, Ohio, is our Top Micropolitan area. It's the ninth straight No. 1 ranking for the plucky yet muscular town of 40,000 that straddles Interstate 75 about 100 miles south of Detroit.

Ho-hum, right?

Wrong.



The scope of Findlay's latest triumph is truly eye-popping. Findlay's haul of 32 qualifying projects dwarfs those of all other micros, none of which accumulated more than 12. In what was a challenging environment for investment among the 543 communities the Census Bureau identifies as micropolitan statistical areas, Findlay's project count increased by a full 33% from the previous year's total.

With Findlay blazing the trail, the state of Ohio dominates our micropolitan ranking once again. Twenty-two Ohio micros combined to amass 115 qualifying projects, more than twice as many as Indiana, whose micropolitans registered 50 qualifying project announcements. Led by upstart Thomasville — which surged to claim our No. 2 spot — Georgia again ranks third for accumulated micropolitan projects, sharing its position this year with Kentucky. Joining a stout, southern contingent, the Carolinas, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana all rank in our Top 10. Kansas, New York, Pennsylvania and Illinois are represented there as well.

Repeat Players

A familiar cast of characters inhabits the list of businesses that placed qualifying investments in Findlay and surrounding Hancock County, which in 2022 recorded the highest annual weekly wage of any county in Ohio. There's Marathon Petroleum, headquartered in Findlay and rooted there since the early 1900s. Cooper Tire invested again, as well. So did Ball Corporation, Whirlpool, Freudenberg North America, Romark, Roki America and Best Buy. These and other repeat investors represent the steel and concrete pillars that support fortress Findlay.

Given Findlay's robust foundation, it is tempting to suggest that it's a machine that runs on autopilot, a supposition that would fail to account for both the current macro-economic realities and what is a long-time, community-wide commitment to growth and job creation.

"These companies don't just automatically reinvest," says Dave Blatnik, Marathon's manager of state government affairs for Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. "The economic development community is on a constant mission to drive and create value for the businesses that are here."

Dan Sheaffer is a fixture of that community. Sheaffer in November assumed leadership of the Findlay-Hancock County Alliance after serving for a decade there. He's sixth-generation Findlay. Sheaffer says that, given rising labor and construction costs faced by manufacturers, the year 2022 was hardly a gimme for the type of





2022 TOP MICROPOLITANS

by Number of Projects

	Micropolitan	Projects	T44	Crawfordsville, IN	3	T77	Pittsburg, KS	2
	1 Findlay, OH	32	T44	Peru, IN	3	177	Campbellsville, KY	2
	2 Thomasville, GA	12	T44	Warsaw, IN	3	177	Mayfield, KY	2
	3 Cullman, AL	11	T44	Winfield, KS	3	177	Maysville, KY	2
	3 Sidney, OH	11	T44	Frankfort, KY	3	177	Middlesborough, KY	2
	5 Auburn, IN	9	T44	Paducah, KY-IL	3	T77		2
	5 Greenville, 0H	9	T44	Richmond-Berea, KY	3	177	DeRidder, LA	2
	7 Batavia, NY	8	T44	Sturgis, MI	3		Natchitoches, LA	2
Ī		8	T44	Owatonna, MN	3	T77	Ruston, LA	2
Ţ		7	T44	Bozeman, MT	3	T77	Coldwater, MI	7
Ī		7	T44		3	T77	Willmar, MN	2
Ī		7	T44	Fernley, NV	3	T77	McComb, MS	2
Ì		7		Auburn, NY		T77	Meridian, MS	2
Ť		7	T44	Lumberton, NC	3	T77	Kirksville, MO	2
		7	T44	Rockingham, NC	3	T77	West Plains, M0	2
I		7	T44	Sanford, NC	3	T77	Kearney, NE	2
I		7	T44	Defiance, OH	3	177	Scottsbluff, NE	2
Ţ		,	T44	Portsmouth, 0H	3	T77	Pahrump, NV	2
T	2011 - CL March 2014 (1915 - 1917)	6	T44	Sandusky, OH	3	T77	Concord, NH	2
T		6	T44	Tiffin, OH	3	177	Jamestown-Dunkirk-Fredonia, NY	2
I		6	T44	Wooster, OH	3	177	Ogdensburg-Massena, NY	2
II		6	T44	New Castle, PA	3	T77	Plattsburgh, NY	2
II		6	T44	Pottsville, PA	3	177	Albemarle, NC	2
12		5	T44	Sunbury, PA	3	177	Kinston, NC	2
12		5	T44	Gaffney, SC	3	177	Laurinburg, NC	2
TZ		5	T44	Brookings, SD	3	177	Pinehurst-Southern Pines, NC	2
TZ		5	T44	Mitchell, SD	3	T77	Marion, 0H	2
T2		5	T44	Tullahoma-Manchester, TN	3	177	New Philadelphia-Dover, OH	2
TZ	일이 마셨다면서 아이지 않는 사람들이 다 살았다.	5	T44	Manitowoc, WI	3	T77	Norwalk, OH	2
T2		4	T44	Whitewater, WI	3	177	Salem, OH	2
TZ		4	T77	Arkadelphia, AR	2	T77	Van Wert, 0H	2
T2		4	T77	Batesville, AR	2	T77	Wilmington, 0H	2
T2	38) - T. J. & C. C. C. S. C. C. C. C. S. C. C. S. C.	4	T77	Helena-West Helena, AR	2	177	Ardmore, 0K	2
T2	H N. M. M. M. M. M. H.	4	177	Magnolia, AR	2	177	Tahlequah, OK	2
T2		4	177	Cedartown, GA	2	T77	Lock Haven, PA	2
T2		4	T77	Cordele, GA	2	T77	Seneca, SC	2
T2		4	177	Jesup, GA	2	177	McMinnville, TN	2
T2	48	4	177	Moultrie, GA	2	177	Sevierville, TN	2
T2	4 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 -	4	T77	Statesboro, GA	2	T77	Bay City, TX	2
T2	8 Cortland, NY	4	177	Tifton, GA	2	T77	Corsicana, TX	2
T2	8 Chillicothe, OH	4	T77	Galesburg, IL	2	T77	Paris, TX	2
T2	8 Jackson, OH	4	T77	Ottawa, IL	2	T77	Barre, VT	2
T2	8 Wapakoneta, 0H	4	T77	Rochelle, IL	2	T77	Bennington, VT	2
T2	8 Zanesville, OH	4	T77	Decatur, IN	2	T77	Martinsville, VA	2
T2	B Danville, VA	4	T77	Marion, IN	2	T77	Moses Lake, WA	2
T4	4 El Dorado, AR	3	T77	Clinton, IA	2		Fairmont, WV	2
T4		3	T77	Fort Dodge, IA	2		Point Pleasant, WV-0H	2
T44		3	T77	Dodge City, KS	2		Riverton, WY	2
	4 Bedford, IN	7			100			



Joint Operations Board Meeting

Willmar, MN

3/9/2023

Marketing and Communications Update

- Landing pages were created for Broadband, Main Street Revitalization and Child Care which
 include detailed information and links to applications. Applications are easily accessible at the
 EDC.
- Social media marketing continues to support our focus areas and needs for communication including calls to action for broadband and child care and sharing in our successes like the housing study results. So far for this year we are seeing a 47.5% increase in impressions (people seeing our posts) and 27.9% increase in engagements. We have a consistent increase in our LinkedIn following.
- The next Virtual Career Fair will be May 18th. Our partners are again Renville and Redwood Counties in addition to Meeker County this time. The Career & Job Fair at the Willmar High School is scheduled again this year on May 9th and we are extending invite to our other schools in Kandiyohi County. This initiation will be to schools to select a number of students to attend to keep attendance manageable. SWIF may support transportation for these schools.
- Workforce Support this month included contacting all ~80 child care providers to invite them to the informational session. Informative sheets on each of the 'buckets' of grant areas. The application is in process and will be available by March 18th.
- Results of the Township & City Council Surveys have been received and the information is being
 organized to reflect priorities throughout the county and will be presented at the planning
 session. In addition to this I have been building on our relationships with these communities
 through one on one follow-up on survey comments on concerns.
- The creation of the new website progresses as we continue to build on our unified voice to start the direct work with VantagePoint and Redwood Valley Technical Solutions.
- All marketing informational materials have been finalized and will be available at the Planning Session.
- The Housing Newsletter was well received with a 44% opening rate and a 98% on computer opening rate, a high rating when it comes to newsletters.
- Sam Romain is the proposed new member of the MPR Committee needing board action to move him into the committee / the recommendation of the MPR Committee. He is the CEO of Romain-Berg Marketing, specializing in digital marketing and search optimization.