

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)**  
**MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**  
**March 27, 2023**  
**Heritage Bank, 310 First Street South, Willmar**

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

Excused: Ben Carlson

Guest: Tiffany Hintz

Staff: Kelsey Olson, Marketing and Communications Specialist

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

Chairperson Pam Rosenau called the meeting to order at approximately 12:02 p.m.

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Ann Winge Johnson, SECONDED BY Jesse Gislason, to approve the Minutes of the February 27, 2023 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**NEW BUSINESS—**

**Addition of Tiffany Hintz.** Tiffany Hintz introduced herself. She is employed as an executive assistant at Atwater Ford and plans to lead a daycare or senior living project in Atwater. Self-introductions of the committee were conducted.

**Budget Review.** Kelsey Olson presented a budget review for 2022 and 2023 and an estimated 2024 budget. The Marketing and Public Relations Committee's expenses were \$17,717 in 2022 and the budget in 2023 is \$29,630. Increases in 2023 include:

- Mileage, due to Olson's extensive community outreach endeavors.
- Displays and giveaways, including the purchasing of pens, folders, card holders and car magnets.
- Website development, a one-time expense for updating the EDC website.

In 2024 each EDC committee will budget their individual marketing expenses. The Marketing and Public Relations Committee's 2024 budget increases include \$1,200 for community events, \$2,400 for advertisements and \$1,800 for video production. Because the 2024 budget will not have the website development expense, it will be approximately \$9,000 less than the 2023 budget.

**Website & Branding Planning.** Olson reported the City of Willmar is planning a rebranding project. Jean Geselius, graphic designer at Ten Oaks Design Studio, has been hired to design logos that will give the City of Willmar, the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and the EDC a unified look. A meeting will be held with 10 marketing representatives from throughout the county to discuss the change. Olson informed the city that the EDC is working with Redwood Valley Technical Services (RVTS) on a website update and with VantagePoint Marketing Consultants LLC on guiding images, personas for target audiences and defining focus areas and how to present them. Due to the pending logo change, a possible name change for the EDC will be

brought up for discussion. VantagePoint has a \$2,000 package for branding and renaming, although this is not included in the 2023 budget. Aaron Backman, Sarah Swedburg and Olson will complete a website questionnaire and submit it to RVTS by March 29, 2023. RVTS provided an audit of all news stories and pages on the EDC website.

**Folder.** Olson presented a new folder to be used for loan application materials. The folder has two areas to hold 8.5 x 11-inch documents, a separate sleeve to hold brochures and a gusset to allow for a large number of documents. The printer did a nice job proportioning the city pictures on the cover.

#### UPDATES—

**Virtual Career Fair planning.** The next virtual career fair will be held in May using the EDC's contract with Premier Virtual. Ridgewater College and Swift County are added to the list of partners, which includes Renville, Redwood and Meeker Counties. Marketing responsibility will be shared equally by the partners using radio and social media.

**Willmar Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Leisure & Travel Committee Update.** Olson reported the last CVB meeting was cancelled due to the weather. Olson will request a discussion of the SHRPA website be added to the next agenda.

**Summer Schedule of Events.** Olson reported the EDC plans to participate in three community events this summer and requested volunteers. Hintz will review the schedule to ensure all of Atwater's events are included as options. Olson plans to participate in the Lake Lillian centennial celebration.

#### DISCUSSION ITEMS—

**CVB Agreement Review.** Olson requested the committee discuss the CVB agreement approved on July 28, 2011 and offer recommendations for a future agreement. Under the terms of the existing agreement the CVB shall prepare an annual budget to present to the EDC during its budget-planning session, prepare an annual work plan outlining tourism-related goals and provide year-end goals and budget reports to the EDC Joint Operations Board of Directors. The EDC's responsibilities include recommending an appointment to serve on the CVB Board of Directors and providing an annual expenditure of \$34,000 in January each year, subject to an annual budget process. One change to this agreement has been implemented; the funds are now disbursed in four payments throughout the year. Discussion points included:

- Creation of a chart showing the categories for which the EDC markets, and the revenue provided by each, with a comparison to the amount spent by the EDC on each category.
- Analysis of how much is spent on business retention, expansion and recruitment, which is critical for tourism because many related businesses aren't able to hire enough personnel to handle tourism growth.
- Promotion of Willmar as a good place to live rather than just visit.
- The committee would like a report from the CVB detailing how the \$34,000 from the EDC is being spent.
- The CVB needs to have budget transparency, including an outline of expenses and an annual work plan.
- The EDC pays for ads in the Visitors Guide despite its annual contribution.

IT WAS MOVED BY Ann Winge Johnson, SECONDED BY Sam Romain, to recommend to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Operations Board and Joint Powers Board that prior to allocating funds to the Willmar Lakes

Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, it complies with items 1-4 in the written agreement (see attached). MOTION CARRIED.

IT WAS MOVED BY Emily Lien, SECONDED BY Jesse Gislason, to recommend to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Operations Board and Joint Powers Board that the Willmar Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau agreement be reviewed and updated with a signed contract in 2023. MOTION CARRIED.

[Gislason was excused from the meeting]

IT WAS MOVED BY Emily Lien, SECONDED BY Ann Winge Johnson, to recommend to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Operations Board and Joint Powers Board that the Willmar Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau be asked to provide the budgets and work plans since the agreement was executed. MOTION CARRIED.

**Planning Session Review.** Olson reported a proposal at the planning session that would potentially reduce the number of EDC committees to three. The proposed committee structure could be:

- Business Development—workforce, agriculture, technical assistance and industrial development.
- Community Vitality—childcare, broadband and housing.
- Engagement and Communication—marketing, broader collaboration with other organizations, such as the CVB, outreach and promotion of recreational activities.

EDC will review the proposals and each individual committee will discuss how to proceed and give their recommendations. The final decision will be made by the EDC Joint Operations Board and Joint Powers Board. Olson will receive a detailed report from Cheryl Glaeser, facilitator of the planning session, and present it to the committee for discussion.

**Set Marketing and Public Relations Goals and Mission.** Olson reported the EDC's internal document lists the Marketing and Public Relations Committee goals as making a social media plan, make forward thinking changes to the EDC website, update and create promotional handouts and flyers and support day to day marketing needs. The EDC website lists goals as creating awareness of EDC activities and services in our local regional communities, concentrating on focus areas involving workforce training, housing and childcare and attracting new businesses. Future goals will be discussed and set by the committee based on the township and city survey results and the planning session information. Goal planning will be discussed at the April meeting.

**Housing Study Newsletter.** Olson reported good feedback on the housing study newsletter, with an open rate of 46 percent. There were not a lot of clicks, indicating that most viewers had already seen the housing study or had knowledge of it. The overview included providing housing options for seniors, small towns, trends and rental remix, which discussed utilization of apartment complexes. The next EDC newsletter will be the spring edition, which will focus on industrial hemp and feature Prairie PRODucers and the Lower Sioux Indian Community.

**Updated Documents Review.** Olson presented the EDC marketing handouts, giving the committee an opportunity to recommend any final changes before the items are printed.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:24 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, April 24, 2023** in-person at the Community Room, Heritage Bank and via ZOOM video conference.



<b>DRAFT Proposed 2024</b>		
<b>Elevate Community Business Academy</b>		
Advertising		\$ 1,400
Marketing: U-Nique Ad (\$700 spring and fall)		\$1,400
Printing		\$ 500
<b>COMMITTEE EXPENSES</b>		
<b>Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development</b>		
Partners in Ag Innovation Conference Sponsor		\$ 1,500
Marketing: Farmfest Booth (\$875)	Spring & Fall 1/2	
page Industrail Hemp Ad (\$1,400)		\$2,275
Give-away: Farmtastic (\$250)	Crayons for Seeded paper give-away for Farmtastic, Women in Ag Conference, FarmFest, Ag Innovation (\$600 for 500) OR Sunglasses (\$1,045 for 500)	\$850 - \$1,295
Supplies (Spinwheel +\$50)		\$300
<b>Broadband and Advanced Technology</b>		
Marketing		\$ 750
<b>Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment</b>		
Marketing at Community Venture Network & Area Development Conference (Geo-fencing at \$400/event)		\$2,000
Workforce Development (In-Person/Virtual Job Fairs)		\$6,000
Workforce Development (Care-Taker Workforce Solutions Summit)		\$3,000
Childcare Support Event		\$400
Manufacturing Month: Ad/s (\$600)	Newspaper Social Media	
Promotion (\$200)		
Sponsorship Meals for Employee Appreciation (\$200 x 5= \$1,000)		
Other Expenses (\$200)		\$2,000
<b>Marketing and Public Relations</b>		
Branding		\$ 750
Community events		\$ 1,200
Displays and giveaways		\$ 600
Meals/Meeting refreshments		\$1,200
Media		
Publications (Impact, Summer Fun, Willmar Lakes Magazine)		\$850
Advertisements (radio and newspaper)		\$2,400
Printing, copying & publishing		\$ 500
Video Production ( 3 short video testimonials over the year, \$500-600/each)		\$1,800
Media - (Facebook promotions)		\$200
MPR Ad (I believe for one week)		\$2,520
<b>Total Media</b>		<b>\$ 4,900</b>
Mileage/Travel		\$ 1,200
Professional services		
General administrative services		\$ 4,500
<b>Total Professional Services</b>		<b>\$ 4,500</b>
Subscriptions		\$ 4,210



Marketing and Public Relations	2023 Budget
Branding	\$ 600
Community events	\$ 1,200
Displays and giveaways	\$ 2,750
Meals/Meeting refreshments	\$ 800
Media	
Advertisements	\$ 3,100
Printing, copying & publishing	\$ 1,500
<b>Total Media</b>	<b>\$ 4,600</b>
Mileage/Travel	\$ 1,200
Professional services	
General administrative services	\$ 4,500
<b>Total Professional Services</b>	<b>\$ 4,500</b>
Subscriptions	\$ 4,210
Website Development/Maintenance	\$ 9,370
Marketing - Other	\$ 400
<b>Total Marketing and Public Relations Committee Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 29,630</b>

## 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)
  - h. United Way
  - i. Redwood, Renville, Meeker and Swift Counties
  - j. 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
- e. 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



### Website Goals:

1. Create awareness of EDC activities and services in our local/regional community
2. Concentrate on focus areas involving workforce training, housing and childcare
3. Attract new businesses.

### Website Strategies:

1. Be an agent of positive messaging about our business community and economy.
2. Assist businesses in identifying and recruiting talent and collaborate with community partners to fill open positions.
3. Market our community outside of our region to attract targeted businesses.

# Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar EDC Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau Tourism Partnership Agreement

The Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC) Joint Powers Board of Commissioners and the Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (WLACVB) Board of Directors acknowledge the common missions of the EDC Tourism Committee and the WLACVB, and that the partnership agreement be continued for three years for the implementation of the Tourism Committee work plan under the guidance of the WLACVB.

The terms of the agreement are as follows:

1. WLACVB Director, along with the Leisure Travel Committee, shall prepare an annual budget request to be presented to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar EDC during the budget planning session (held in June each year). The budget request shall outline the line-item tourism-related expenses represented in the budget and how it relates to the WLACVB overall budget.
2. The WLACVB shall prepare an annual work plan outlining tourism-related goals to be submitted with the budget request.
3. The WLACVB shall provide annually year-end goals and budget report to the EDC Joint Operations Board of Directors.
4. The Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar EDC Joint Operations Board shall recommend an appointment to serve on the WLACVB Board of Directors.
5. The Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar EDC shall transfer to the City of Willmar the annual expenditure of \$34,000 allocated within the budget in January 2012. Amounts to be allocated in 2013 and 2014 are subject to the EDC's annual budget process.

The terms of the partnership agreement may be amended as necessary with notice and approval by both the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar EDC Joint Powers Board and the WLACVB Board of Directors.

The agreement will continue year-to-year and may be terminated by either Board with advance written notification identifying intent and reasons for the termination prior to September 30<sup>th</sup> of the year preceding the partnership's termination.

Approved: July 28, 2011

Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar EDC

Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Harlan Madsen  
chairperson



Beth Fischer  
Executive Director