

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)**  
**MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**  
**September 25, 2023**  
**Heritage Bank, 310 First Street South, Willmar**

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

Excused: Ben Carlson and 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 12:04 p.m

Discussion was held regarding the addition of new members to this committee. Chris Riley, Kandiyohi Power Cooperative; Javier Valenzuela, Bremer Bank and Kevin Dietrich, Willmar Area Community Foundation were identified as candidates for Kelsey Olson to contact.

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Ann Winge Johnson, SECONDED BY Emily Lien, to approve the Minutes of the August 28 meeting and September 5, 2023 special meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**UPDATES—**

**Personas.** Olson shared three customer personas, including the local government official, which is a new target audience for the EDC; the developer and the site selector, which were completed with the help of Sarah Swedburg and Aaron Backman. Developers and site selectors are subject to tighter deadlines than in the past, and both have goals that include financial security. Information is obtained from economic reports, which could influence where the EDC chooses to spend future marketing dollars.

**Website.** Olson, Swedburg and Backman reviewed the site map and determined it needs to take a different form as opposed to a revised version of the current website ([see](#) attached). The home page will feature an icon for each target audience with an eye-catching image that leads users to the relevant information. Existing businesses and future businesses will have separate headers. Subpages will be specific to each audience. Current projects, local events, about us and contact us will be listed on top. Attaching teaser phrases to the images was suggested. Olson cited the Ports of Duluth website as an example of a simple site. It has four boxes across the top for business, community, information and contact us. When hovered on, a menu appears for each of these categories, making the site very easy to navigate. The home page will feature an event calendar and social media will be listed at the bottom. Communities in Kandiyohi County will be on a subpage and each will be allowed to offer a link to their respective website. A meeting is scheduled with Redwood Valley Technical Solutions to discuss the website map.

**Rebranding.** Olson reported Backman has a goal of proposing three names with unique logos at the Joint Operations Board meeting in October. A tagline, “connecting communities and business,” will be included in the proposal.

**Virtual job fair.** A virtual job fair will be held during Minnesota Manufacturing Month in October. Invitations went to anyone who participated in the West Central Minnesota virtual event. Premier Virtual is handling recruitment for the event, using Indeed postings within an hour radius of Willmar. Olson attended the Tiger Pathways Conference in Hutchinson, which highlights student-led workforce solutions and connects working professionals with schools. Schools are given the opportunity to choose from a group of professionals who will give presentations to third and fifth grade classes. These classes were chosen because at the third-grade level students reach an understanding that they will have to work for a living when they finish school, and fifth graders have yet to form gender stereotypes about careers. ACGC and KMS schools have agreed to participate.

**Social Media.** Olson reported Facebook impressions were up 96% and engagement was up 231.1%, while LinkedIn impressions were down 43.7% and engagement was down 24%. There were 1,054 likes on Facebook, an increase of 76%. Followers went from 942 to 1288, a 73% increase.

#### **NEW BUSINESS—**

**Logo.** Kristin Allen at Greenwater Garage & Gallery provided logos using the names Kandiyohi Economic Development, Kandiyohi County Economic Development Commission, Prosper Economic Development and Prosper Kandiyohi County (see attached). The logos reflect a shorter name, the locality and economic development. The following logos were preferred by the committee:

- The green arrow pointing to the right, with the “i” in Kandiyohi made visible, “county” added to avoid confusion about the area served and the “growing forward” tagline removed.
- The Kandiyohi County Economic Development Commission logo with the state of Minnesota starburst, remove “commission” and make the logo available both square and horizontal.
- The Prosper logo including the sunburst.

**Summer newsletter.** The summer newsletter came out one month late with a different theme than intended. It was sent to 696 subscribers, and Olson’s goal is to increase that number to 1000 by next year. The open rate was 44%, with a 3.4% click through rate.

**Virtual business resource One-Stop-Shop.** Olson reported that 61 businesses registered for the One-Stop-Shop, with 47 logging in. Olson plans to post a reminder on social media that the event will be open until mid-October.

**Industrial Hemp Ad.** Olson presented a draft of a half-page ad (see attached) that will appear in *Rooted*, a magazine published by the *West Central Tribune*. The ad’s purpose is to separate industrial hemp from marijuana with eye-catching images that provide education about its uses. Highlights include construction erosion bedding, clothing, building materials and plastics. Committee suggestions included eliminating the rounded font and making one image larger to become the focus of the ad. The spring ad in *Rooted* (see attached) will use the Expanding, Growing, Building tagline. Pictures depicting garden vegetables and a hemp bull have been added. Olson will encourage the publishers of *Rooted* to include an article about harvesting hemp.

**Hispanic Heritage Month video.** Olson will work with Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio, the city of Willmar, and Mid-Minnesota Development Commission to create a video for Hispanic Heritage Month using a

\$1500 grant from Southwest Initiative Foundation. The video, by Ten17 Media, will capture images from Welcoming Week and local businesses while defining what Latino means in Kandiyohi County. Pablo Obregón will write the script.

**Storytelling our work.** Olson met with childcare providers to capture their stories. She will create a story file to keep these available for future use.

**Winter newsletter ideas.** Theme ideas included small construction, such as cabinet making and Three Fingers Sawmill; an update on Highway 23 and other road construction projects in Kandiyohi County, the new rail park and broadband.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:12 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, October 23, 2023** in-person at the Community Room, Heritage Bank.