

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
AGRICULTURE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT(AG) COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
November 18, 2021
EDC Board Room and Via Zoom Video Conference**

Present: Rollie Boll, Kevin Halvorson, Larry Konsterlie, Kim Larson, Nate Reuss, Keith Poier, Chris Radel and Dan Tepfer

Excused: Dustin Kotrba and Dan Lippert

Guests: Chris Radel, Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator, Willmar Municipal Utilities and Nate Reuss, Economic Developer, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission and Laura Arne, EDC Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee (via Zoom)

Staff: Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Secretarial: Diane Beck, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chairperson Kevin Halvorson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:32 a.m. noting a quorum was present. Self-introductions were conducted.

AGENDA—Added to New Business was a Micro-Farm Project.

IT WAS MOVED BY Dan Tepfer, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll, to approve the revised Agenda.
MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Boll, SECONDED BY Keith Poier, to approve the Minutes of the August 19 and September 19, 2021 meetings as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

Approve New Members Chris Radel and Nate Reuss.

IT WAS MOVED BY Kim Larson, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll, to approve Chris Radel and Nate Reuss as new members of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development Committee. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS—

Industrial Hemp Conference. Laura Arne, a member of the EDC's Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee, gave an interesting presentation on her attendance at The 2nd Florida Industrial Hemp Conference & Exhibition, May 19-21, 2021 (see attached). There were 205 in-person attendees plus virtual attendees and speakers. It was emphasized strongly the future of the industry is in hemp fiber. Industrial applications far outweigh the retail market. A clearinghouse is needed; Arne will contact the speaker to obtain additional information. State and federal laws were discussed. States are willing to move forward, however, federal laws are holding back progress. Arne suggested contacting local elected officials to propose industrial hemp programs and convey these programs can help the state's economic development. Marketing is a strategy and it is important to partner and build alliances. Arne shared information about Delta 8, a THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) used for brain health. Regulations have loosened up, but some states will not allow Delta 8.

Legal issues can crop up fast; there is a need to have someone who is up to date with the latest information. It is difficult to master the industry language; there are different extracts coming out for various applications. It is important to disclose the product contents and be current on permits. It is also beneficial to make alliances with media to work with facts rather than perception. The testing process is inconsistent. Crops need to be tested at a certain time and testing levels may vary depending on when tests are done. Banks conduct research which takes time and personnel. Banks are not interested in cooperatives at this point. Credit card companies are interested in working with hemp farmers, but farmers need to be transparent. Investors are another source of financing. Arne shared information on grants, clinical trials and the testing process. Some testing companies are charging high rates to test industrial hemp. Detailed business plans are necessary in the startup process. Branding is important, as well as securing professional marketing. It is important to find sources to market the product.

Arne shared she was the only one who attended from the Midwest. Most attendees were from Florida and Georgia. There were no attendees from western states.

Dan Tepfer felt there are many obstacles, i.e., regulations. Sarah Swedburg recently attended an event in Minneapolis and shared discussions were held regarding industrial hemp. Arne inquired if there is a group advocating for industrial hemp financing; Swedburg will contact the speaker and notify Arne. Arne inquired if the Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee should form a committee dealing with industrial hemp financing. Swedburg commented this will be discussed at a future subcommittee meeting.

Ridgewater College Updates. Chris Radel and Swedburg met with Ridgewater College Agricultural Department staff to discuss having more connection/communication between the Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee and Ridgewater College. Radel stated Ridgewater College is interested in what is being done in the industrial hemp arena. Swedburg will meet with an ag student later today. An **Ag Career Fair** will be held on **April 26, 2022** at Ridgewater College.

Micro-Farm Project. Radel shared he and Swedburg are working on an idea to organize and secure a 5–10-acre plot to use for a micro farm for the Karen population in the Willmar community. Keith Poier suggested contacting a sustainable farm organization for additional information and Tepfer suggested contacting Farm Bureau. Radel will provide an update at a future committee meeting.

[Swedburg was excused from the meeting.]

REPORTS

Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee. Poier shared David Ladd from the Minnesota Hemp Association attended the last subcommittee meeting to share information regarding hemp. A networking meeting was recently held which focused on industrial hemp/cannabis, oils and legalizing marijuana. Poier shared the NoCo Hemp Expo will be held in Denver March 23-25, 2022 and is a top hemp conference. The Northern Hemp Summit will be held December 13-14, 2021 in Fargo, North Dakota. He feels it is important to have a representative attend the North Dakota conference. Nate Reuss shared information on a meeting he attended with Tim Seehusen and others regarding Prairie PROducers starting an industrial hemp processing plant near Olivia. Poier commented on the price of industrial hemp needed to make a profit.

Partners in Ag Innovation Conference. Chair Halvorson shared information from Dustin Kotrba as to a follow-up meeting held regarding the 2021 Partners in Ag Innovation Conference. There is a \$3,500 carryover in the budget; speaker ratings were high; and the 2022 Partners in Ag Innovation Conference will be held July 26, 2022 at MinnWest Technology Campus. The committee has a soft hold on a keynote speaker (Matt Roberts). Conference plans also include a broadband panel discussion and storytelling sessions plus other ideas the planning committee is pursuing.

Ag/Renewable Energy Community Events/Projects. Chair Halvorson inquired if the committee is interested in holding a joint meeting with the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce Agri Business Committee in December or January. Committee members agreed with the suggestion and discussed possible agenda topics. More information will be forthcoming. Tepfer emailed Jake Salsa asking for a summary report for Seed Grant funding, but has not received a response. Poier shared he read an interesting article in *Future Farmer* magazine regarding NASA collecting dust samples from asteroids, which seems to be a productive soil. They are attempting to get the dust to earth to replace top soil and are attempting to grow a crop on an asteroid.

ADJOURNMENT—With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:18 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular meeting is 7:30 a.m., December 16, 2021, in the EDC Board Room and via Zoom video conference.