

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)  
AGRICULTURE & RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT (Ag) COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**November 21, 2019**

**Christianson PLLP, Willmar**

Present: Rollie Boll, Ian Graue, Kevin Halvorson, Michelle Marotzke and Dan Tepfer

Excused: Larry Konsterlie, Dustin Kotrba and Dan Lippert

Absent: Christy Kallevig, Kim Larson and Keith Poier

Guests: Jacob Selseth of West Central Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs)

Media: Carolyn Lange, West Central Tribune

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager

Secretarial: Diane Beck, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Chairperson Dan Tepfer called the meeting to order at approximately 7:36 a.m. and declared a quorum was not present.

**AGENDA**—The agenda was approved as emailed.

**MINUTES**—As there was not a quorum in attendance, the July 18, August 5 and September 19, 2019 minutes were received but not approved.

**REPORTS**

**Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee.** Connie Schmoll reported the Subcommittee of approximately members met on October 7<sup>th</sup> and currently is working on markets and conducting research on their own. Schmoll, Kevin Halvorson, Kim Larson and Laura Arne attended a forum on November 15<sup>th</sup> by Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI) along with partner Agrigrowth on the topic of Building an Industrial Hemp Industry in Minnesota. Schmoll suggested members view the information and slides at <https://www.auri.org/2019/11/hempvideos/>. Topics include:

- The State of Industrial Hemp
- Beyond the Hype: Value Added Opportunities in Hemp
- Innovators in Minnesota's Hemp Industry
- Critical Industry Supports
- Lessons Learned

Schmoll shared Minnesota is working on Industrial Hemp language and rules which the federal government needs to approve.

Schmoll and Halvorson are working on a grid containing industrial hemp opportunities/products, type of building, costs and land needed, etc. There is a \$6 million factory being built in the United States which will manufacture HempWood, a product made out of compressed hemp pulp fibers held together with soy-based glue. The product can be used to make blocks, boards, flooring, cutting boards and skateboards. Schmoll commented the industrial hemp growers in Minnesota are growing hemp as pilot crops. Schmoll suggested the possibility of having a panel discussion in Willmar to share information regarding industrial hemp.

**Ag Marketing and Event Planning Subcommittee.** Schmoll reported Dustin Kotrba suggested kicking off the planning for the July 30<sup>th</sup> Ag Innovation Conference in December. Schmoll shared the partnering with MinnWest Technology Campus has been beneficial in securing and assisting with handling the finances. New members are welcome to join the planning team; contact Schmoll if interested. Schmoll reported she and Donna Boonstra attended a Blandin Innovation Conference in October and had the opportunity to speak with two presenters who would be excellent presenters at the Ag Innovation Conference. Schmoll encouraged committee members to view the agriculture innovation video *Farmforward* on YouTube.

**2020 Visionary Subcommittee.** No report available.

**Regional Sustainable Development Teams Planning Meeting (CERTs).** Jacob Selseth, West Central Coordinator with Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) provided an overview of his position. The mission of CERTs is to connect individuals and communities in Minnesota to the resources they need to identify and implement community-based clean energy projects. Selseth reported CERTs awards Seed Grants every other year to community groups for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects across Minnesota. They have awarded over \$1.2 Million to 355 projects since 2006. He shared The West Central Region currently has 7 seed grant applications totaling \$35,000 with \$20,000 to distribute. Overall, they distribute \$20,000 to each of the 7 regions in Minnesota. Some Seed Grants projects have included: LEDs, lighting in the Willmar theatre, New London-Spicer School greenhouse, solar, Youth Energy Summit. Selseth shared CERTs and the Willmar Clean Energy Group, will host a clean energy film, "The Power of Minnesota" on December 7<sup>th</sup> at the Willmar Public Library. The film contains stories of how clean energy is making local economies even stronger including local speakers and discussion about saving energy and money in homes and businesses. Schmoll will share the flyer.

Selseth shared information on the 2019 SWSDP Board and Work Group Gathering held on November 13<sup>th</sup> in Clara City which included the four work groups of agriculture and food, clean energy, natural resources and resilient communities to connect, cross-pollinate, build on each other's ideas and set priorities for 2020. Selseth commented a newer focus for CERTS is electrification, energy storage and electrical vehicles. In February 2020, CERTs will be conducting idea briefs which is similar to SEED grants regarding energy proposals. The Ag Committee discussed rural grocery stores and transportation to get locally grown produce into the mainstream is an important issue. Schmoll mentioned the New London Food Co-op group in New London is building a membership for a food coop and encouraged members to sign up. She suggested inviting Eric Hatlestad to a future Ag Committee meeting to give a presentation on the New London Food Co-op. Schmoll also mentioned a presentation by First Nation regarding honoring the land. Ian Graue suggested First Nation give the presentation at the Ag Innovation Conference in July.

**Electrical Vehicles Presentation.** Chair Tepfer provided interesting information on driving an electric vehicle. He owns an all-electric Nissan Leaf and shared it takes more management. Some of the challenges are battery life and charging stations, range issues as range decreases when driving on freeways and colder weather. Maintaining a constant speed is difficult and stressed the importance of using cruise control. Discussion held regarding issues with car dealerships and electric vehicles. Chair Tepfer shared the differences between the plug-in hybrids, hybrids and all-electric vehicles. Committee members had the opportunity to view Chair Tepfer's Nissan Leaf and a Tesla leased by Kandiyohi Power Coop. Chair Tepfer provided rides in the Tesla.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:15 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next committee meeting is **7:30 a.m., December 19, 2019** at Christianson PLLP, Willmar.