

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

MINUTES

April 21, 2016

Christianson & Associates, PLLP, Willmar

Present: Arvind Auluck-Wilson, Rollie Boll, John Duevel, Jon Folkedahl, Ian Graue, Kevin Halvorson, Kim Larson, Dustin Kotrba, Dan Lippert, Bruce Reuss and Dan Tepfer

Excused: Keith Poier

Absent: Larry Konsterlie and Donnell Williamson

Guest: Lyn Zeppelin, Vice President/Business Banker (Commercial Ag Lender), United Prairie Bank, Spicer

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

Chairperson Ian Graue called the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 a.m. Connie Schmoll requested to add the following topics to the agenda under New Business: 1) Committee News and suggested to place this agenda topic on subsequent Ag Committee agendas; 2) Chair Graue suggested to add the EDC's Business Specialist position to the agenda. The agenda was approved with the additional requests.

MINUTES

IT WAS MOVED BY Arvind Auluck-Wilson, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll, to approve the minutes of the March 17, 2016 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

REPORTS

Ag Investment Subcommittee. Dan Tepfer provided an update of the Ag Investment meeting on April 19, 2016 at Kandiyohi Power Cooperative in Spicer, MN. Approximately 10 potential investors, along with EDC Investment Planning Subcommittee members, attended the meeting. Tepfer reported the meeting was positive and generated great interest in forming an Angel Fund program. Steven Mercil of Rain Source, gave an interesting presentation. The Ag Investment Subcommittee and potential investors, will meet on Thursday, May 5, 2016 at Kandiyohi Power Cooperative. The goal of the meeting will be to begin the process of setting up an Ag Investment Group. Tepfer commented a \$1 million fund is needed to set up the investment fund. Tepfer shared the investment group would be interested in investing in viable opportunities for Kandiyohi County as well as other opportunities as presented. Schmoll recapped of the 157 letters sent to potential investors, approximately 25 expressed interest in participating in an investment group and 12 were interested in investing a minimum of \$50,000-\$100,000 that would be pooled and invested as the group decided.

Ag BRE Survey Subcommittee. Schmoll provided an overview and minutes of the two Ag Focus Sessions held on March 28 and 29, 2016 at Ridgewater College (see attached). The purpose of the focus group sessions was to determine if another Ag survey should be conducted and decide on goals and strategies. The next Ag BRE Survey Subcommittee meeting is Wednesday, April 27, 2016, to review the Ag Focus Group Sessions and determine next steps. Jim Molenaar, Regional Dean of Farm Management, St. Cloud Technical and Community College, is interested in assisting with next steps and plans to attend the meeting. Schmoll shared she has received several comments from the focus group sessions. Kim Larson shared concerns of ensuring all survey participants are notified of the survey results as well as better disbursement of the final report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

EDC policy/quorum issues. Schmoll reported the EDC staff reviewed the EDC's Policies and Procedures Manual with regard to staff members as voting committee members. The policy states EDC staff are not voting committee members. Currently, the Ag Committee allows the Business Development Specialist and the Executive Director to vote. Schmoll suggested the Ag Committee stay within the guidelines of the EDC. The committee concurred with the suggestion and will remove EDC staff from voting status. A brief discussion was held regarding the quorum issue. Committee members concurred that the quorum issue should also remain consistent with the other EDC committees at 50% plus one.

Draft 2016 Ag goals. The EDC Joint Powers Board and the Joint Operations Board will conduct a Strategic Planning Session today, April 21, 2016. After the 2016 EDC goals are formalized, the Ag Committee will address their 2016 goals at a future meeting.

Discussion on Energy/Biogas Feasibility Study. Schmoll reiterated the EDC's decision not to pursue the EcoEngineers feasibility biogas study and shared she conducted an email survey of four individuals to assess interest in the study of development of biogas production in the community. Jon Folkedahl stated there are ongoing studies by Willmar Municipal Utilities, and at this point, it seems unlikely the process could produce biogas and be economically feasible. Schmoll commented that buy-in is needed from local partners, if they would be willing to participate in a survey prior to moving forward. Also, the possible partners need to assess what, if anything, is being done with their by products or what could be done. Great River Energy is currently conducting a study/research. Auluck-Wilson feels there are unrecognized resources (by products) available in the area and suggested inviting other companies to make biogas presentations and to visit with the City of Willmar and the Willmar Wastewater Treatment Facility regarding the water salt content issue. Schmoll agreed to meet with Bruce Peterson and Jim Gauer on the topic and bring information to the Ag Committee meeting on June 16, 2016.

NEW BUSINESS

Business Development Specialist position. Chair Graue asked Rollie Boll to provide background on the Ag Specialist position. The position has gone from half time to full time and is currently half time agriculture and half time county-wide business development. With the vacancy of the EDC Assistant Director, the workload of the Business Development Specialist has greatly increased. The EDC Joint Powers Board voted to provide additional salary to Schmoll since the departure of the Assistant Director for the interim; however, Tepfer commented with the increased workload he is concerned with burnout and feels it is feasible to add additional staff at some point. Bruce Reuss commented historically, the Ag Committee has had a designation priority; however, the time allotment has varied from the former Ag Specialist position and suggested the Business Development Specialist position be at least a half-time position dedicated to focus on agriculture and renewable energy efforts. Kim Larson commented on the importance of a full-time position. Boll will share the committee's suggestion at the EDC Strategic Planning Session later today.

IT WAS MOVED BY Bruce Reuss, SECONDED BY Kim Larson, to recommend to the Economic Development Commission's Joint Operations Board and Joint Powers Board to designate at least 50% of the EDC Business Development Specialist position for agriculture and renewable energy. MOTION CARRIED.

Community News. Schmoll has been approached by the Willmar Area Lakes Chamber of Commerce if the EDC could assist with partial funding for bus transportation for the upcoming Willmar 5th grade agriculture tours to area farms on May 17, 18 and 19, 2016. Schmoll proposed the EDC provide \$500 toward the effort and stated if committee members are interested in chaperoning the event to contact her. Boll shared information from a recent meeting with West Central Ag Sales Association that it would provide some funds for the buses and suggested the Ag Committee provide \$250 for half the cost of bus transportation.

IT WAS MOVED BY Dan Tepfer, SECONDED BY Dustin Kotrba, to have Economic Development Commission provide \$250 for bus transportation for the Willmar 5th grade agriculture tour May 17-19, 2016. MOTION CARRIED.

Other. Schmoll informed committee members Kandiyohi County will be conducting a telephone survey of residents during the month of May as a part of a feasibility study for county-wide Internet service. The Minnesota Corn Growers Association will host Kernel Nation which is an event on July 7, 2016, at Robbins Island to spread the news of agriculture in the community and has requested assistance from the EDC to invite contacts. Schmoll suggested inviting Anna Dirks Wagner, Clean Energy representative, to a future Ag Committee meeting.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular meeting is **7:30 a.m., Thursday, April 20, 2016**, at Christianson & Associates, PLLP, Willmar.