

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

May 19, 2017

EDC Board Room

Present: Sam Bowen, Jim Ellingson, Roger Imdieke, Les Nelson, Ranae Rahn and Kelly TerWisscha

Excused: Bob Carlson and Dean Steinwand

Absent: Les Heitke

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director and Connie Schmoll Business Development Specialist

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

Chairperson Sam Bowen called the meeting to order at approximately 9:05 a.m.

AGENDA—

IT WAS MOVED BY Les Nelson, SECONDED BY Ranae Rahn to approve the agenda as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES

IT WAS MOVED BY, Roger Imdieke SECONDED BY Les Nelson, to approve the minutes of the February 17 and March 17, 2017 meetings as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

REPORTS

Business Visits/Tours. Aaron Backman shared that the EDC Joint Powers Board and Joint Operations Board met on April 27, 2017 to follow-up and finalize the EDC Strategic Planning/Goals Session held on March 23, 2017. He recently gave a tour to a potential manufacturing business, attended groundbreaking ceremonies for the new Willmar Surgery Center, attended a Shovel-Ready Conference in the Metro area and attended the Willmar Airport Commission meeting. Backman reported construction of the three-unit building on the Kandi Mall property will begin soon and Auto Zone is constructing a new building on the south end of the Kandi Mall parking lot. Backman mentioned Commonwealth Development from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, may construct a 45-47 affordable housing project off Lakeland Drive that will be a \$8 million project.

[Schmoll joined the meeting.]

Broadband update. Connie Schmoll provided an update on the CTC project. Committee members have been making visits door-to-door and currently have 517 residents signed. An additional 293 are needed before CTC will move forward with the project. Residents can sign up on the CTC website at www.connectctc.com and mail a \$25 deposit. Schmoll mentioned residents received instruction letters; however, a simpler letter will be mailed soon.

Other. Schmoll shared Natasha Mortenson of the University of Minnesota will give a presentation entitled "Speak for Agriculture" on June 19 to the EDC Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development Committee and EDC Board members. She encouraged BRE/R Committee members to attend as their schedules permit.

Schmoll provided an update on a recent visit by Pakistani professionals to Kandiyohi County. They toured MinnWest Technology campus and are interested in gathering information on rural economic development, sustainable and scalable rural development and opportunities in rural development.

[Schmoll was excused from the meeting.]

BRE Grant for Diverse Businesses. Backman reported he has visited approximately eight Willmar's Latino and Somali businesses. The goal of the BRE grant is to conduct 16 site visits by end of June 2017.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Highway 23 Coalition. Backman shared an overview of the Highway 23 Coalition meeting held on May 18, 2017 at McKale's Restaurant in New London with 26 in attendance. The goal of the coalition is to be more organized and to include representatives from New London, Paynesville, Richmond and Willmar, as well as businesses. Bob Mathiasen was selected as Chair; Vice Chair, Mayor Jeff Thompson, Paynesville; and Secretary/Treasurer, Aaron Backman. Membership structure and fees were discussed. Backman commented they hope to keep it simple and be a voice and impact for funding of the project. Backman provided an update on the Transportation bill for the State of Minnesota. Kelly TerWisscha inquired if the two-lane segments south of Marshall to Pipestone will be included in future funding. Backman stated if the Highway 23 Coalition can prove success, it may have more of an impact farther out and stated the Highway 23 Coalition can show support for not only the Highway 23 segments south of Marshall, but north of Foley as well. Backman provided information on the Highway 23 Coalition's Day at the Capitol on April 19, 2017.

Midtown Market Plaza update. Backman shared the Midtown Market Plaza (former Erickson Furniture building in downtown Willmar) will begin a renovation project on the first floor where approximately 6-8 Somali businesses will be housed. The EDC's Finance Committee approved a \$30,000 Revolving Loan Fund loan. Other finance partners were Home State Bank, Southwest Initiative Foundation and Mid-Minnesota Development Commission. An open house may be held

later this summer. Further improvements in the lower level of the building are planned in the future.

Historic 313. Backman reported the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota (PAM) took over the Historic 313 project. Current projects include the Spurs Restaurant and an expansion of Foxhole Brewhouse to offer food options that may be available in early July.

Willmar Wye Project. The Environmental Assessment is complete and is in the design-build portion of the project. Backman expects the master agreement to be signed in June 2017.

Other. Backman shared a meeting will be held today with Bruce Peterson regarding the development of the Marcus site south of Schwegman's Cleaners.

Meeting Date. Backman referred to the committee survey as to changing the date of meetings. Discussion was held and the committee concurred to meet the first Friday of each month, 9:00-10:00 a.m.

ERC (Enhanced Resource Centers). Backman reported ERC is in the process of recruiting additional employees. Currently, it employs approximately 49 people with a goal of 100 employees. The wage scale is \$14.00-\$15.00/hour with higher wages for higher skills. The committee discussed options for recruiting, i.e., Ridgewater College, social media, Willmar Area Jobs (an online page). Chair Bowen mentioned another recruitment option of job pages in other communities (Litchfield and Hutchinson). Bowen will have Dayna Latham, Customized Training Representative at Ridgewater College, contact Star Tucker at ERC.

Workforce. Bowen referred to the 2017 Workforce Training Appropriation for Latinos in Minnesota called Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES). Bowen has been working with John Pacheco of Latino Chamber of Commerce Minnesota regarding training options for Latinos in the Willmar area. Willmar is one of three outstate training areas. Training options discussed are in healthcare and manufacturing/welding. In the future, a focus on heavy construction may be offered. They are seeking to hire a career navigator (bi-lingual) person. Bowen stated a current Ridgewater College employee may be interested. Bowen will schedule a meeting with Backman, Ken Warner and others to discuss the program and how to move forward.

Other. TerWisscha inquired on the status of the Glacial Ridge Hospitality event center at Little Crow Country Club. Backman shared information from a recent meeting last week. Kandiyohi Power Cooperative committed \$200,000 for the project. With this commitment, the project is close to moving forward. Imdieke stated United Prairie Bank will allow the project to proceed. TerWisscha also inquired if there has been any study on market rate rental housing in Willmar. Backman responded some discussions have been held. Imdieke shared the May 2018 Governor's Fishing Opener will be held in the Willmar Lakes area. Backman mentioned MnDOT will conduct a Safety Assessment along three segments of Highway 23 north of Spicer at 153rd Avenue (Glacial Ridge Winery), Highway 9 and Kandiyohi County Road 40. Jim Ellingson inquired about Qwik Trip coming into the Willmar area. Backman shared the company is at looking at multiple locations in Willmar.

Imdieke shared that 1,000 Degree Pizza will also be coming to Willmar and Backman stated a new food establishment in the Kandi Mall has opened at the former location of the yogurt place. Schwieters Chevrolet in Willmar is planning to relocate from First Street South to the southeast corner of Lakeland Drive and Willmar Avenue.

ADJOURNMENT—

IT WAS MOVED BY Kelly TerWisscha SECONDED BY Jim Ellingson to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 a.m. MOTION CARRIED.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **9:00 a.m., Friday, July 7, 2017** in the EDC Board Room.