

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

MINUTES

June 17, 2021

Via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Rollie Boll, Kevin Halvorson, Dustin Kotrba and Keith Poier

Absent: Larry Konsterlie, Kim Larson, Dan Lippert and Dan Tepfer

Excused: Michelle Marotzke

Guests: Justice Walker, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission and Carolyn Lange, West Central Tribune

Staff: Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

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

Chairperson Kevin Halvorson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:34 a.m. A quorum was not present.

AGENDA—A quorum was not present to approve the Agenda.

MINUTES— A quorum was not present to approve the May 20, 2021 Minutes.

PRESENTATION

Halal Meat Production. Sarah Swedburg introduced Justice Walker of Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC), who shared his background and education. He is originally from Columbus, South Carolina, and has a BS in Environmental Studies and Sustainability and an MA in City and Regional Planning. His idea for a halal meat processing project began with a visit to a hobby farm north of New London that raises goats and grows asparagus. They are looking to expand their business to include goat processing. Walker and the hobby farm owner applied for grants, visited other meat processing facilities and toured various stores in the area. Walker felt the farm's current location on Highway 23 would be successful for a goat processing facility and commented the owners would start on a small scale and increase as demand increases. Currently, the goat demand in the Willmar community is approximately 2,500 pounds per week. Walker stated halal meat in the United States is shipped frozen and comes from wild Australian goats. The Somali community is very interested in having a local goat meat processing facility. Walker shared area meat processing plants are extremely busy and do not have time to process goat meat. Swedburg shared the EDC is working with a local grocer to purchase a building for expansion and future halal meat processing. Walker provided requirements for meat to be certified halal. Walker commented goat meat butchers do not have to be Muslim, but can be of Jewish and Christian faith. Swedburg

thanked Walker for the interesting presentation; Walker will keep this committee informed of the progress of a halal goat meat processing facility. His next step is to run a pilot program about buying tendencies for goat meat in ethnic grocery stores through a Reproductive Scientist Development Program (RSDP) grant from the University of Minnesota Extension.

REPORTS

Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee. Keith Poier shared Laura Arne organized a field trip to Hemponix (formerly Lettuce Abound Farms), a hemp seed plant outside New London. Other tour participants included Swedburg, Chair Halvorson and Harold Stanislawski of AURI. Hemponix uses proprietary aeroponic agronomics to produce hemp seeds. They were able to use a lot of the same equipment used for growing lettuce. Kevin Ortenblad, owner, shared with them the planting and harvesting process. The company will mainly produce seeds for CBG (cannabigerol) oil, a superior cannabinoid with the potential to revolutionize the treatment of medical conditions and injuries. He discussed with them the barriers and education regarding the growing of hemp seeds. They were shown a half full sandwich bag containing 10,000 seeds valued between \$.50-\$1.50/seed. Swedburg shared it is possible to produce five to six million seeds a year due to the fast-growing plants. She was impressed with the minimal amount of equipment changes needed for hemp seed production. Poier shared there are others growing hemp seeds in an enclosed environment.

Partners in Ag Innovation Conference. Dustin Kotrba shared the planning committee met earlier in June to finalize speakers, marketing, technical support issues and to contact John Cosgrove, who agreed to serve as an emcee and manage the trivia/prize sessions. The agenda is nearing completion. Representative Dave Baker will attend in person and U.S. Representative Michelle Fischbach will send a recorded message. Currently, 32 participants are registered. Kotrba asked committee members to reach out to their contacts to encourage attendance. The date of the conference is July 29 and it will be held both in-person and live streamed. Carolyn Lange offered to write an article prior to the conference for publication in the *West Central Tribune's* farm page; she will be in touch with Kotrba.

Meeting Frequency. Frequency of committee meetings was discussed in May and it was decided to retain the same meeting schedule of 10 times a year with no meetings in May or October. Swedburg shared she has speakers in mind for future committee meetings. Poier commented Laura Arne will share highlights from a hemp conference she attended in Florida at a future meeting.

AG/RENEWABLE ENERGY COMMUNITY EVENTS/PROJECTS. Lange commented the halal meat production facility presentation was interesting and she will write a story for a future edition of the *West Central Tribune*.

ADJOURNMENT—With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:45 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is scheduled for 7:30 a.m., July 15, 2021, tentatively at the EDC Board Room.

