

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

MINUTES

July 7 2017

EDC Board Room

Present: Jim Ellingson, Les Heitke, Roger Imdieke, Les Nelson and Kelly TerWisscha

Excused: Sam Bowen, Bob Carlson, Ranae Rahn and Dean Steinwand

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

Vice Chairperson Les Nelson called the meeting to order at approximately 9:10 a.m. and indicated a quorum was not present.

REPORTS

Business Visits/Tours. Aaron Backman shared information on several business visits over the past two months and his attendance at the Chamber Connection at United Prairie Bank in Spicer. Backman provided highlights from a recent meeting with Mel Odens, Kandiyohi County Engineer, regarding the CSAH No. 55 bridge over the railroad tracks in Willmar. Backman toured Historic 313 with representatives from a St. Cloud restaurant and construction of the retail strip at the Kandi Mall has begun.

[Kelly TerWisscha joined the meeting.]

AGENDA AND MINUTES. As a quorum was now present,

IT WAS MOVED BY Jim Ellingson, SECONDED BY Kelly TerWisscha, to approve the agenda as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY Jim Ellingson, to approve the minutes of May 19, 2017 as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

Business Visits/Tours Continuation. Backman attended the summer conference for the Economic Development Association of Minnesota, participated in Open Mic, attended the Kandiyohi County Bankers Association meeting, the TED/TEDI Grant informational meeting at the Minnesota Department of Transportation District 8 Office and an informational meeting with the Bush Foundation. Backman reported on meetings with ALESS Transportation, a proposed medical transport business in Willmar and shared the Willmar Planning Commission approved a Conditional Use Permit for Kwik Trip.

BRE Grant for Diverse Businesses. Backman reported he has completed 16 diverse business interviews and will survey a few more. Currently, there are 31 Somali-owned businesses; one-half of which are located on Litchfield Avenue and one-quarter located on Fourth Avenue. Kelly TerWisscha commented this is much like the disbursement of the Latino-owned businesses approximately 15 years ago. Once all interviews are completed, Backman will prepare and submit a report to Southwest Initiative Foundation. Backman stated the interviews have been positive and he has learned a great deal about the businesses and the people. Les Heitke inquired if the number of Somali-owned businesses is similar to the Latino-owned businesses; Backman indicated affirmatively. Heitke stated there are approximately 60 diverse businesses in Willmar and inquired as to the total number of businesses in Willmar as he would like to know the economic impact for the area. Heitke stated Dr. Bruce Corrie of Concordia University, conducts research on the economic impact of minorities and he would like to have him come back to Willmar in the future. Roger Imdieke commented it would be good to have a better idea of the number and type of businesses throughout the county, including home-based businesses. Connie Schmoll noted it would be beneficial to know the manufacturing businesses in Willmar as well. Backman indicated that perhaps the study will help leverage funds in the future.

Highway 23 Coalition. Backman provided an overview of the Highway 23 Coalition meeting held May 18, 2017. Approximately 26 people attended, including four mayors and representatives from Kandiyohi and Stearns Counties. The map of the Highway 23 Corridor was shared (see attached). The group concurred with expanding the corridor to cover Marshall to I-94 in order to secure additional partners and to keep the Coalition an independent organization. The following officers were elected: Bob Mathiasen, Chair; Paynesville Mayor Jeff Thompson, Vice Chair and Aaron Backman, Secretary/Treasurer with Bob Dols being noted as Past Chair. Other topics discussed included a mission statement, logo, dues, an executive committee and lobbyists versus a coalition to speak for the project. The Coalition's Executive Committee and others met on June 8, 2017 and agreed to an expanded board, including representatives from each county. TerWisscha commented that including Marshall will be of benefit to Schwan's. Imdieke stated expansion of Highway 23 will be beneficial for the movement of heavy freight and commented it is important to include state Senator Lange and Fischbach and state Representative Baker. Backman indicated federal funds are also available. Backman will prepare a draft budget for the next Highway 23 Executive Committee meeting on July 20, 2017.

Historic 313 Building Update. Backman reported the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota (PAM) has had a number of meetings with contractors and tenants since taking control of the project in February 2017. The top priority is to finish the space for Spurs, a Mexican/seafood restaurant, and to initiate discussions with the owners of Foxhole Brewhouse on a possible expansion. The EDC has been assisting the owner of Spurs with potential financing and the owner of Foxhole Brewhouse about future expansion plans. A St. Cloud restaurant is interested in space at Historic 313 and has discussed a lease agreement with PAM.

Midtown Plaza Update. The EDC has been working with the owners of Midtown Plaza as to their renovation of the first floor of the former Erickson Furniture building on Litchfield Avenue to establish a multicultural business center. Initially, there will be six tenants, including a grocery store, transportation company, community services/religious center, bridal consultant and West

Central Interpreting Services. Engan Associates completed the architectural drawings for the renovation and Willmar's Building Inspector will inspect the plan for permitting.

Broadband update. Schmoll gave an update on the county's broadband project. The number of subscribers is nearing the goal of 810 and deposits of \$25 are required by a July 21 deadline.

NEW BUSINESS

Workforce Training Program with CLUES and Ridgewater College. Sam Bowen was unable to attend today's meeting to share information on the \$1.5 million grant received for a Latino workforce training program. Willmar is one of three outstate training areas that could partner with CLUES. Training areas being discussed are in healthcare and manufacturing/welding. In the future, a focus on heavy construction may be offered. They are seeking to hire a bilingual career navigator.

Other. Backman shared information on a bridge project on CSAH 55 over the railroads tracks. The EDC submitted letters of support for the project. A First Street redevelopment project is being considered for the west side and TIF (tax increment financing) is being considered. Backman reported he completed a Shovel-Ready Site marketing piece; Dan's Diesel, a large truck repair business, may construct a building near Uncommon on north Highway 71; and he is working with a local bank for financing of a business. The building may be built north of Willmar. Backman reported Kwik Trip is contemplating three sites in Willmar: two smaller locations and a truck stop at the current Cenex site on east Highway 12 that will include a convenience store, showers and cat scale. A new highway entrance on the west side is a possibility. Backman reported the owners of the Nelson Laundry site are working with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to clean up the site and will level the building to eventually sell the site.

ADJOURNMENT—

IT WAS MOVED BY Jim Ellingson, SECONDED BY Kelly TerWisscha, to adjourn the meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:30 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **9:00 a.m., Friday, August 4, 2017** in the EDC Board Room.



COALITION

PROJECT AREA: This map shows the remaining two-lane segments between Willmar and I-94

