

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

MINUTES

September 16, 2021

EDC Board Room and Via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Rollie Boll, Dustin Kotrba, Kim Larson, Keith Poier and Dan Tepfer

Excused: Kevin Halvorson

Absent: Larry Konsterlie and Dan Lippert

Guests: Chris Radel, Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator, Willmar Municipal Utilities and Nate Reuss, Economic Developer, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission

Staff: Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

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

Vice Chairperson Dustin Kotrba called the meeting to order at approximately 7:40 a.m. noting a quorum was not present. Self-introductions were conducted. Nate Reuss, prospective new committee member, shared a brief bio.

AGENDA—Sarah Swedburg noted item 5a under New Business on the Agenda will be removed as Laura Arne was unable to attend today's meeting.

MINUTES—A quorum was not present to approve the August 19, 2021 Minutes.

Addition of Chris Radel to the Ag and Renewable Development Committee. Swedburg reported as there is not a quorum, the formal vote to add Chris Radel to this committee will be tabled until the November meeting.

NEW BUSINESS—

Industrial Hemp Conference. Tabled.

Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTS) Program. Swedburg shared information on the CERTS Program. Seed grant applications are due October 8, 2021. The maximum grant is \$5,000. Projects may start in early December 2021 and must be completed by January 6, 2023. Grant projects can include energy efficiency and conservation, renewable energy, electric vehicle-related projects and energy storage. Seed grant dollars cannot be used for capital projects. Swedburg commented the

CERTS Program may be an opportunity for the EDC's Elevate program. Radel shared anyone can apply for the grant and stated the Willmar Community Center will be applying for a Seed grant for lighting.

REPORTS

Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee. Keith Poier provided an update of the recent subcommittee meeting. The NoCo Hemp Expo will be held in Denver March 23-25, 2022 and AURI will sponsor the Northern Hemp Summit in Fargo, North Dakota, on December 13-14, 2021. Swedburg mentioned there may be an industrial hemp online class. Discussion was held on the charge of this subcommittee. Swedburg stated the charge of the subcommittee is to look into a feasibility study and research opportunities for production and processing of industrial hemp. Poier shared Tim Seehusen of Prairie PROducers continues to work on the possibility of starting an industrial hemp processing plant near Olivia. A discussion was held regarding the opportunities and challenges of growing industrial hemp. Poier shared all hemp growing/processing have been placed in the category of marijuana and needs to be separated in order for industrial hemp farming to expand. Testing regulations of industrial hemp crops was discussed.

Partners in Ag Innovation Conference. Kotrba reported the committee will hold a follow-up meeting next month. He will provide information from the meeting at next month's committee meeting. Kotrba mentioned the format of future conferences may be changed to engage more producers.

Ag/Renewable Energy Community Events/Projects. Radel reported he contacted Curt Yoose and another staff member of the Ridgewater College Agriculture Department to give a presentation at a future committee meeting and the possibility of becoming partners with the Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee. Committee members noted it would be beneficial for Ridgewater College's Agriculture Department to partner with the EDC. Radel discussed the possibility of the College growing a small plot of industrial hemp and inquired if the EDC has funds to award to college students, Elevate participants or community residents for producing/developing hemp products. He felt this may create a greater interest in the industrial hemp program. Radel also communicated with a person in the Karen community who is interested in renting a plot of land to grow vegetables. Swedburg shared a list of speakers for future Ag Committee meetings.

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

NEXT MEETING—The next regular meeting is 7:30 a.m., November 18, 2021, in the EDC Board Room and via Zoom video conference.