

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE
MINUTES
December 16, 2016
EDC Board Room

Present: Jim Ellingson, Roger Imdieke and Les Nelson

Excused: Sam Bowen, Bob Carlson, Jean Marthaler and Ranae Rahn

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

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

Chair Les Nelson called the meeting to order at approximately 9:05 a.m.

AGENDA—The agenda was approved as emailed.

MINUTES—As there was not a quorum in attendance, the November 18, 2016 minutes were received, but not approved.

REPORTS—

Business Visits/Tours. Connie Schmoll gave a brief overview of recent business visits. Aaron Backman met with Abdirahim Hussen of the African Development Center regarding possible funding assistance for the building improvements, etc. to the former Erickson's furniture store. Backman has also been in contact with the building owner, Zack Mahboub of West Central Interpreting Services. There are currently two potential investors interested in funding assistance. At this point, the African Development Center assistance may be a backup plan. The City of Willmar will most likely require certain building upgrades to bring the building up to code. Schmoll recently attended a presentation by Mike Geister of Geistwerks. Schmoll has been in contact with a person interested in purchasing Mr. B Chocolates, she mailed site information to a potential medical supply company which would be a potential \$30 million project and also sent site information to a start-up food production company, CEO. Backman and Schmoll recently visited with Renee Nolting of West Central Industries regarding options of expanding the business and placing workforce. Schmoll recently met with Clark Engineering on a potential manufacturing business in the Willmar Industrial Park. This company currently has the demonstration leachate project at the Kandiyohi County Landfill. Schmoll shared a newsletter from Clean Energy Resource Team which featured the

Barn Theatre. Schmoll is currently working with a company near Atwater looking to expand their business as the company is growing and they are landlocked.

Workforce Subcommittee. Schmoll provided an update of the manufacturing tours in October 2016 conducted for Willmar High School teachers and students. It was determined that overall the age and size of groups were adequate. The Vision 2040 BRE/R Workforce Subcommittee may host a meeting or send a mailing in January 2017 to share results of the survey with other schools, roles of the subcommittee and Willmar High School staff and students, transportation and budget. Members of the subcommittee will give the presentations.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2016-2017 Goals. As to the status of the Border-to-Border Grant, Schmoll shared they received notice that challenges were made by CenturyLink that some sites should be removed from the proposed project area. Schmoll researched the sites and determined they were not critical to the project. The final decision for the grant should be known by the end of December. Schmoll provided updates on other 2016/2017 BRE/R goals. Chair Nelson commented on the upcoming move of the Willmar Area Multicultural Business Center (WAM-BC) to the vacant EDC office. Schmoll indicated the EDC Joint Operations Board approved a one-year lease beginning in 2017. WAM-BC is a nonprofit corporation that is entirely dependent on grants and donations. It provides technical assistance to mainly minority-owned businesses and has a microloan program for minority-owned businesses in Kandiyohi County and Meeker Counties.

Committee membership. Chair Nelson suggested BRE/R committee members recruit new members.

NEW BUSINESS

Diverse Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program. Schmoll commented Scott Marquardt of Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) notified Backman that SWIF approved a \$15,000 grant for the EDC to do a BRE program for diverse businesses from November 2016 to June 2017. Backman and Schmoll will make approximately 15 visits to diverse businesses over the course of the grant period. Schmoll asked committee members to contact her if they know of diverse businesses they should visit.

Other. Schmoll shared the EDC will conduct an Agriculture Producers' Survey beginning in January 2017. The subcommittee recommended that at least two agriculture producers (one in livestock production and one crop producers) per township be interviewed. Approximately 60 interviews will be conducted in 24 townships. Teams consisting of two volunteers will conduct the interviews. Training for volunteers will be held on January 11, 2017 and January 13, 2017 at Christianson, PLLP. Packets will be mailed to ag producers on January 13 and volunteers will begin calling producers on

January 17.

Willmar Airport Master Plan update. Schmoll stated Backman serves on the Willmar Airport Master Plan Advisory Group, which recently met to begin work on a Willmar Airport Master Plan. One issue they are working on is the lack of broadband for the Fixed Base Operator (FBO) at the airport. Roger Imdieke suggested looking into MVTV wireless. Backman will provide an in-depth report at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:55 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **9:00 a.m., Friday, January 20, 2017** in the EDC Board Room.