

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

MINUTES

December 21, 2017

Christianson PLLP, Willmar

Present: Rollie Boll, Ian Graue, Kevin Halvorson, Dustin Kotrba, Kim Larson, Dan Lippert, Keith Poier, Bruce Reuss and Dan Tepfer

Excused: Jon Folkedahl and Larry Konsterlie

Guests: Duane Hultgren, Hultgren Farms and Harlan Madsen, Kandiyohi County Commissioner

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

Media: Carolyn Lange, West Central Tribune

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Chairperson Dan Tepfer called the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 a.m.

AGENDA—The agenda was approved as emailed.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Boll, SECONDED BY Kim Larson, to approve the November 16, 2017 Minutes as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

REPORTS

West Central Angel Fund I. Connie Schmoll reported West Central Angel Fund I now has 30 members. The Fund will only consider projects that have at least a \$100,000 gap in financing as it wants to do large projects rather than smaller ones. The Fund has received more than 30 applications, which have been narrowed down to 9 potential projects.

Marketing Subcommittee. Subcommittee Chair Dustin Kotrba reported a Doodle survey was emailed to the full Ag Committee as to a potential date to view and pre-screen a 90-minute movie “Food Evolution” to see if it has good content, is pro ag and would be an option for the public to see at the event being planned by the subcommittee. The cost to show the movie publicly is \$2,500. A location for previewing by committee members will be selected once the number of participants is known.

[Harlan Madsen joined the meeting.]

Kotrba encouraged the committee to respond to the Doodle survey. An alternative to the “Food Evolution” movie is doing a soil social. A speaker on workforce issues can tailor his workshop to be ag related. Kotrba also noted that Christianson PLLP could provide a speaker on workforce issues. Jean Geselius contacted Case IH in Benson about speaking on ag production and technology, which has requested more information. A couple of local companies are also interested in presenting on ag technology. Schmoll noted a preview of the “Food Evolution” movie can be seen on YouTube for free. Common Ground is interested in partnering on an event. The subcommittee is looking at a date in August to allow time for marketing. Chair Tepfer stated the Marketing Subcommittee has had a lot of discussion on whether the event should be focused on public education or ag producers. As of now, the plans are to cover a little of both.

Ian Graue mentioned a four-part series of articles in the *Star Tribune* on agriculture in Minnesota covering: 1) organic farming, 2) grass-fed meat, 3) ethical animal treatment and 4) GMOs. These articles could be relevant to the workshop being planned. The article on GMOs gives the science side not understood by most of the public. Chair Tepfer noted that Natasha Mortenson also touched on GMOs and the public’s perception of them. Schmoll commented committee members could do letters to the editor in response to these articles or submit comments online. Dan Lippert stated subjects generally get lumped together and it would be beneficial to cover each topic separately rather than lumping them together—need to defend one topic at a time and thoroughly. There is a need to gradually educate the public on ag topics. The “Food Evolution” movie has a GMO focus and articles could be done building up to the public viewing. Committee members spoke on the benefits of GMOs.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

Feedlots in Kandiyohi County. Schmoll reported a conditional use permit application for a hog operation in Colfax Township was heard by the Kandiyohi County Board last month and sent back to the Planning Commission for further review. A few committee members attended the public hearing in support of the application. Chair Tepfer the committee’s focus is what can it do, if anything, to help support these types of projects in the future to expand ag in Kandiyohi County. Schmoll stated the application was thorough, but maybe there is something this committee can do to support applications at the Planning Commission level. It was noted there are new Commissioners and Planning Commission members since the May 4, 2004 Livestock Supportive Policy Resolution (see attached) was adopted by the Board of Commissioners and there may be education needed. Harlan Madsen agreed education may be needed, but stated applications must be allowed if they follow the ordinances—this applicant met and exceeded every condition. Madsen stated when the applicant meets the conditions, the County Board should proceed; thus, it was disappointing that the application did not move forward. Madsen voiced his concern about the future for ag in the county after what happened with the application for the hog operation. The application has been withdrawn and this may be an opportunity to facilitate a conversation

with the County Board, support the Planning Commission and bring about awareness of ag in Kandiyohi County. Producers may have to go one step further than what is required on applications and not make assumptions.

Duane Hultgren stated the applicant researched what would best fit the area, had soil borings and engineering done and would have had a sealed building using odor controlling methods similar to that used by Meadowstar Dairy. Two other producers considering Kandiyohi County planned to use curtain barns. The applicant has other counties that are more welcoming and want them to expand into their county. Madsen noted the county does not have ordinances cover areas such as noise or emissions as those are governed by state or federal permits with the Pollution Control Agency, Department of Agriculture or Department of Natural Resources. Madsen stated the question that must be answered by the County Planning Commission is the use of the land appropriate for the classification. Other permits required must be met and certified before the county's conditional use permit is issued. Larson stated this committee developed an Outline of Livestock Siting, including a checklist for producers to go through when applying for a permit. Larson attended the hearing and stated it was brought up that adjoining land located in another county was a potential building site that could be adversely affected. Committee members noted that including "potential" use of a property could not and should not be considered when hearing a permit application. Madsen stated the ordinance does not recognize potential. Bruce Reuss noted a letter is sent out to neighbors about what they can expect when living in an ag zone. Committee members questioned whether the ordinance is looked at differently when adjoining property is located in another county. Madsen stated that in general, ag zoning in other counties is similar to Kandiyohi County's, but some counties have different classes. Most counties have one ag zone—Kandiyohi County has two and some have up to seven. Stearns County has a 700' setback from a feedlot to a residence; Kandiyohi County's is a quarter mile.

Continued discussion focused on raising awareness of the ordinance and what valuations mean to the ordinance. Graue suggested there be ongoing education due to the turnover of County Board and Planning Commission members so decisions are made based on facts. Chair Tepfer suggested it is this committee's responsibility to keep the Board and Planning Commission educated on ag issues. Discussion was held on holding a public forum and inviting the County Board, Planning Commission members, area realtors, Kandiyohi County Corn Growers, ag processors, the public and other stakeholders. The Planning Commission could present first as to what are the rules. The planning committee could be 10 to 12 members including two or three from the county's ag sector and ag processors. Dan Lippert noted a need to review the current rules, clarify this committee's commitment to agriculture and livestock and to illuminate the County Board on property values and the sharing of the county's tax burden and how it affects other taxpayers. The proposed hog operation would have added 700 acres to Colfax Township's valuation. It was felt most do not think of a dairy barn, turkey barn, etc. as value added. Schmoll stated she is willing to assist with planning a forum to facilitate a conversation to create awareness.

[Duane Hultgren and Dustin Kotrba were excused from the meeting.]

IT WAS MOVED BY Kim Larson, SECONDED BY Bruce Reuss, to create a subcommittee to develop a public forum to facilitate a conversation to create awareness of agriculture as economic development in Kandiyohi County. MOTION CARRIED.

Rollie Boll, Lippert, Larson and Reuss volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.

Election of 2018 officers.

IT WAS MOVED BY Ian Graue, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll, to re-elect the current officers for 2018. MOTION CARRIED.

AG/RENEWABLE ENERGY COMMUNITY EVENTS/PROJECTS. Schmoll announced a Frozen Farm Forum on industrial hemp and clean energy opportunities will be hosted by Lac qui Parle County EDA and Madison and Dawson Chambers on January 11-12, 2018. Schmoll stated she will be attending the MN AG EXPO in Mankato the afternoon of January 24, 2018 and if anyone else is interested in attending and car pooling, they should contact Schmoll. Graue highlighted an article in the December 20, 2017 issue of *The Raymond-Prinsburg News* on the Prinsburg City Council approving a subscription to a solar garden. Schmoll met with Jamey Cline of Christianson PLLP, who has information on ag grants and loans, which Schmoll believes would be valuable for this committee to hear. Schmoll will invite him to a future committee meeting. Schmoll will resend the Doodle survey to the committee. Larson reported he was invited to the White Bear Lake High School for career day to share about the field of agriculture. Larson distributed the *Impact* magazine to the students and presented the fast facts in the magazine. Larson thanked the *West Central Tribune* for highlighting agriculture in Kandiyohi County. Madsen announced Carolyn Lange recently received the Minnesota Farmers Union's Agriculture Communicator of the Year award.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:19 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **7:30 a.m., January 18, 2018** at Christianson PLLP, 302 Fifth Street SW, Willmar.