

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

**MINUTES**

**December 19, 2019  
Christianson PLLP, Willmar**

**Present:** Rollie Boll, Ian Graue, Kevin Halvorson, Dustin Kotrba, Kim Larson, Dan Lippert, Michelle Marotzke and Dan Tepfer

**Excused:** Christy Kallevig and Keith Poier

**Absent:** Larry Konsterlie

**Staff:** Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

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

Chairperson Dan Tepfer called the meeting to order at approximately 7:33 a.m. and declared a quorum was present.

**AGENDA**—The agenda was approved as emailed.

**MINUTES**—Chair Tepfer presented the July 18, August 5 and September 19 and November 21, 2019 minutes.

IT WAS MOVED BY Michelle Marotzke, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll, to approve the July 18, August 5, September 19 and November 21, 2019 minutes. MOTION CARRIED

**REPORTS**

**Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee.** Kim Larson reported the Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee met on December 9<sup>th</sup> with David Fieblekorn as the guest speaker. Fieblekorn is an engineer and was an engineer at the Frigidaire plant in St. Cloud. He started a consulting business and also served as a consultant for Minnesota Valley Alfalfa Producers (MNVAP) in Priam.

Fieblekorn currently works with a hemp fiber processing plant in Oregon which is owned by three major investors along with three other investors. Fieblekorn gave an overview of the industrial hemp fiber processing plant. The plant mainly processes the hemp fiber down to a grade to produce cigars and wrappers for cigars and cigarettes, which are also sold to other cigar and cigarette companies. The company offers a large number of services from planting through harvesting and sales. At the meeting, Duane Hultgren shared information on growing industrial hemp and storage of the product. He felt a lead person would be beneficial in the industrial hemp planning process and suggested looking into available grants to hire a consultant to develop a plan. Chair Tepfer felt the consultant would be a first step prior to doing a feasibility study. The subcommittee's task was to narrow the focus of industrial hemp and a consultant would be valuable in this regard. Larson

shared he and Keith Poier attended a meeting on farming in Renville County where Harlan Madsen, Kandiyohi County Commissioner, was a featured speaker. Poier asked Madsen if Kandiyohi County would support an industrial hemp consultant. Poier will bring the idea of looking into grants to fund the hiring of a consultant to the next Industrial Hemp Exploratory subcommittee meeting. Schmoll stated the Subcommittee will meet on January 13<sup>th</sup> to continue discussion to narrow the focus of industrial hemp.

Ian Graue mentioned he saw on the news last night a hemp plant in southern Minnesota was shown. Marotzke mentioned she learned that CBD oil shows up as a positive on drug tests, which could be detrimental to employees. Schmoll stated the subcommittee's focus is on the hemp fiber as it is easier to transport. Schmoll reported she and Kevin Halvorson met to begin working on the industrial hemp matrix which includes opportunities/products, type of building, costs and land needed, etc. Other subcommittee members will also be conducting research which could be done by a consultant. Schmoll reported she received a call from Tim Seehausen in Olivia, who is interested in an industrial hemp processing plant and inquired about acreage in Kandiyohi County. Schmoll mentioned the Pioneer facility would be a good location for a hemp processing plant. The goal is to narrow the focus on industrial hemp.

**Ag Marketing and Event Planning Subcommittee.** Dustin Kotrba reported the 2020 Partners in Ag Innovation conference will be held July 30<sup>th</sup> at the MinnWest Technology Campus. The timeframe will be the same as last year. Last year's budget was \$30,000; there will be some carryover. This year's budget is approximately \$30,000. Schmoll mentioned there will be \$1,500 available from the Ag Committee's budget. Two sponsors have been secured and have committed \$8,500 with in-kind marketing support from Minnesota Turkey Growers Association. The committee has discussed having Sam Ziegler of GreenSeam in Mankato as a possible speaker for a portion of the conference. Sara Mikolich, planning coordinator, has been working and reaching out to possible speakers. The topics have not been finalized. If committee members have suggestions for speakers and topics, contact Kotrba, Chair Tepfer or Schmoll. The next Ag Marketing and Event Planning Subcommittee meeting will be January 9<sup>th</sup>. Mentioned was Katie Pinke, a blogger who spoke at the Corn Growers meeting. Another suggestion was the Millennial Farmer from Kensington. Larson stated he attended the Renville County meeting and shared Harlan Madsen had an excellent presentation on farming. Other topic suggestions included: faster farming with larger equipment, farmers going through transition, encouraging the next generation of ag producers and financial and emotional side (mental health) of passing on the family farm. Graue shared a general crisis line is available: Text 741741.

**2020 Visionary Subcommittee.** Schmoll reported the Visionary Subcommittee members will meet soon to compile an agenda, set a date and prepare invitations for a group meeting. Larson encouraged Ag Committee members to submit visionary topics to Schmoll, Larson or Halvorson. Chair Tepfer felt it is imperative to include the next generation of farmers. Speakers for the visionary meeting were discussed. Larson suggested Glenn Arfstrom and discussed an article written by Arfstrom a few years ago regarding the Ag Committee's goals, focus and vision.

Schmoll reported the Ag Professionals had planned to sunset; however, they decided not to sunset the organization until their funds are all distributed. The banquet will not be held. Schmoll shared their mission statement is similar to this committee's and suggested they be included in the visionary meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**2020 Chair/Vice Chair Nominations.** Chair Tepfer announced voting for the Ag Committee Chair and Vice Chair will be held at the January meeting. Schmoll asked for volunteers to serve on the 2020 nominating committee. Chair Tepfer and Boll volunteered to work with Schmoll to gather nominations. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 16<sup>th</sup> at McMillian's Restaurant in Willmar.

**Community Ag/Renewable Energy Community Events/Projects.** Marotzke reported the Willmar Clean Energy Group meeting, sponsored and facilitated by CERTs, was held at the Willmar Public Library on December 7<sup>th</sup>. Speakers presented information on solar/solar finances and options, geo thermal and electric vehicles; Marotzke spoke on utility rebates. The clean energy film entitled, "The Power of Minnesota" was also shown to attendees. Marotzke shared the film is available on YouTube. Marotzke shared there are 10 electric vehicles registered in Willmar and 6 outside of Willmar. Ag Committee members discussed the need for electric vehicle charging stations and the importance of having backup power sources. This topic will be on the January Ag Committee agenda.

[Ian Graue was excused from the meeting.]

Schmoll shared she attended the Community Venture Network (CVN) Quarterly meeting on Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup> and highlighted the presenters and topics. She extended invitations to three presenters to consider visiting Kandiyohi County (Willmar) and tour possible business sites. Schmoll and Aaron Backman participate in a committee working with Kathy Schwantes on bringing a turkey research facility to Kandiyohi County.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:50 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next committee meeting is **7:30 a.m., January 16, 2020** at McMillian's Restaurant, 2620 1<sup>st</sup> Street South, Willmar.