

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)
MINUTES
July 14, 2022
City Office, New London, Minnesota, and Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Art Benson, Donna Boonstra, Jesse Gislason, Les Heitke, Kelly TerWisscha and Mary Warszynski

Ex Officio: Vicki Davis, Joint Powers Board Liaison

Guests: John Bergman, New London Mayor; Abdulkadir Gaal; Trudie Guptill, New London City Administrator

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director; Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager; and Kelsey Olson, Marketing & Communications Specialist

Media: Jennifer Kotila, West Central Tribune; and Ralph Dickerson, Lakes Area Review

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

President Art Benson called the meeting to order at approximately 11:05 a.m. followed by self introductions. Trudie Guptill welcomed everyone to New London and noted the city is busy with New London Water Days this weekend. The city rejected all bids for street projects and is waiting for the possible passing of a bonding bill. If no bill is passed, it will rebid next spring. The city is working on buying the former MJ's Restaurant. A design meeting was held with an architect and they will meet again August 3rd to review the final plans.

[Les Heitke joined the meeting.]

AGENDA—Added to the Agenda under New Business before Amended Budget was a TED grant application.

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY Jesse Gislason, to approve the revised Agenda and the following Consent Agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approve:

1. Minutes of June 9, 2022
2. Financial reports as of June 30, 2022, subject to audit

Accept: Committee/Subcommittee Minutes

1. Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development 4/21/2022
2. Broadband and Advanced Technology 6/6/2022
3. Finance 6/14/2022
4. Leisure Travel 5/2/2022

MOTION CARRIED.

Housing Study. Aaron Backman reported the last housing study was done in the fall of 2015. Studies are typically good for two to three years and there have been several new housing projects in the past few years—information Backman would like included in a new study. The Kandiyohi County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) has been approached to participate in a new study; however, it typically will only use a state-approved vendor, but all have declined doing a study. Backman approached Viewpoint Consulting Group, Inc., which first submitted a proposal to only do a study of Willmar. At a meeting of the Vision 2040 Housing Committee, it was determined the study should include the entire county. Viewpoint has now submitted a proposal (see attached) to do a study for all incorporated cities in the county. Jill Bengtson, Executive Director of the HRA, believes the HRA board will be in favor of participating financially in the study. Backman is recommending the City of Willmar and Kandiyohi County each pay half of the amount for the study using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Sarah Swedburg noted the county is looking for places where it could use its remaining 25% and is interested in housing. The study, as proposed, would be completed in 120 days. Guptill noted the 2015 study was instrumental in getting a developer to build town homes in New London and a new study would be helpful to them. The agreement with Viewpoint would be with the EDC, but paid for by others.

[Mary Warszynski joined the meeting.]

Discussion was held on the benefits of having an updated countywide study and whether or not it is redundant to what developers do on their own before completing a project.

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY Les Heitke, to approve the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission entering into an agreement with Viewpoint Consulting Group, Inc. to complete a housing study at a cost of \$48,000, subject to having 100% funding participation by other entities, such as the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County or the Kandiyohi County Housing and Redevelopment Authority. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS

Transportation Economic Development Grant. Backman reported the Minnesota Department of Transportation opened a Transportation Economic Development (TED) program in June for infrastructure and transportation projects connected with state highways. The EDC has been working with the City of Willmar on a large project for the Willmar Industrial Park that could benefit from this grant. Backman will be working with Bolton & Menk on additional site layouts for the project. The proposed project is approximately \$950,000; the grant request will be for \$570,000 and proceeds from the sale of the City of Willmar's real estate will be used for the required matching funds. Funds to pay Bolton & Menk will come from the TIGER II grant line item in the budget. The EDC has entered into a nondisclosure agreement relative to the project.

IT WAS MOVED BY Jesse Gislason, SECONDED BY Mary Warszynski, to approve the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC) applying for a Minnesota Transportation Economic Development grant for a

proposed project in the Willmar Industrial Park; to use funds from the sale of the City of Willmar's real estate for the matching funds and to approve payment of future bills from Bolton & Menk related to this project from the TIGER II grant line item of the budget. MOTION CARRIED.

2022 Budget Amendments. Backman reviewed proposed changes to the 2022 budget (see attached). Swedburg reviewed proposed changes relative to the Elevate Community Business Academy, noting the EDC received a two-year grant from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) for the program, which the board approved adding to the revenues of the 2022 budget last month. Swedburg is working on a fundraising strategy for the program going forward.

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY Mary Warszynski, to approve the changes to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's 2022 budget as proposed with total revenues of \$691,975 and total expenses of \$689,597. MOTION CARRIED.

Vision Insurance for Staff. Backman informed the board that staff asked if vision insurance and term life insurance could be provided. The EDC's current health insurance provider is BlueCross BlueShield, which offers vision plans (see attached). Any consideration of term life insurance will be discussed when the 2024 budget is being developed.

IT WAS MOVED BY Les Heitke, SECONDED BY Donna Boonstra, that the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission enroll in the Blue Cross Vision Plan, Value Standard, Option 2, effective August 1, 2022 at an approximate cost of \$448 per year and to add the premium to the 2022 and 2023 budgets. MOTION CARRIED.

Executive Director's Annual Review. Nine out of 13 board members completed the confidential review form, a compilation of which was reviewed with Backman by Joint Powers Board Chair Julie Asmus and President Benson. Backman provided information on work that has been completed over the past year by he and EDC staff.

[All staff, guests and media were excused for a closed session of the board.]

IT WAS MOVED BY Jesse Gislason, SECONDED BY Kelly TerWisscha, to reopen the meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was reopened at 1:00 p.m.

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY Art Benson, to file the annual review of Executive Director Aaron Backman in his personnel file and to recommend to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Powers Board that it approve a 4% salary increase for the Executive Director in 2023. MOTION CARRIED.

[TerWisscha and Boonstra were excused from the meeting.]

REPORTS

Elevate Community Business Academy. Swedburg reported the next class will begin September 12, 2022 and will be held Monday evenings. Advertising for the next classes has started and four informational sessions will be held in August. Swedburg will inform other communities of the dates. Danny Carranza will again be an instructor. Translation of the curriculum into Somali is on schedule and will be done the end of this month.

Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development Committee. Swedburg announced the Partners In Ag Innovation Conference will be held July 26, 2022 at the MinnWest Technology Campus Auditorium and live streamed. Currently, there are just over 100 people registered.

Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee. The afternoon of July 26th the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute is hosting an industrial hemp summit in Olivia that Swedburg will attend. A Dutch company is looking for a potential development location in the United States; Swedburg is working to get it to look at Kandiyohi County. As to a lack of hemp producers, Swedburg noted it is mainly because there is nowhere for them to process the product.

Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee. Swedburg reported the state Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant application is due August 4th, which will be her focus until completed. Federated is still onboard for the project. The EDC has also been contacted by a couple of new providers.

Economic Development Activity. Backman distributed a list of DEED Contamination Cleanup Grant Awards (see attached).

[Swedburg was excused from the meeting.]

Backman provided information on the state grants awarded and the use of funds, most of which were for housing projects. Willmar was awarded a Contamination Cleanup Grant award of \$475,581 for Block 25 Lofts. A video of the Block 25 Lofts construction site was recently done and is posted on the EDC's LinkedIn and YouTube page. Unique Opportunities continues work on its Phase 3 of another 72 units for multi-family housing; it has a waiting list of 550 people. Preserve on 24th just accelerated its Phase 2 with 108 units under construction.

Marketing and Public Relations Committee. Kelsey Olson reported she has been working on the advertising for the next Elevate classes. She assisted with the EDC and Mid-Minnesota Development Commission producing videos relative to the Minnesota Frontline Worker Pay Program, which were done in English, Spanish, Somali and closed captioned and was recognized in the *West Central Tribune*. Olson has worked on updates to the Elevate website and the EDC's website. She worked with Greenwater Garage + Gallery to develop a new icon showing the location of Kandiyohi County in the state for marketing purposes. Olson is visiting all cities in the county to increase the EDC's image library. Olson requested images from anyone who attends local celebrations. The EDC's summer newsletter was emailed and had a 40% open rate, which is good. The Prospectus done in 2019 has been updated to include both the Opportunity Zone and the Renaissance Zone and was distributed by Swedburg at a recent conference she attended. The EDC is also looking at purchasing new logo items.

WHAT'S UP? Gislason noted New London is getting ready for this weekend's Water Days. Chair Benson worked at Rockin' Robbins last week, which had its best first day ever. A committee is looking at building a bandshell at Robbins Island. Mayor Bergman thanked the EDC for coming to New London, providing information on what it does and encouraged continued open communications.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no business,


IT WAS MOVED BY Mary Warszynski, SECONDED BY Jesse Gislason, to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:37 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular board meeting is 11:00 a.m., Thursday, August 11, 2022 at the Community Room of Heritage Bank, Willmar, and via Zoom video conference.

Donna Boonstra, Secretary

APPROVED: 8/11/2022



Art Benson, President