

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

MINUTES

July 21, 2022

EDC Board Room and via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Rollie Boll, Kevin Halvorson, Larry Konsterlie (via Zoom), Dustin Kotrba, Kim Larson, Chris Radel, Nate Reuss and Dan Tepfer

Absent: Dan Lippert and Keith Poier

Media: Shelby Lindrud, West Central Tribune (via Zoom)

Staff: Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

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

Chairperson Kevin Halvorson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:37 a.m.

AGENDA—Chris Radel noted he has an item to report under New Business.

[Kim Larson joined the meeting.]

IT WAS MOVED BY Chris Radel, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll, to approve the revised Agenda.
MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES—Chair Halvorson presented the April 21 and June 16, 2022 Minutes. Radel inquired about the discussion held at the last meeting as to the committee's goals/issues. Sarah Swedburg shared she met with other members who were unable to attend the June 16th meeting, except one. She combined the responses which will be discussed during today's meeting.

IT WAS MOVED BY Chris Radel, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll to approve the April 21, 2022 and the June 16, 2022 Minutes. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Ag Committee Goals and Budget. Swedburg showed a PowerPoint entitled EDC Ag and Renewable Energy Committee Goal Planning Session ([see](#) attached) and provided an overview of the June 16th planning session. She reiterated she met with four committee members who were unable to attend the meeting to obtain their input and summarized all of the responses. She is happy with the input and feels there is good synergy from the information gathering. Swedburg would like the committee to set at least three goals for the next 6 months and three for the next 12 months. She

compared information from the 2017 BRE study and feels some of the information mirrored the study.

Following is a compilation of the planning session questions:

1. What is your favorite project from the past that delivered and received positivity in the county?

- Bushmills (5)
- Meadow Star Dairy (2)
- Partners In Ag Innovation Conference (3)
- Livestock Conference (2)
- Minnesota Valley Alfalfa Producers (2)
- West Central Angel Fund

2. What health momentum does our group have right now? Swedburg shared there is a lot of positivity in the make-up of the committee and all bring expertise to the table.

- Wide range of projects that could touch many populations
- Partners In Ag Innovation Conference
- Shrimp industry/Nova-Tech Engineering
- Industrial hemp (2)
- Keeping in contact with larger groups; liaisons
- Mixture of people on the committee

[Dan Tepfer joined the meeting.]

3. What key frustrations need to be addressed?

- Lack of financial support (2)
- Pricing
- Long timelines for projects
- Risk and slow development of non-traditional ag products
- Loss of Pioneer Seed Research Station
 - A discussion was held. Dan Tepfer felt a lot was lost due to consolidation/technology. Kim Larson mentioned the loss of good paying jobs. Nate Ruess explained the loss of work was in Kandiyohi County, but the research work continues.
- Ag liaison from the EDC Joint Operations Board
- More active pursuit of projects by the committee
- Ag brochure
- “Momentum without direction is wasted?”
- How do we measure success?
- Ag and renewable energy?

4. What are our primary priorities for agriculture?

- Expanded markets
- Exploration of plant-based meats

- Decline in Ag vendors
- Comradery of Ag community (2)
 - Social network of Ag community
- Supporting new, emerging, innovative farmers (3)
 - Capitalize on land transfers
- Feasibility study of vegetable farming
- Industry priorities should align with committee priorities
 - “Rudderless” feeling
- Real-time collection of data by farmers
- Creating demand through projects

5. What benefits will come from bringing awareness back to these priorities in the County?

- Turning priorities into action will attract active committee members
- Bringing more people to the table
- Education, awareness and combatting misinformation (3)
- Making money
- Food production is fundamental to all
- Agriculture remains a cornerstone (2)

6. As a group, what one action will we commit to for increased community engagement that will reinvigorate our agricultural roots and values?

- Energy, effort and resources for industrial hemp (2)
- Engagement of producers
- Engagement with public (2)
 - Creative/fresh marketing and education for public
 - Best ROI engages youth
 - Engagement with churches, i.e., Karen community
- Support new Robbins Island Farmers Market
- Carbon/Healthy Soil 101 education event
- Creating a resource packet for emerging farmers
- Continue Partners In Ag Innovation Conference

New ideas generated at today’s meeting:

- Farm transfer classes through Community Education
- Industrial hemp feasibility study with Christianson PLLP
- Ag appreciation or Farmtastic event at Stinger’s and/or WarHawks game(s)
- Resource folder for new farmers
- Grants for farmer’s markets
- Soybean processors
 - Larson suggested Mike Youngerberg of the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association be a guest speaker at a future Partners In Ag Innovation Conference
- Labor during the busy farming season
- Renewable energy exploration
- Public perception of farming

Swedburg feels it is reasonable to aim for at least three goals for the next 6 months and three goals for the next 12 months, identify timelines for each goal, what is measurable and have at least one committee member commit to be the lead for specific project(s). She will serve as a resource.

Swedburg suggested the following as goals:

1. Farm transfer classes. Swedburg shared she has been interacting with David and Samantha Nelson for assistance with planning strategy. Mr. Nelson has a background in consulting and strategizing and is delving into consulting and strategizing in farm transfers. The Nelsons see a need for farm transfer resources that focus on family dynamics to aide them in preparing and getting through the process. They are proposing to hold a couple of different farm transfer classes through Community Education. Swedburg feels this committee could support and help with this. Mrs. Nelson recognizes the family dynamic consulting side of things. Swedburg commented there may be existing organizations that could assist with the high-level technical pieces for people to take the next step, such as Christianson PLLP. The Nelsons are looking at leading a three-hour mini session in December and a two-part weekend series in March that would be more in-depth. Swedburg feels this could be one goal the Ag Committee could support and help fund; it could assist with marketing as well.
2. Feasibility study for an industrial hemp facility in Kandiyohi County. Swedburg mentioned the Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee has discussed this in the past. The Agricultural Utilization Resource Institute (AURI) is interacting with a Dutch company looking to develop an industrial hemp facility in North America and has currently identified Indiana. The AURI suggested it also tour Minnesota and hopes are that it may consider Kandiyohi County. A feasibility study may help attract a facility to Kandiyohi County; this would be in addition to what Prairie PROducers is doing in Olivia. Kotrba voiced his interest in serving on a feasibility study task force and felt it would take six months to complete. Reuss commented a feasibility study by an established company is important.
3. Ag appreciation night. Swedburg mentioned that GreenSeam LLC of Mankato, which is focused on the pork industry and agriculture as a whole, will host an Ag appreciation night at a local sports game. She felt it would be good to hold an ag appreciation night at a Stinger's or WarHawks game; this could also serve as an educational event. Larry Konsterlie shared the Kandiyohi County Corn and Soybean Growers Association has partnered with the Stinger's to held a Farmtastic Event every other year focusing on youth and farming. He is unsure if the program will continue and felt this may be something this committee could support. The Association received excellent feedback on the events. Other organizations, i.e., Farm Bureau were involved with the events. Swedburg and Konsterlie will visit over the next month and come back with a report on a Farmtastic Stinger's/WarHawks event(s).
4. Ag resource folder.

Additional comments by members included:

- Giving financial support to area farmer's markets, i.e., marketing/promotion of the businesses.
 - Businesses should be required to apply for funds and indicate what they will do with it.

- A plan/conversation is necessary to discover what the vendors are trying to accomplish and how it would benefit their business.
- Is this committee a supporter or an instigator of projects and how do the members see themselves accomplishing the goals in promoting agricultural opportunities in the area?
 - This committee may not have the time or money to be instigators or developers of projects.
 - A lot has been done in the industrial hemp area and with the venture capital group.
 - It is good to generate ideas and bring people together to do the basic leg work. Eventually project(s) will be handed off to a private organization.
- Use all of the committee's budget by year-end.
 - Swedburg will bring the committee's financial information to the monthly meetings.
- Assist area high schools with their greenhouse projects.
 - Willmar High School is building a new greenhouse; could this committee provide some funding?
 - Reach out to the school within the next three months for information on their plan.
 - The New London-Spicer High School built a greenhouse several years ago.
 - It may be beneficial to bring in both schools to a future Ag Committee meeting to give an update on their projects.
- Reach out to area churches regarding agriculture.

The committee identified the following goals:

6-Month Goals:

- Feasibility study for industrial hemp with Christianson PLLP (Dustin Kotrba)
- Expend all of the Ag Committee's budget by year-end
 - Give grants to area farmer's markets (Chris Radel volunteered to reach out to the vendors)
- Invite Willmar High School to talk about its new greenhouse and invite New London-Spicer High School to share information on its established greenhouse project (Dan Tepfer)
 - Discussion held regarding power supply issue; Radel provided information on the power demand

12-Month Goals:

- Create a resource folder for new farmers
 - Ruess suggested reaching out to Michelle Marotzke at Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
- Support farm transfer classes (Community Education/Ridgewater College)
- Continue the Partners In Ag Innovation Conference

Radel suggested prioritizing the 12-month goals and felt continuation of the Partners In Ag Innovation Conference is the most important.

Swedburg will have the committee review the status of its goals in five months.

Larson mentioned the 2017 BRE Report. Swedburg will put together a cross section/comparison of the 2017 responses/outcome recommendations/goals with the above goals.

NEW BUSINESS—Radel announced he is leaving Willmar Municipal Utilities in August and would like to remain on this committee. Members agreed with Radel remaining on this committee.

REPORTS

Partners In Ag Innovation Conference. Kotrba shared plans are in place for the conference scheduled for July 26th. Currently 140 are registered. Swedburg will register Ag Committee members.

Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee. Swedburg shared additional information on the Dutch company interested in an industrial hemp facility. AURI is holding an industrial hemp education session at Prairie PRODucers in Olivia from 2:00-4:00 p.m. on July 26th that Swedburg will attend.

Ongoing Ag-Related EDC Work. Swedburg shared the following:

- The EDC's quarterly newsletter published in July had an Ag focus.
- Abdulkadir Gaal, the new Joint Operations Board member will be a member of this committee.
- Kelsey Olson and Swedburg are working on an Ag-related ad for the *Rooted* magazine to be published in August.
- The EDC was invited to submit a full application for a Transportation Economic Development Grant between the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The request is for \$570,000 with a \$380,000 match that will come from the City of Willmar for a total of \$950,000. The grant will be used for improvements to Highway 40 west of Willmar to accommodate Nexyst 360 truck traffic to the Willmar Industrial Park. Swedburg shared the EDC was one of eight entities invited to pre-apply for the grant; the Willmar/EDC impact ranked quite high on the list. The grant application is due the first week of September and it may be two months before it is known if the grant is approved. Additional details will be shared next month on further development with Nexyst 360. Kotrba shared basic information on the rail component of the project.
- She recently toured the new state-of-the-art turkey barn along Highway 12 East (north of Haug Implement). The facility is built with three barns under one roof and can house up to 50,000 pullets (25,000 pullets on each side of the middle portion of the building). When the pullets grow to a certain size they are transferred to the outer portions of the barn. The turkeys never leave the barn until they are ready for market. The first flock is expected soon. The facility is owned by Rick VanderSpek of AgForte. Swedburg will invite VanderSpek to a future committee meeting.
- A voice mail was left for Melanie Dickman of Kandi Land Farm; Swedburg will give an update at a future meeting.
- The EDC anticipates providing grant assistance to Happy Halal for a second round of grants under the USDA Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program; its feasibility study was recently completed.
- The EDC will submit an application for the state Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program for Arctander, Dovre, Lake Andrew and St. Johns Townships by the deadline of August 4. Letters of support can be submitted by township residents. Larson mentioned the

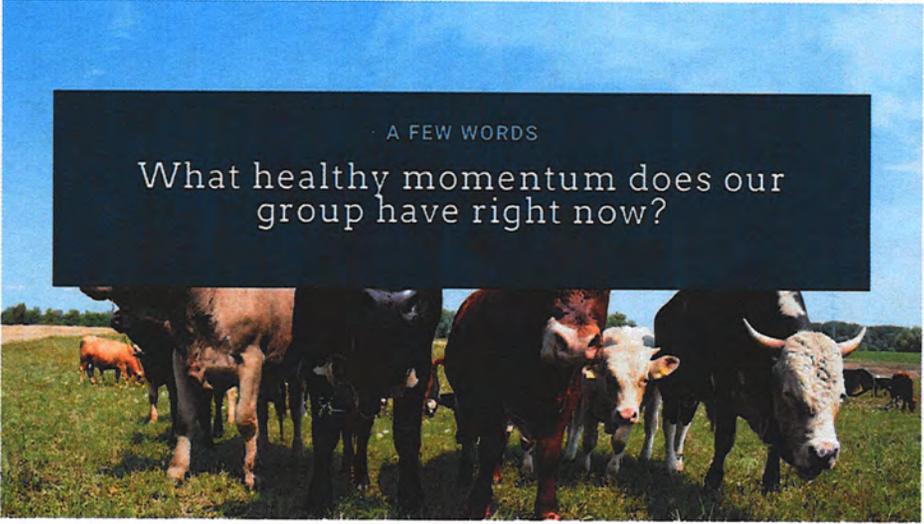
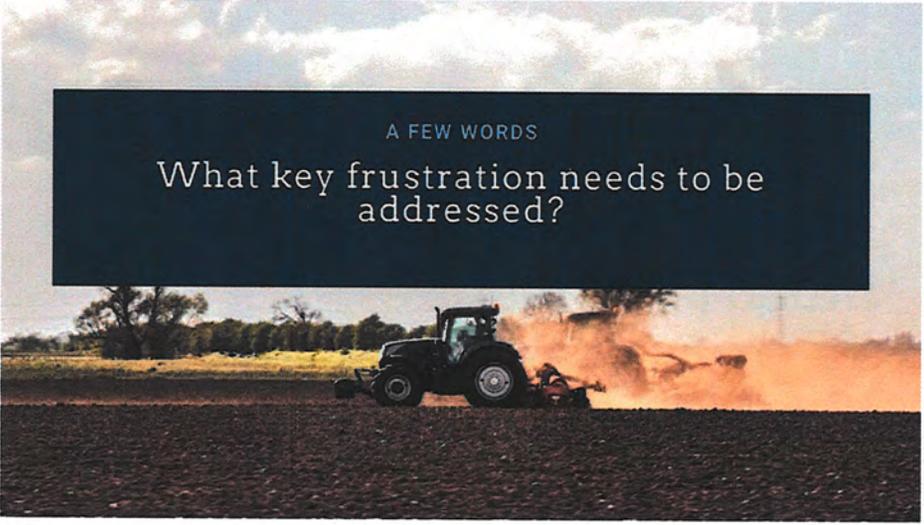
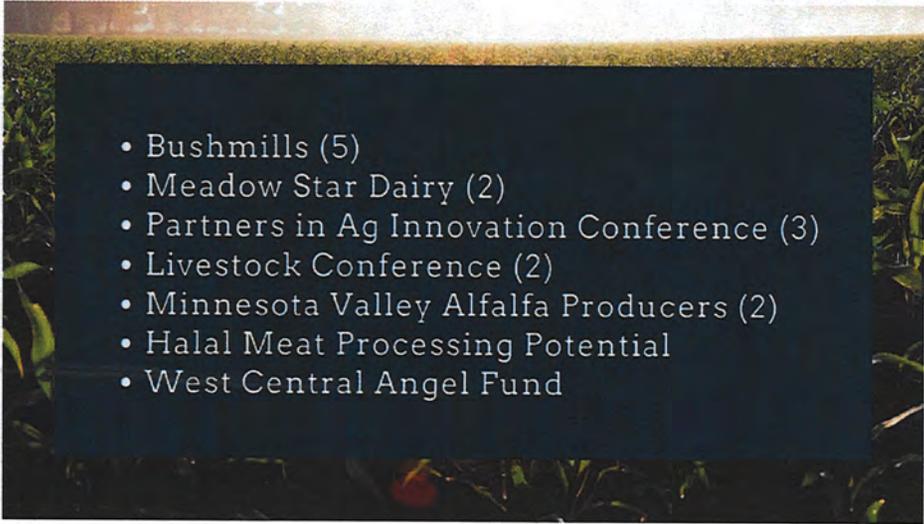
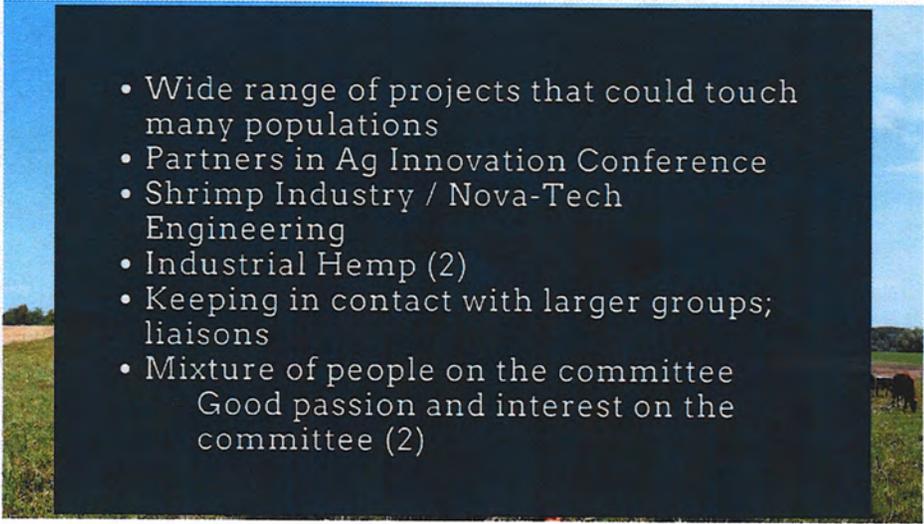
cost of the project has increased drastically. Swedburg shared the project will be kept at the \$10M cap as the state has a \$5 million cap for grant awards. If awarded a grant, 50% of funding for the project will come from the grant, 25% from Federated Telephone Cooperative and 25% from local dollars. It is expected the cost to residents will be \$1,200/year. Swedburg explained the capital fund dollars.

ADJOURNMENT—

IT WAS MOVED BY Dustin Kotrba, SECONDED BY Dan Tepfer, to adjourn the meeting.
MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:20 a.m.

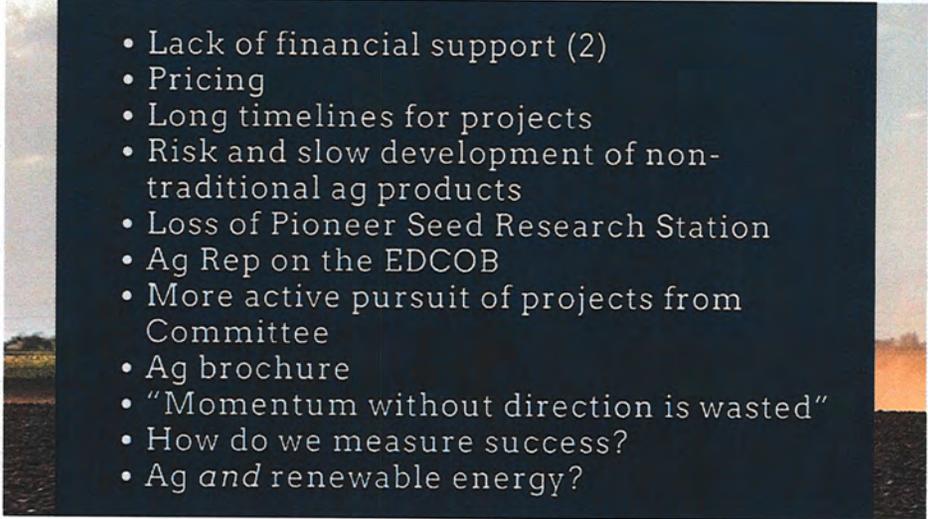
NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **7:30 a.m., Thursday, August 18, 2022** at the EDC Board Room and via Zoom video conference.

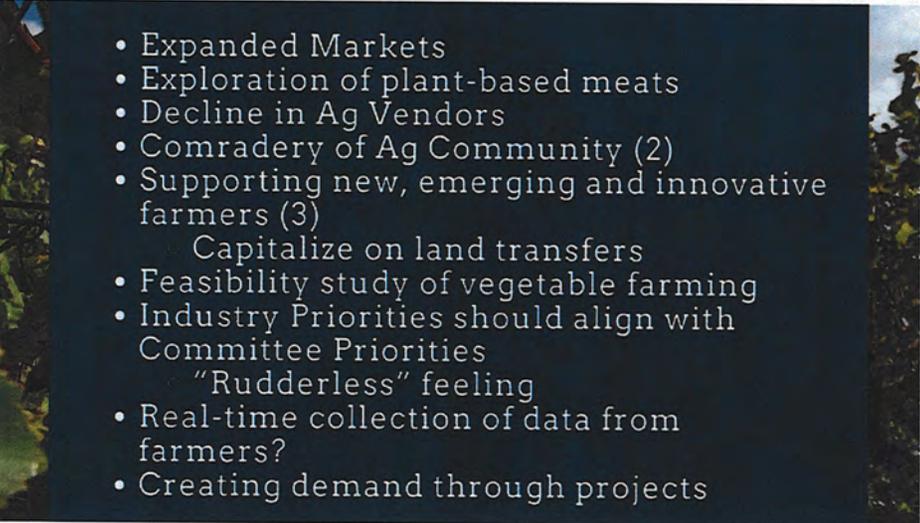


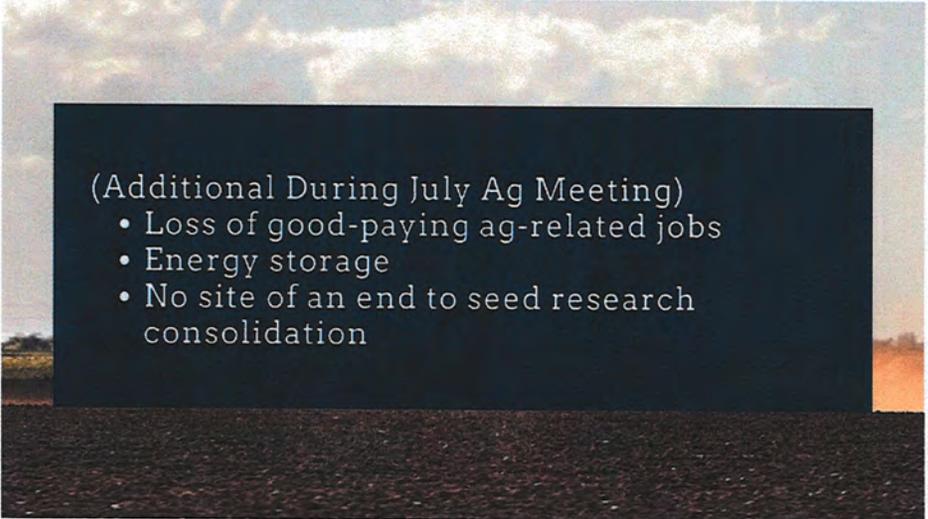


SHARE 3

What are our primary priorities for agriculture?

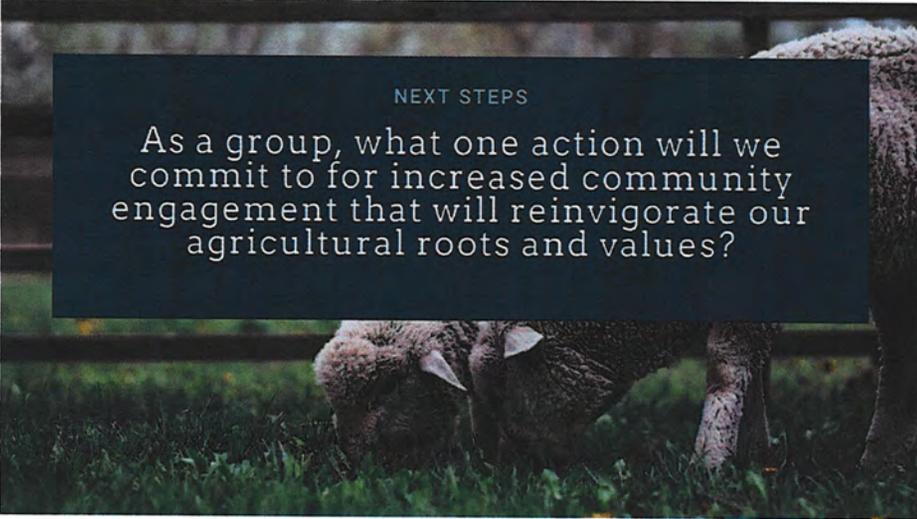
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- Lack of financial support (2)
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 - Loss of Pioneer Seed Research Station
 - Ag Rep on the EDCOB
 - More active pursuit of projects from Committee
 - Ag brochure
 - “Momentum without direction is wasted”
 - How do we measure success?
 - Ag *and* renewable energy?

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- Expanded Markets
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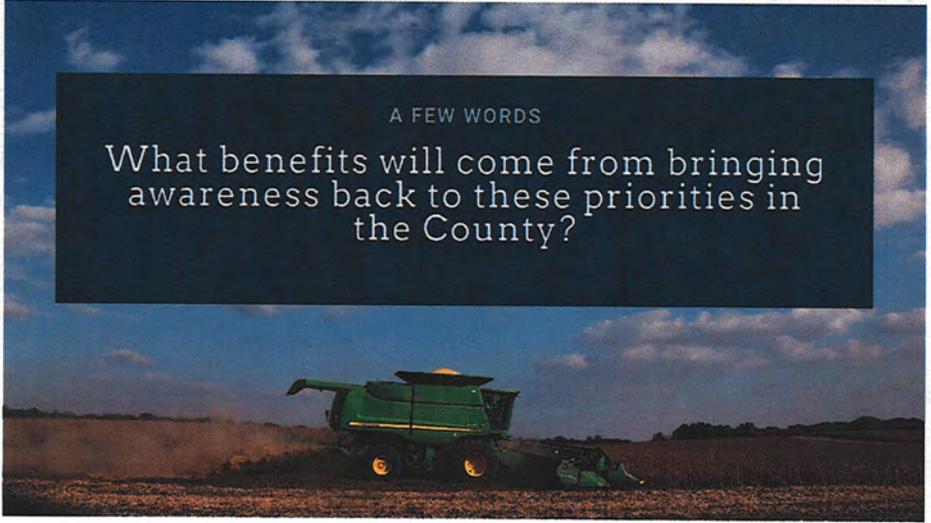
(Additional During July Ag Meeting)

- Loss of good-paying ag-related jobs
- Energy storage
- No site of an end to seed research consolidation



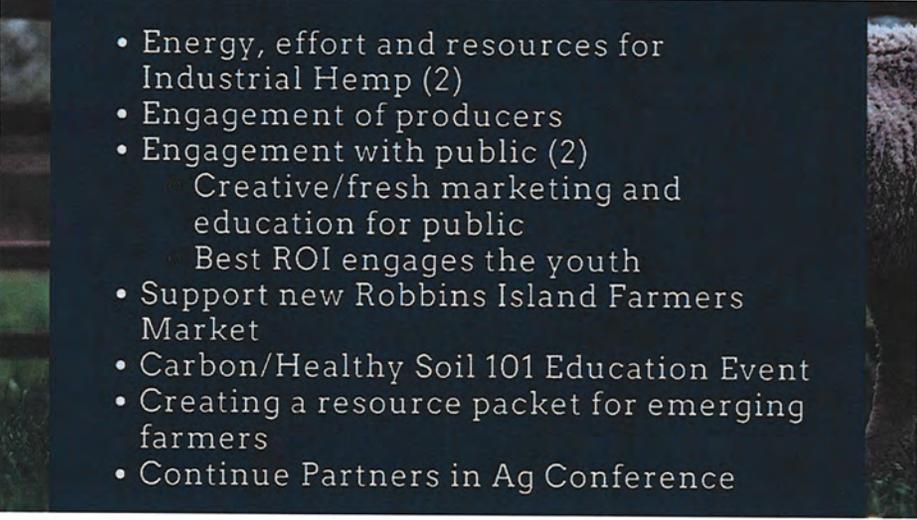
NEXT STEPS

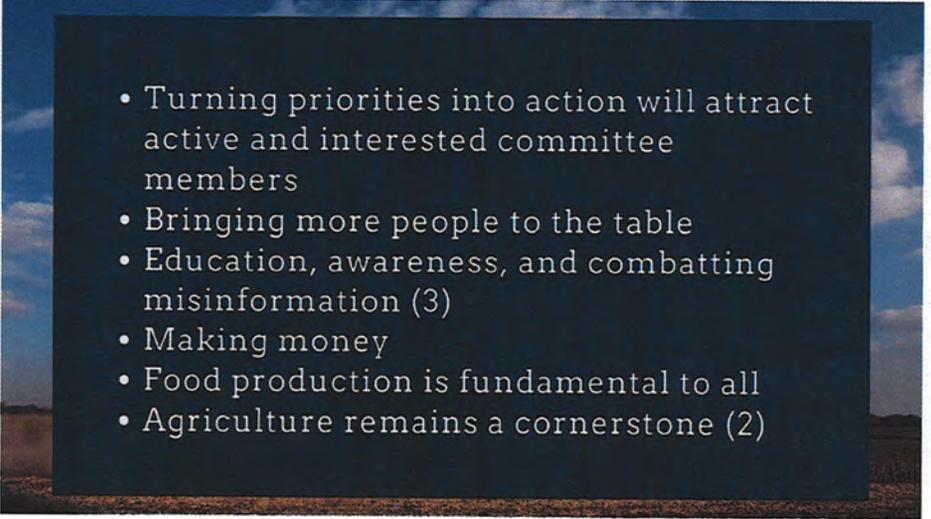
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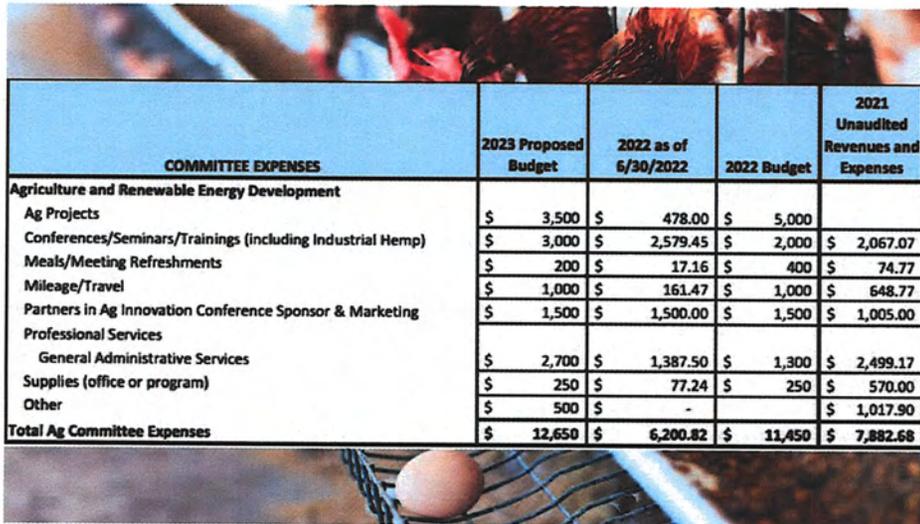


A FEW WORDS

What benefits will come from bringing awareness back to these priorities in the County?

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- Energy, effort and resources for Industrial Hemp (2)
 - Engagement of producers
 - Engagement with public (2)
 - Creative/fresh marketing and education for public
 - Best ROI engages the youth
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 - Creating a resource packet for emerging farmers
 - Continue Partners in Ag Conference

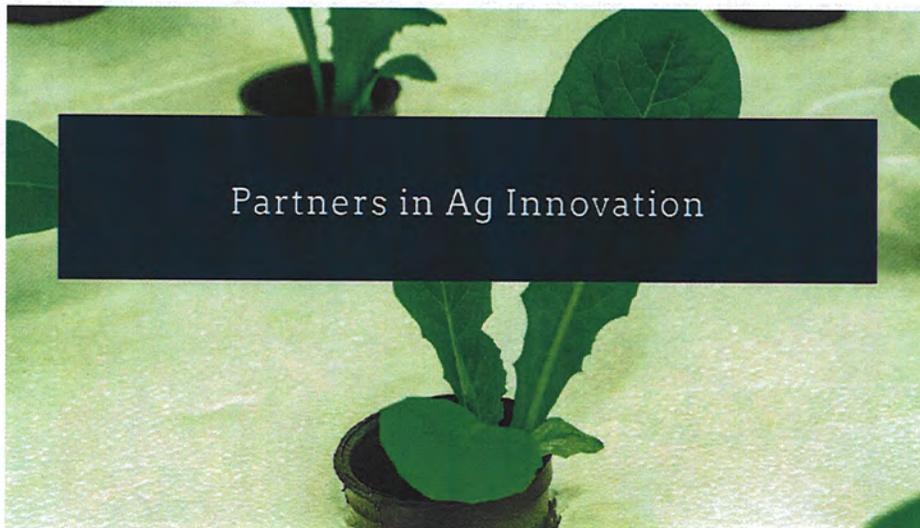
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- Turning priorities into action will attract active and interested committee members
 - Bringing more people to the table
 - Education, awareness, and combatting misinformation (3)
 - Making money
 - Food production is fundamental to all
 - Agriculture remains a cornerstone (2)



COMMITTEE EXPENSES	2023 Proposed Budget	2022 as of 6/30/2022	2022 Budget	2021 Unaudited Revenues and Expenses
Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development				
Ag Projects	\$ 3,500	\$ 478.00	\$ 5,000	
Conferences/Seminars/Trainings (Including Industrial Hemp)	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,579.45	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,067.07
Meals/Meeting Refreshments	\$ 200	\$ 17.16	\$ 400	\$ 74.77
Mileage/Travel	\$ 1,000	\$ 161.47	\$ 1,000	\$ 648.77
Partners in Ag Innovation Conference Sponsor & Marketing	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,005.00
Professional Services				
General Administrative Services	\$ 2,700	\$ 1,387.50	\$ 1,300	\$ 2,499.17
Supplies (office or program)	\$ 250	\$ 77.24	\$ 250	\$ 570.00
Other	\$ 500	\$ -		\$ 1,017.90
Total Ag Committee Expenses	\$ 12,650	\$ 6,200.82	\$ 11,450	\$ 7,882.68



Determine SMART Goals for 6 & 12 months



Partners in Ag Innovation



August: Report on "Farmtastic" Stingers Event (Larry & Sarah)

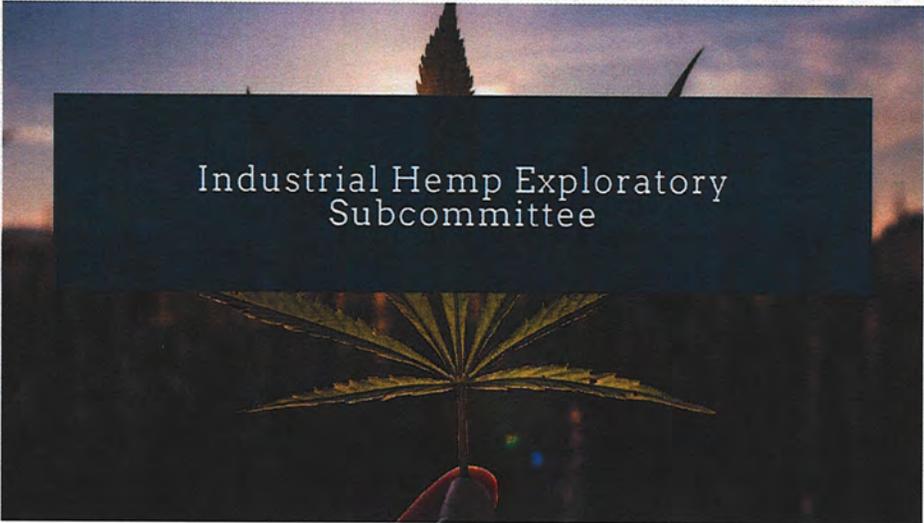
6 Month Goals

- Feasibility Study of Industrial Hemp with Christianson (Dustin)
- Use all of the Ag Committee Budget by the end of year Grant for Farmers Markets (Chris)
- Bring in Willmar & New London-Spicer High School to speak about new greenhouse (Dan)

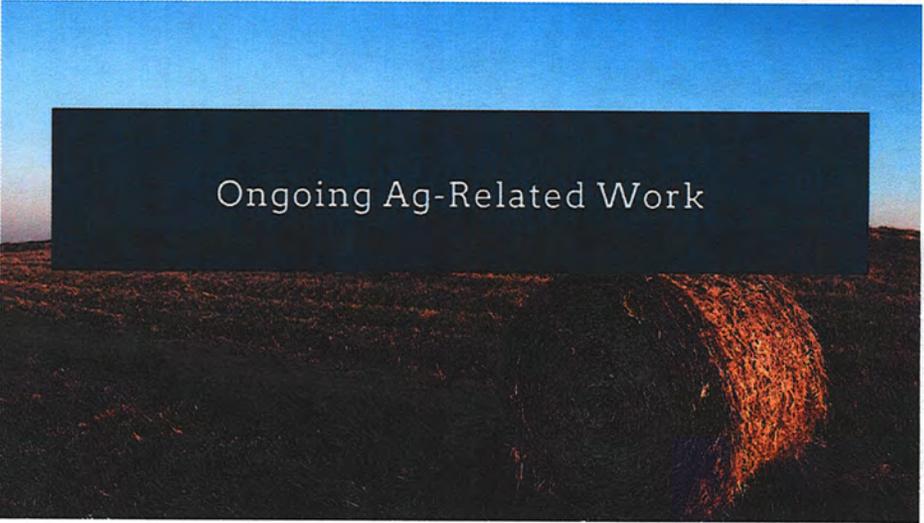
12 Month Goals

- Continue Partners in Ag Innovation Conference
- Resource folder for new farmers
- Farm transfer class support (Community Ed Classes; Ridgewater)

- EDC Newsletter - Ag-Focused in July
- EDCOB Liason will be Abdulcadir Gaal
- EDC invited to submit a full "Transportation Economic Development" grant for CSAH 40 improvements for ag industrial development project
- Tour of Ag Forte Turkey Barn on Hwy 12
- Anticipate grant assistance for 2nd round of MPEPP grant program for Happy Halal
- Border to Border grant due August 4 - Letters of Support from farmers, residents, and businesses still welcome (contact Sarah)
- CNH purchased the Buhler Building in Willmar



Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee



Ongoing Ag-Related Work