

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

MINUTES

August 18, 2022

EDC Board Room and via Zoom Video Conference

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

Absent: Larry Konsterlie and Keith Poier

Media: Shelby Lindrud, West Central Tribune

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—

IT WAS MOVED BY Nate Reuss, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll, to approve the Agenda as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES—Chair Halvorson presented the July 21, 2022 Minutes. Dustin Kotrba commented he appreciated the comprehensiveness of the minutes and noted a correction on page 6 to the spelling of pullets to poulets.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Boll, SECONDED BY Dan Tepfer, to approve the July 21, 2022 Minutes with the correction of the spelling of poulets on page 6. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

2017 BRE Report Compared to 2022-2023 Goals. Swedburg reviewed the Ag Producer BRE Report, April 2017, Chapter V, Potential Strategies for Kandiyohi County and the Agriculture Industry (see attached) and commented, from her perspective, the potential strategies identified in 2017 are in line with the 2022-2023 goals identified by this committee. Kim Larson shared he spoke with Mike Youngerberg of the Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council regarding soybean processing and soybean crushing processes. Larson shared a soybean crushing plant would require a smaller facility compared to a full soybean processing plant and may be an opportunity for Kandiyohi County. Larson and Swedburg will contact Youngerberg to discuss soybean processing/crushing and inquire if he would be willing to attend a future committee meeting.

[Abdulkadir Gaal joined the meeting and provided a brief bio followed by self-introductions.]

Farmtastic Event at Stinger's/WarHawks Games. Swedburg announced she and Larry Konsterlie have not had a chance to discuss the Farmtastic event. The topic will be placed on a future agenda.

Finalize 6-Month and 12-Month Goals. Swedburg distributed the 2022-2023 Goals (see attached) and suggested assigning goals to committee members. Once goals are assigned, the goals can be adopted. She noted the addition of updating the Kandiyohi County agriculture flyer as a six-month goal. At Swedburg's suggestion, the committee agreed to put the Farmtastic event under the 12-month goals on hold until a final decision as to the level of support is determined. Members were assigned to the following goals that were not yet assigned.

6-Month Goal Committee Assignment:

4. Update Kandiyohi County agriculture flyer and create industrial hemp flyer.
Swedburg commented the EDC has a template, but it needs updating and a person to review the data and provide insight on the sources and anything that is missing.
Assigned to: Dan Lippert

12-Month Goals Committee Assignments:

1. Continue Partners in Ag Innovation Conference in 2023.
Assigned to: Dustin Kotrba
2. Create a resource folder for new famers.
Assigned to Nate Reuss
3. Support farm transfer planning classes with Willmar Community Ed and Ultimate Ag as well as with Ridgewater College.
Swedburg shared she has been working with Willmar Community Ed and Ultimate Ag regarding farm transfer classes focusing on family dynamics; there may be other opportunities for the Ag Committee to support.
Assigned to: Chair Kevin Halvorson

Tepfer reported as to his 6-month goal assignment to invite Willmar and New London-Spicer High Schools to speak about greenhouses, he has been unable to reach Tracy Tebben of the New London-Spicer High School. Swedburg will find a contact for the Willmar High School and send to Tepfer. She suggested placing the topic on the November or December agenda.

Swedburg commented she will keep the list of other goal ideas generated at the last meeting and will note new goal idea(s) as they arise and bring them to the committee to review as warranted.

Kotrba shared he and Jamey Cline have discussed the industrial hemp feasibility study and a study for a soybean crushing facility. The challenge is understanding what funding mechanisms are available for feasibility studies. Christianson PLLP is willing to do some cost-sharing, but the cost of

a feasibility study is between \$20,000-\$40,000 and it does not have the budget for such a study. He felt it may be good to include a request for funding for a feasibility study for a soybean crushing facility at the same time as the hemp study and shared there are two ways to approach the issue: 1) pre-feasibility study; and 2) regular feasibility study. The first step would be to look at grant opportunities. Kotrba suggested looking at a grant for professional services for a pre-feasibility study or a regular feasibility study, which would be at no cost to the committee. A funding match would be needed for such a grant. Swedburg suggested inviting Youngerberg to the committee's September meeting to discuss soybean crushing. While the committee is exploring grant opportunities for industrial hemp, it would be good to keep soybean crushing in the background until a better sense of direction is known.

[Chris Radel joined the meeting.]

Dan Lippert inquired how the committee obtains agricultural ideas and feels some pressure should be exerted on members to bring emerging agricultural opportunities to present/discuss each month. It could be ideas from conferences, meetings or within the community. Members felt this would be a good idea. Swedburg will place the agenda topic Ag Committee Emerging Agricultural and Renewal Energy Opportunities on each agenda beginning in November.

IT WAS MOVED BY Dan Tepfer, SECONDED BY Kim Larson, that the Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development Committee adopt the 2022-2023 Goals. MOTION CARRIED.

REPORTS

Partners in Ag Innovation Conference. Kotrba shared the conference was held on July 26th and of the 140 registrants, 95-100 were in attendance. He felt the speakers were good and emcee John Cosgrove was excellent. Boll inquired of the number of farm producers in attendance. It was noted that some sponsors would like to see more active farmers attending the conference. Swedburg will check the attendance and report at the next meeting; Kotrba commented historically, approximately 20 farm producers attend. Kotrba shared the conference planning committee will meet in September to review the event. Conference video clips are being edited and will be posted on the website when completed. Swedburg shared the videos will be segmented by conference topics. She will send a link to the committee in the near future.

Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee. Swedburg shared the subcommittee will meet in September. One of the agenda topics will be the industrial hemp feasibility study; Christianson PLLP will be invited to attend. Swedburg will invite Kevin Ortenblad of Hemponix to speak on marketing at a future meeting. She shared highlights of the industrial hemp mini conference held on July 26th at Prairie PROducers in Olivia following the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference. Attendees from Kandiyohi County were: Laura Arne, Kelsey Olson and Reuss, as well as Janette Wertish, Mayor of Renville, a subcommittee member. Reuss shared Prairie PROducers has been successful in receiving local support and funding from Renville County, the City of Olivia, Renville County Economic Development Authority, Southwest Initiative Foundation and Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC). The funding will be used to process inventory in order to move forward with the business.

2023 Committee Budget. Swedburg shared the committee's proposed 2023 budget and prior year comparisons (see attached) noting there are adequate funds to hold an offsite meeting, including a meal or refreshments. A suggestion was made to hold an offsite meeting in December. She noted if budget changes are needed, the changes must be presented to the EDC Joint Operations Board for approval. Larson inquired how the Ag Committee budget compares to the entire EDC budget. Swedburg stated the Ag Committee budget is one of the higher line items in the EDC budget. The EDC's budget is generally between \$600,000-\$700,000 with approximately 80-90% of its funding coming from a county tax levy; additional funds come from grants and other outside funds.

Ongoing EDC Ag-Related Work.

- An application for the state Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program was submitted on August 4th. Kandiyohi County had 4 out of 135 grant applications that were submitted. Total requests are approximately \$192 million. Grant awards should be known by yearend.
- An application for a state Transportation Economic Development grant is on track for submission by the September 2nd deadline. If awarded, the funds will be used for work on Highway 40 for the Nexyst 360 development in the Willmar Industrial Park.
- A feasibility study was completed for Happy Halal (approximately 3,500 sq. ft. facility).
- Anticipate providing assistance to Happy Halal to apply for a second round of grants under the USDA Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program.
- Kelsey Olson and Swedburg enjoyed attending FarmFest on August 3rd.
- Kandi Land Farm will open on September 17th.
- Swedburg is working on a childcare grant application that is due August 30th.

Other. Radel shared he reached out to a few Robbins Island farmers market vendors regarding possible funding assistance by this committee; they inquired what the application would entail. Swedburg questioned what would be helpful for the vendors and where are the gaps, if a grant program is created? Tepfer felt funds could be used for awareness/marketing. Swedburg stated a short application would need to be developed. Lippert inquired if there something that can be done for all farmers market vendors, i.e., provide some sort of structure/coordination to assist with marketing, i.e., social media. Swedburg suggested creating a list of ideas to present to the vendors. Swedburg and Radel may work on developing an application form. Radel will continue to reach out to other area farmers market vendors to determine what their needs are and bring the information to the September meeting.

Radel shared the New London Food Co-op is currently renting a building in downtown New London and is getting close to opening. The Co-op will be WIC certified and will have fresh produce. Out of the estimated \$250,000 needed, it has \$25,000 left to raise. It is working on a member loan program and some funds may come from other entities. Radel questioned if this committee could assist with funds. It has been working with MMDC and two other lending organizations, but unless the upfront funds are raised, the lending organizations will not be able to assist with funding. Swedburg noted she serves as secretary for the Co-op. Originally, the member drive was to run for one month; however, the Co-op is reaching out to local newspapers to inform readers of the

Co-op's progress and the member loan program. Tepfer felt this could be a project for the Ag Committee. Boll commented on the Willmar food co-op that did not materialize and felt before this committee commits to providing any funding that the history of the Willmar food co-op be researched. Swedburg will research the history of the Willmar food co-op effort and report at the next committee meeting. Reuss mentioned there was favorable response from a New London community-wide feasibility study regarding support of a food co-op. Tepfer suggested a \$1,500 donation from this committee. Radel will bring a presentation on the New London Food Co-op to the next committee meeting and will find out if the Co-op reached out to the New London Township Board as to its interest in donating to the Co-op.

ADJOURNMENT—

IT WAS MOVED BY Dan Lippert, SECONDED BY Chris Radel, to adjourn the meeting.
MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:08 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **7:30 a.m., Thursday, September 25, 2022** at the EDC Board Room and via Zoom video conference.



Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

AG PRODUCER BRE REPORT APRIL 2017



**Prepared by
Jim Molenaar**

Agriculture is an important sector of the Kandiyohi County economy. We believe the vitality of agriculture is important to the future economic stability of our area. The purpose of this program is to develop a vision for agriculture as a cornerstone in the economic foundation of Kandiyohi County and the surrounding area.

Chapter V

Potential Strategies for Kandiyohi County and the Agriculture Industry

The purpose of this chapter is to identify potential strategies to develop and implement the “findings” of the BRE process. Unlike the information in the previous four chapters, this is not a “snapshot” or a specific moment in time. This chapter should be viewed as an ongoing process. The strategies listed here should not be viewed as the final product, or a complete list. We have compressed the timelines for completing the first phase of this project. The final chapter should not be rushed. Many of the strategies will develop over the year ahead, but some of the findings in this report may develop over a longer period of time.

Potential Strategies

- ✓ Continued support of the EDC’s Ag Committee, as well as the EDC. This support should be provided in financial support, staffing and resources to develop and implement the strategies of the BRE process.
- ✓ Communicate, promote and educate both the farm and nonfarm public in understanding our agriculture industry. Work in cooperation with the media in sharing the agriculture “story” of Kandiyohi County. Develop a list of agriculture issues and opportunities to be shared in the form of a press release or other communication devices.
- ✓ Share the Kandiyohi County Ag Producer BRE Report with community stakeholders and agriculture organizations. This could take place in group or one-on-one settings. Key audiences could include legislators, county commissioners and elected leaders. Other groups to consider are the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, West Central Ag Sales Association and various farm organizations. Sharing this report through traditional news sources has already occurred. What additional media outlets might be available? Should a “social media” platform be explored?
- ✓ Seek partnerships and develop programming to educate and address the growing concerns of an aging farm population, including farm transfer, estate planning and strategic planning and preparation for retirement. This partnership could be accomplished with both the Ridgewater College Farm Business Management and Agriculture Program, as well as the University of Minnesota Extension. It may be possible to use local private services as well in this education opportunity.
- ✓ Continue to support the development of “value-added” agriculture in the county. This includes growth and enhancement of the livestock industry, further processing of livestock and agriculture crops, and development of renewable energy initiatives. There are some new initiatives on the horizon to bring additional value to Kandiyohi County commodities and products. The EDC, through its Ag Committee should serve as the forum and leadership group to forward these discussions and initiatives.
- ✓ Serve as a leader in promoting discussion and advocacy to address the threats that were expressed by our agriculture producers. Key among those issues are healthcare, property tax rates and structure, agriculture regulation and policies, competition for agriculture land, including competition converting land to non-farm uses such as CRP. This list is only an example; the key point is that the EDC will serve as the catalyst to promote policy discussions to address the issues that are present or will emerge.
- ✓ Fully recognize the economic impact that agriculture producers and the agriculture industry have on Kandiyohi County and the region. Understand that a vibrant agriculture industry requires that our leadership be aware and engaged in helping the economy continue to grow.

It is important to recognize that one group will not be able to do all that is needed to retain and expand our agriculture industry. We will need the concerted efforts of our governing officials and community organizations as well as the public. The entire business community needs to recognize the vested interest they have in a thriving agriculture economy, not just those who deal in agriculture products. Information, education and open communication will be a critical part of this future. We encourage you to make use of the resource in as many ways as possible. It should not end up on a shelf waiting to collect dust!

Consider carefully and look to the future. There is great potential in the agriculture industry in Kandiyohi County. Thank you for participating in this process.



Agriculture and Renewable Energy Committee

2022-2023 Goals

Mission: To sustain, identify and develop agriculture, agribusiness and renewable energy opportunities.

Objective: Target activities that leverage Kandiyohi County's assets in agriculture, with a special emphasis on Ag business, manufacturing, bioscience, technology, renewable energy and research.

6 Months (August 2022 – February 2023)

1. Complete a feasibility study of industrial hemp in Kandiyohi County with Christianson PLLP
Assigned To: Dustin
2. Use all of the Agriculture and Renewable Energy Committee's Budget by December 2022
Assigned to: Chris
3. Invite Willmar and New London-Spicer Public Schools to speak about greenhouses
Assigned to: Dan T.
4. Update Kandiyohi County agriculture flyer and create industrial hemp flyer
Assigned to: Dan L.

12 Months (August 2022 – August 2023)

1. Continue Partners in Ag Innovation Conference in 2023
Assigned to: Dustin
2. Create a resource folder for new farmers
Assigned to: Nate
3. Support farm transfer planning classes with Willmar Community Ed and Ultimate Ag as well as with Ridgewater College
Assigned to: Kevin

2023 Proposed Budget and Comparisons	2023 Proposed Budget	2022 as of 7/31/2022	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	\$ 2,988.05	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,067.07
Meals/Meeting Refreshments	\$ 200	\$ 38.62	\$ 400	\$ 74.77
Mileage/Travel	\$ 1,000	\$ 201.85	\$ 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	\$ 1,702.50	\$ 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	\$ 6,986.26	\$ 11,450	\$ 7,882.68

EDC Ongoing Work:

- Border to Border grant submitted August 4th. Kandiyohi County had 4 of 135 grants submitted.
- “Transportation Economic Development” grant on track for September 2 deadline.
- Completion of feasibility study for Happy Halal.
- Anticipate grant assistance for 2nd round of MPEPP grant program for Happy Halal.
- Kelsey and Sarah had a blast attending Farm Fest August 3rd!
- Kandi Land Farms opening September 17th!