

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)  
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**August 22, 2022**

**Heritage Bank, 310 First Street South, Willmar and via Zoom Video Conference**

Present: Ben Carlson, Jesse Gislason, Ann Winge Johnson, Emily Lien and Pam Rosenau

Excused: Donna Boonstra

Absent: Liz Dyrdaahl

Staff: Kelsey Olson, Marketing and Communications Specialist and Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Secretarial: Cathy Skindelien, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chairperson Emily Lien called the meeting to order at approximately 12:04 p.m.

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

**MINUTES**—

IT WAS MOVED BY Ben Carlson, SECONDED BY Ann Winge Johnson, to approve the Minutes of the July 25, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE STATISTICS**—

**Facebook Statistics.** Kelsey Olson reported on Facebook statistics based on information provided by the 30-day trial with Sprout Social. There were 11 net likes and one person was lost on July 18, the day an article was posted about Governor Walz’s plan to transition to clean energy. Top posts included the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference, the new Earth Angels business and Block 25 progress. The Sprout Media engagement page divides activities into the following categories: reactions, comments, shares, post link clicks and other clicks; and provides a daily count of each engagement. Women in the 35-44 age range are the largest demographic.

**LinkedIn.** Olson reported increases in impressions, engagements and post clicks. Top posts included TJ Maxx coming to Willmar, What We Have Been Up to This Week and Earth Angels. The EDC’s LinkedIn posts will concentrate on new businesses and what is happening at the EDC.

**UPDATES**—

**Logo and defined areas.** Olson reported the “Business Hub” and “Open for Business” logos have been retired and will be replaced with a logo that reflects the EDC’s definition of West Central Minnesota, which includes the counties of Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac Qui Parle, McLeod, Meeker, Pope, Stearns, Stevens, Swift, Redwood, Renville and Yellow Medicine. The ribbon around the outside of the area will read “Partnering with West

Central Minnesota.” The logo will serve to identify which counties are included as partners in events, such as job fairs. REDstar quoted approximately \$500 to create this logo; Olson is seeking additional quotes. She contacted TEN17 Media and Greenwater Garage and received no response. Carlson will provide additional options.

**Sprout Social.** Olson expressed concern about the price of Sprout Social, which is \$169 per month versus \$75 per month for Hootsuite. It will be used for six months and its continuation will depend on the priority level assigned to social media in the coming year.

**Twitter report.** In response to last month’s discussion of the value of the EDC’s postings on Twitter, Olson refrained from posting anything this month and received no feedback from the public. Discussion was held on whether to let the account go dormant or to disable it completely.

IT WAS MOVED BY Jesse Gislason, SECONDED BY Ann Winge Johnson, to disable the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission’s Twitter account. MOTION CARRIED.

**Partners in Ag Innovation Conference.** Pam Rosenau reported the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference was a success. One hundred and fifty people registered with 40 not attending, but possibly joining online. Good feedback was received on the story-telling portion of the conference and the broadband panel went over well. The majority of attendees stayed for the entire event. Although the target audience is producers, attendance represented more industry than individuals. Ideas to entice producers to attend future conferences included hosting farm tours and contacting those involved in land stewardship projects and organic farmers cooperatives to promote the conference at their meetings. Hosting an event for the partners, such as dinner or a golf outing was suggested. Grain bin safety will be considered as a topic for next year.

**Industrial Hemp.** Olson and Sarah Swedburg attended the Field Day held at Prairie PROducers in Olivia, Minnesota. Several interesting stories were shared, one about the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute and the University of Minnesota collaborating to build loft-style houses using hempcrete in Fargo, North Dakota. The houses will be monitored by the University for humidity and temperature. Prairie PROducers has received funding from the Lower Sioux Community for equipment.

**Farmfest.** Olson and Swedburg attended Farmfest in Redwood County on August 3, 2022. Kandiyohi County was represented by Prinsco and Hanson Silo, which are both candidates for the next job fair. The Parks and Trails Committee was the sole representative of Renville County. Olson noted the number of local ag businesses participating was low, most likely due to the high cost of a booth and staffing shortages. Olson and Swedburg enjoyed the Game of Soy, where they learned that Skechers and Good Year Tires manufacture products made of soybeans in place of petroleum. Next year the EDC and the Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) plan to have a booth for three days at the event, splitting the cost of \$800. It was suggested the CVB sponsor the Kandiyohi County Fair. Olson responded this was a good idea, and commented that she and Beth Fischer, Executive Director of the CVB, plan to attend at least one meeting at each township in Kandiyohi County next year.

#### **NEW BUSINESS—**

**Workforce Effort Update.** Olson reported that as a result of her 6-month review, she will be spending 10 percent of her time on workforce initiatives. This committee will receive routine workforce updates. Olson toured West Central Steel and took pictures, however, the EDC will not be allowed to use them due to privacy issues for the employees. During any subsequent tours of businesses, Olson will ask in advance what

type of pictures can be used. Carlson recommended bringing a photo release form along when visiting. Olson needs five more businesses to provide tours for area schools, including DREAM Technical Academy and Central Minnesota Christian School.

**Premier Virtual and In-person Job Fair.** Olson reported that following the cancellation of the State of Minnesota's contract with Premier Virtual, the EDC has contracted with it to provide the platform for the Virtual Job Fair. All of the counties in West Central Minnesota will be invited to participate in the virtual job fairs. The fee will be \$350, which will drop to \$300 to participate in two events per year. Small businesses will be charged \$100. Olson will create a proposal for the other counties.

Olson plans to approach K95.3 radio station about allowing the EDC to handle the job fair registration process after the fall in-person job fair. The EDC would create an electronic invitation and registration form, collect them and send to the radio station, thus avoiding issues stemming from handwritten registration forms.

**BNSF Ribbon Cutting.** Kandiyohi County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation are planning a ribbon cutting event for the Willmar WYE project. The event will feature speakers and a train ride for officials. Kandiyohi County has asked the EDC for help in the planning process.

**Minnesota Manufacturing Month Update & Events.** An ad has been created for Minnesota Manufacturing Month and will run the first week in October.

**Childcare Support Update.** The EDC is working with Mid-Minnesota Development Commission to secure a Department of Employment and Economic Development Child Care Economic Development Grant for \$300,000. Other requested funds include \$150,000 from Kandiyohi County and \$100,000 from the City of Willmar, both from American Rescue Plan funds. Two meetings have been held for churches, people in need of child care and child care providers looking for new locations. A third meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 24, 2022 to get feedback on how to design the grant application. Anyone in Kandiyohi County is welcome to attend. Activity bags will be provided for kids and pizza will be served.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, September 26, 2022** in-person at the Community Room, Heritage Bank and via ZOOM video conference.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:50 p.m.