

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE
MINUTES
December 19, 2022
Heritage Bank, 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: Aaron Backman, Executive Director and Kelsey Olson, Marketing and Communications Specialist

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

Vice Chairperson Pam Rosenau called the meeting to order at approximately 12:09 p.m.

AGENDA—The agenda was approved as emailed.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Ann Winge Johnson, SECONDED BY Ben Carlson, to approve the Minutes of the November 28, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS—

VantagePoint Consulting. Kelsey Olson announced the EDC plans to work with VantagePoint Marketing for marketing support. The plan cost is \$60 per hour (for a couple months), pending board approval in mid-January.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Swag: Folders and Pens. The EDC card holders have arrived. Each item holds seven business cards or three credit cards. The card holder provides protection against the scanning of credit cards by outside sources. The rose gold pen preferred by the committee has a limited print area which will not hold the necessary information. Hansen Advertising will provide a sample of a similar pen with a larger print area. Olson is working with a designer from Hansen Advertising on the EDC folder. Car magnets have been ordered.

[Chairperson Emily Lien joined the meeting]

DISCUSSION ITEMS—

Virtual Career Fair. Olson reported that so far 12 businesses have signed up for the virtual career fair, which will be held on January 18, 2023. The Renville Housing and Redevelopment Authority/Economic Development Authority and the Redwood Economic Development Authority, both partners in the virtual career fair, have begun marketing efforts. Ridgewater College and the City of Clara City are potential partners, while the City of Benson declined participation. Meeker County will partner in the spring and Olson met with a diversity recruiter for the Minnesota Department of Health and Human Services, who expressed interest in building a partnership. Olson sends out email blasts regarding the virtual career fair each Friday. On a positive note, she received a reply from a pharmacy that stated there is no need to participate this year due to successful hiring from last year's fair. Olson will print neon-colored cards advertising the career fair and drop them off at companies in Willmar that are hiring. Advertising will take place on social media as well.

Community Outreach Questionnaire/Survey. Olson reported Google Forms will be used for the Community Outreach Questionnaire/Survey. The survey will ask which township or city the person represents and whether they feel represented by the EDC. The EDC "What We Do" flyer, which lists the EDC's focus areas, will be included and participants will be asked whether the focus areas are important to their community, with answering options of yes, no or need more information. There will be an opportunity to list needs within each person's township or community. The survey will be sent out one month prior to the EDC planning session held in the spring.

UPDATES—

Press Releases for Grants. Olson completed press releases regarding the Child Care Economic Development Grant and the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant. Future press releases will be created in advance for quicker distribution. The press release for the Transportation Economic Development Grant has been delayed pending other approvals.

Overall Workforce Support Update. Olson's workforce support activities include the virtual career fair, connecting with companies, building relationships and research for support of the childcare grant. Olson met with a licensor to understand the rules and regulations for forgivable loans. Documents will be created to streamline the loan process.

Newsletter. The winter edition of the EDC newsletter will contain a review of 2022. There will be four categories:

- **Financial Wins** – This will feature a picture of the broadband ribbon-cutting event in Prinsburg plus information regarding grants awarded for broadband, childcare, contamination clean-up and Highway 40 improvement.
- **Community Support** – The focus will be on two broadband projects, community outreach, the countywide housing study and the new Somalian version of Elevate curriculum.
- **Progress on Projects** – Included will be the completion of the Willmar Wye project, the FedEx expansion, Block 25 construction and the Highway 23 North Gap project.
- **Workforce Engagement** – Highlights will be the Workforce Solutions Summit, frontline worker application assistance, Minnesota Manufacturing month, the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference and the virtual career fair.

Suggested topics for next year's newsletters include:

- **Industrial Hemp** - Backman reported a meeting with two individuals from Dun Agro Hemp Group, an industrial hemp company from the Netherlands that is searching for potential locations for processing facilities in the United States. The meeting went well and a second visit is planned.
- **Housing Study** – Backman has received the second version of the housing study, which focuses on Willmar. Senior housing is a high priority and entry-level housing is in short supply.
- **Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Certification** – Backman reported BNSF invited Willmar to have the Willmar Industrial Park become a BNSF-certified site. Only one other community in outstate Minnesota, Becker, has this certification. The process will take approximately one year to complete with an estimated cost of \$20,000.

The possibility of changing the newsletter schedule from quarterly to monthly was discussed. It was determined that while Olson's schedule does not allow time to create a monthly newsletter, six per year could be considered. A decision will be made pending a re-evaluation of Olson's priorities.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, January 23, 2023** in-person at The Handle Bar, Atwater and via ZOOM video conference.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:37 p.m.