

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

September 26, 2022

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

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

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.

Chairperson Emily Lien called the meeting to order at approximately 12:02 p.m.

AGENDA—The agenda was approved as emailed.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Pam Rosenau, SECONDED BY Ben Carlson, to approve the Minutes of the August 22, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS—

Marketing Allocation (2023) for Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB). Aaron Backman gave a brief history of the EDC's association with the CVB. When the EDC was created in 2003, it inherited several committees that were part of the Kandiyohi County Rural Development Finance Authority, which was formed in 1990. It was determined in 2009 that the EDC's Tourism Committee and CVB were duplicating efforts, and it was decided that the CVB would better serve the tourism activities in Kandiyohi County, resulting in the dissolution of the EDC Tourism Committee. From 2004-2010, the funding provided to the CVB from the EDC's operational budget varied. In 2010 a fixed level of \$34,000 was established and continues at that level. A tourism partnership agreement was established in April 2009 (see attached). The outline of the agreement is as follows: The CVB Director shall prepare the annual budget request to be presented to the EDC during the budget planning session. It will outline by line-item tourism and related expenses, prepare an annual work plan, have annual year-end goals and a budget report for the EDC. The EDC Joint Operations Board shall recommend appointments to serve on the board of directors. The annual expenditure of \$34,000 is part of the EDC's budget process. The terms of the agreement may be amended with notice and approval of both entities.

Backman, referring to a memo prepared by the EDC's Marketing & Communications Specialist (see attached), indicated the agreement may be terminated by either board with advanced written notification prior to September 30th of the preceding year. The partnership agreement has not been reassessed in eight years and the EDC feels it should reevaluate its financial support. The mission of the CVB to promote and market the

Willmar Lakes Area as a travel destination does not fully encompass the EDC's mission to be a catalyst for economic growth. The EDC has provided over \$400,000 from operating funds to the CVB in support of the hospitality sector, more than any other sector. CVB currently receives approximately \$250,000 in lodging tax revenues and has become a self-sustaining entity with full-time staff. It has successfully operated for 14 years, and could continue to operate without the allocation from the EDC. The EDC proposes a phase-out of the funds as follows:

- 2022 - \$34,000
- 2023 - \$22,000
- 2024 - \$11,000
- 2025 (and future years) - \$0

The proposed phase-out is justified by the following points:

- Lodging tax revenues have grown 41 percent in the last decade
- The CVB has reserves of over \$300,000
- The CVB focuses on meetings, conventions and sports, which is distinct from the EDC mission
- The EDC has areas of focus needing more resources, including agriculture, broadband, childcare, workforce development, etc.
- The CVB staff now operates on a full-time basis
- The EDC is funded through a tax levy, and has a fiduciary responsibility to use funds based on its mission; while the CVB is funded through a 3% lodging tax
- The CVB is self-sustaining and should operate as its own entity
- Many economic development entities in other communities do not provide operational support of tourism entities

IT WAS MOVED BY Pam Rosenau, SECONDED BY Jesse Gislason, that the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Marketing and Public Relations Committee recommends a three-year funding phase-out plan for the Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau on the condition that during the phase-out period, the funds will be provided based on specific requests throughout the year from the CVB, pending EDC approval. MOTION CARRIED.

Olson reported she, Beth Fischer and Sarah Swedburg plan to attend all township and city council meetings this year in Kandiyohi County to determine how each township or community feels they are being represented. Olson will follow up with a survey after all meetings have been attended.

Website Quotes. Olson reported plans to send out Request for Proposals (RFPs) for website quotes in January, 2023. In 2015 the EDC received quotes from Arrowplane out of the Twin Cities, Brand Acceleration, Indianapolis, Indiana; E*Tap Marketing, Willmar, Minnesota; Golden Shovel Agency, Little Falls, Minnesota; REDstar, Willmar, Minnesota; Redwood Valley Technical Solutions (RVTS), Redwood Falls, Minnesota; and Vivid Image, Hutchinson, Minnesota. Ben Carlson recommended limiting the requests to four companies, and mentioned that the RFP should be specific about helping with branding, evaluation, audit of website, keeping the EDC involved and helping with post care. Samples of sites done by each company should be requested. Olson will send RFPs to RVTS, E*Tap Marketing; 8bitsstudio and Studio 544, which are both from Hutchinson, Minnesota.

Subcommittee Proposal. Olson proposed the formation of Marketing Subcommittees for four areas: social media, event and projects management, branding and websites. After discussion the committee decided these issues should be handled at the scheduled committee meetings with emails used as follow-up when necessary. If Olson needs additional help with the website, smaller groups may be formed if necessary.

The committee discussed an action plan for items needing review prior to the next meeting. Olson will correspond via email with a subject line that details the action item needing review by a specific date. Olson will reply with suggestions only to those who have provided feedback. If committee members have questions or concerns, or would prefer a discussion over an update on an item, they will provide that feedback to the EDC prior to the next meeting.

ACTION ITEMS—

EDC Folder for Loan Recipients. Olson presented a mock-up of the cover for the new loan application folders (see attached). Backman noted that geographically each community picture on the cover is located roughly where it is in the county. It was suggested to make the logo smaller, as the wave in the “E” of EDC makes it appear off center. The folders will be 8.5” x 11” with a brochure folder inside, as well as two slots for business cards. Inside the folder on the left the logo of the cities of Kandiyohi County will appear, however, if it is too small to be readable, a list the communities will be substituted. The choice of photos for Willmar and Raymond were discussed, and it was suggested the type on the folder’s back cover should be made bold. A final version will be sent to the committee, and when approved, the folder will move on to the printing phase.

Tri-Fold Marketing Piece. Suggestions for the tri-fold (see attached) were as follows:

- Add white borders around all of the pictures on the front of the brochure
- Fix the spacing in the “Our Focus” section
- Zoom in on the Preserve on 24th picture
- Eliminate the border around the airplane picture
- Under proudly serving these communities – add a line between Prinsburg and Raymond
- Research whether Roseland and Norway Lake should be listed as communities or townships
- Add a space to separate “24 Kandiyohi County Townships” from the communities and add an “&”

CVB Ad. Suggestions for the CVB ad (see attached) were as follows:

- Make some of the pictures larger to create focal points
- Use the standard font
- Wrap the Expanding, Growing, Building information in a blue box
- Add URLs to the LinkedIn and Facebook logos

U-Nique Ad. The Elevate ad (see attached) will appear in *U-Nique* magazine, a publication by the West Central Tribune that is targeted towards women. Carlson will supply a logo for Minnesota Employment and Economic Development that has the MN in black and white to make it more readable.

Rooted Magazine ad. Carlson commented to keep in mind that the Ethanol photo has been used frequently and recommended replacing it.

Impact Ad. Suggestions for the *Impact* ad (see attached) were as follows:

- Cities of Kandiyohi County logo on the bottom will be enlarged, if it is still hard to read the listing of the communities will be substituted
- Blue boxes on each photo need to be adjusted
- Use blue ink on the address and phone number
- Use colored version of LinkedIn and Facebook, add the URL for each

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, October 24, 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 1:33 p.m.

TO: Aaron Backman | Executive Director

FROM: Kelsey Olson | Marketing and Communication Specialist

DATE: 9.21.2022

RE: Annual Tourism Marketing Allocation to the Willmar Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)

On Monday, September 5, 2022, I met with Beth Fischer, Executive Director, of the Willmar Lakes Area CVB. The intent of this meeting was to learn about the history of the EDC and CVB relationship including the marketing allocation that the EDC gives to the CVB yearly.

During this meeting, I learned the history of the relationship between the CVB, the Tourism Committee, and the EDC. When the EDC was created in 2004 it inherited all committees developed by the Kandiyohi County Rural Development Finance Authority, which was started in 1990. It was determined in 2009 that the Tourism Committee and the CVB were duplicating efforts and it was decided that the CVB, which had expanded to represent the entire county beyond Willmar lodging facilities, would be of better service overseeing the Tourism Committee (later to evolve into the Leisure Travel Committee). The funding amount of the CVB for tourism marketing from the EDC varied from 2004 – 2010. In 2010 a dedicated allocation of \$34,000 was determined and has been set ever since. The CVB Tourism Partnership Agreement between the EDC and the CVB signed in 2011, has not been reviewed or reassessed in its 10 years of existence.

The recommendation from a marketing viewpoint is that the EDC should re-evaluate its financial support of the CVB. There are several reasons for this:

- The mission of the CVB (to promote and market the Willmar Lakes Area as a travel destination) is distinct from and does not fully encompass the mission of the EDC (to be a catalyst for economic growth of the greater Kandiyohi County area).
- Since the Agreement was signed, the EDC has provided over \$400,000 from our operating funds to support one sector (hospitality)—more than any other sector.
- The CVB currently receives roughly \$250,000 in lodging tax revenues generated by hotels in the county. It has become a self-sustaining entity with a full-time staff that can oversee the Leisure Travel Committee as part of that position.
- The CVB has successfully operated for over 14 years. It can operate without the allocation of EDC funds, including through a phase-out of the funds
- With the EDC having the use of the dedicated \$34,000 allocation, it would allow us to solidify and enhance our committee efforts, including agriculture, broadband, child care



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and marketing. This would assist us in meeting our 2022-2023 Strategic Priorities of Countywide Engagement and Advancing EDC Branding and Marketing Efforts.

- The EDC now has a full-time Marketing and Communication Specialist that can manage the EDC's marketing projects. The marketing allocation funds could be used to market Kandiyohi County as a whole, meet our goals and mission, and target our specific markets.

It would be of continued importance for the EDC to serve on the Leisure Travel Committee and support the efforts of the CVB. Continued partnership to promote Kandiyohi County and ensure all communities and townships are represented by both the EDC and CVB would be important for both entities. This was discussed and a potential plan is being considered for this partnership during the meeting between myself and Beth.

The EDC has been a strong supporter of the CVB. In addition to providing funds for marketing, the EDC through the county approved significant COVID financial assistance. I believe the CVB can continue to run efficiently and successfully with a phase-out of the EDC allocation.

There are many ways this phase-out could occur, but one possibility is a three-year phaseout that would reduce the \$34,000 allocation in the following manner: 2023 allocation of \$22,000, 2024 allocation of \$11,000 and zeroed out in 2025.

Thank you for the consideration of this recommendation that will support the Strategic Priorities and Mission of the EDC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelsey Olson".

Kelsey Olson
Marketing and Communications Specialist

Supporting Documents and Minutes for the Re-evaluation of the Marketing Allocation for the CVB from the EDC:

Prepared by Kelsey Olson, Marketing and Communications Specialist

The following are excerpts taken from meeting notes of the Joint Powers Board as it relates to CVB funding.:

April 9, 2009

Bollig stated Commissioners Richard Larson and Dean Shuck serve on the Tourism Committee and the CVB Board and are familiar with both entities. Bollig stated the purpose for the change is twofold: one, it appears EDC staff does not believe tourism fits under economic development, and second, streamlining and efficiency.

Hultgren instructed EDC staff to obtain legal opinions before the April meeting of the EDC Joint Powers Board. The inquiry was made on the relationship between the CVB and the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce (Chamber). Fischer indicated the CVB is a division of the Chamber, but it has a separate board of directors. Spaulding stated the budget process would be similar to the current process, the CVB would present its budget proposal just like other EDC committees. The EDC boards would approve the budget and work plan and the CVB would manage it with regular reports to the EDC.

April 23, 2009

Board members shared concerns that all items, organizations, and events within Kandiyohi County be included and also that the name is revisited as some do not believe "Willmar Lakes Area" encompasses all of Kandiyohi County.

Madsen expressed concern that perception is reality and the public must be educated that the CVB is its own entity and not under the umbrella of the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce (WLACC). Madsen would like to see an organizational chart of the new partnership.

Renquist stated after consultation with Attorney Dean Anderson, a proposed agreement was prepared (see copy attached). Attorney Anderson told Renquist and Spaulding that the EDC can transfer funds to another organization as long as the organization the funds are transferred to has the same mission and usage for the funds.

Falk expressed his interest in an additional clause to allow for a cancellation 90 days before the next year in the event things are not going as planned. Ruff suggested a phrase be included that if the organization does not fulfill the intent of the transfer of EDC tourism funds, the funds would be refunded. Spaulding noted the majority of tourism expenditures occur within the first quarter/half of the year.

It was suggested the CVB look at a different structure possibly away from the WLACC; how it is presented and packaged is crucial to selling the concept to the community.

October 20, 2013

The CVB has three target markets: meetings and conventions, sports, and leisure travel.

The following comments were made following Fischer's presentation:

The CVB has expanded to outside Willmar and includes Spicer lodging and Kandiyohi County Parks.

[The EDC is] throwing money after a specific type of business that gives us a lower return on our money; not giving return on money for industrial growth.

All revenue should come from the lodging facilities and not the taxpayer.

Identified Issues:

- It was brought up in 2009 that the title of "Wilmar Lakes Area" does not represent greater Kandiyohi County.

-Efforts to prove the CVB was expanding outside of Willmar reflect only a small portion of the county in the 2013 notes. The main publication at this time, the lodging and dining map focuses' almost completely on Willmar opportunities.

-Legal counsel stated we could only transfer funds to organizations that have the same mission as us. The mission of the EDC and the mission of the CVB are not the same. In addition, the target markets of the CVB do not correlate with the target audiences of the EDC.

-Part of the agreement is that the EDC would receive annual reports including line-item budget reports and goals, we have not received this report over the last few years

-The EDC would be approving the CVB budget per the allocated fund's usage, we have not received this report over the last few years.

**Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC
Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
Tourism Partnership Agreement
April 23, 2009**

The Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC Joint Powers Board of Directors and the Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors acknowledge and agree that due to the common missions of the EDC Tourism Committee and the WLACVB along with the joint marketing partnerships that are currently in place, that a partnership agreement be formed for the implementation of Tourism Committee work plan under the guidance of the Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The terms of the agreement are as follows:

1. WLACVB Director, along with the Tourism Committee, shall prepare an annual budget request to be presented to the Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC during the budget planning session (held in June of each year). The budget request shall outline the line-item tourism related expenses represented in the budget and how it relates to the WLACVB overall budget.
2. The WLACVB shall prepare an annual work plan outlining tourism related goals to be submitted with the budget request.
3. The WLACVB shall provide annually a year-end goals and budget report to the EDC Board of Directors.
4. The Kandiyohi County & Willmar EDC Joint Powers Board shall recommend an appointment to serve on the WLACVB Board of Directors.
5. The Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC shall transfer to the City of Willmar the annual expenditure allocated within the budget in January of the calendar year.
 - a. \$36,050 – 2009 (unexpended balance at time of agreement)
 - b. \$34,000 – 2010
 - c. \$34,000 – 2011

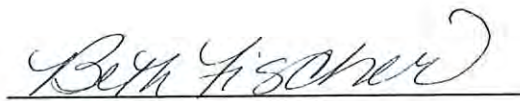
The terms of the partnership agreement may be amended as necessary with the notice and approval by both the Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC Joint Powers Board and the Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors.

The agreement will continue year-to-year and may be terminated by either Board with advance written notification identifying intent and reasons for the termination prior to September 30th of the year preceding the partnership termination.

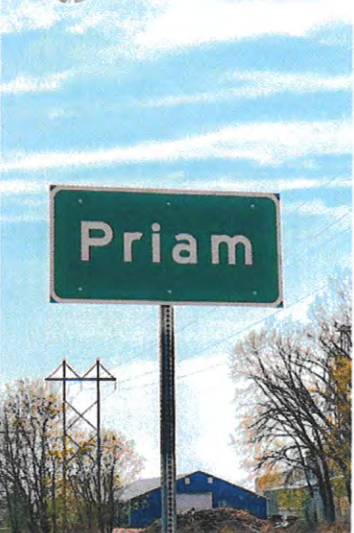
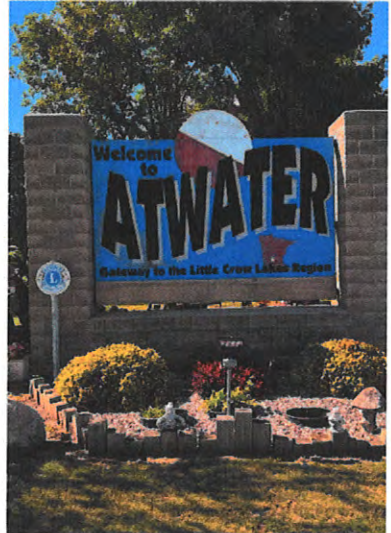
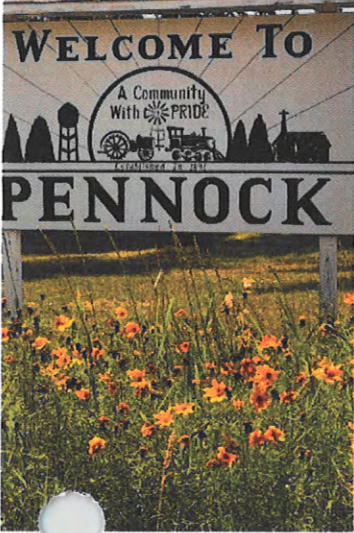
Approved this date: April 23, 2009



Ron Christianson
Chairperson
Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC

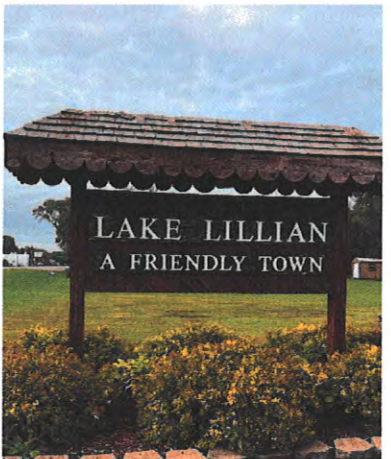
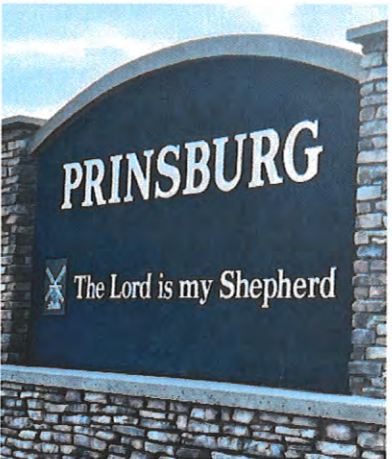


Beth Fischer
Executive Director
Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



EDC

Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar
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Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission
222 20th St. SE
Willmar, MN 56201
866.655.4556 | 320.235.7370
edc@kandiyohi.com | www.kandiyohi.com





The EDC provides essential leadership in several community focused areas:

- 

Building relationships with site selectors and developers interested in investing in projects
- 

Promoting the development of new industry and agricultural innovations
- 

Expanding business in the "shovel-ready" certified Willmar Industrial Park
- 

Assisting in the creation and retention of new and existing housing and workforce development in Kandiyohi County
- 

Effecting the expansion of broadband internet accessibility throughout Kandiyohi County
- 

Demonstrating leadership in the Highway 23 Coalition efforts to expand transportation
- 

Providing opportunities for entrepreneurs through the Elevate Community Business Academy (www.elevatecba.com)



Aaron Backman

Economic Development Director

aaron@kandiyohi.com



Sarah Swedburg

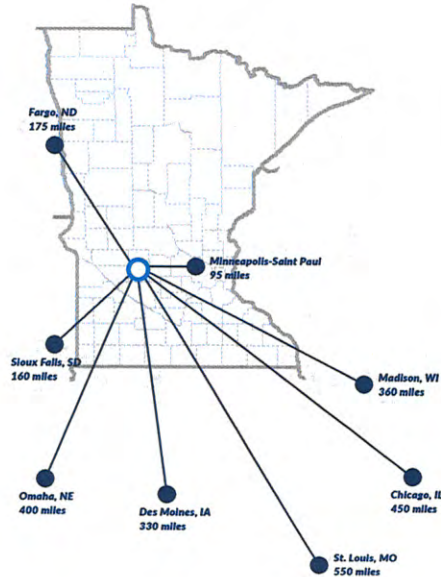
Business Development Manager

sarah@kandiyohi.com

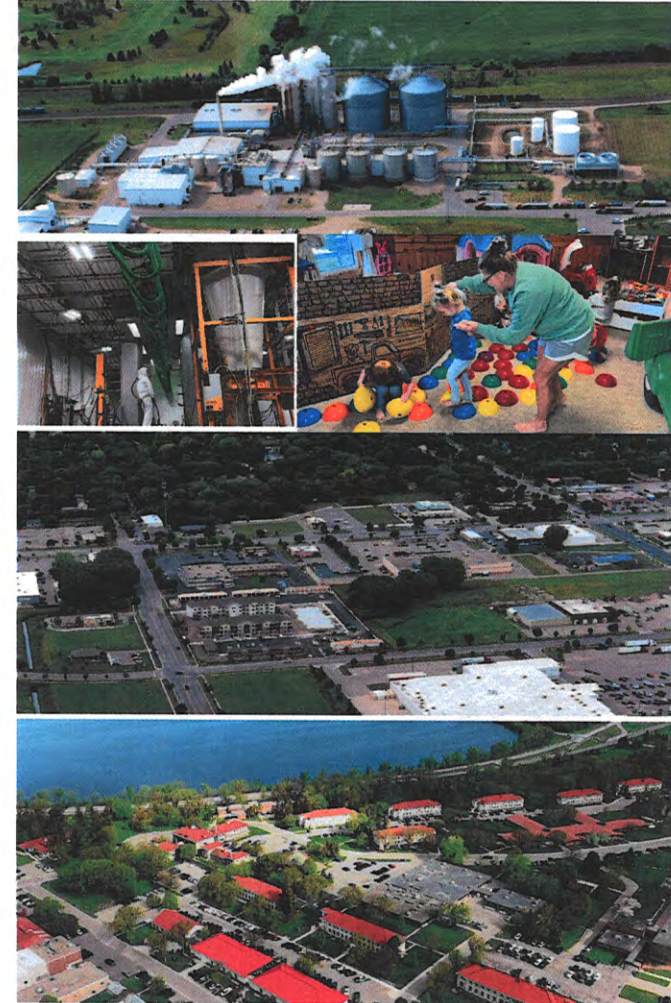
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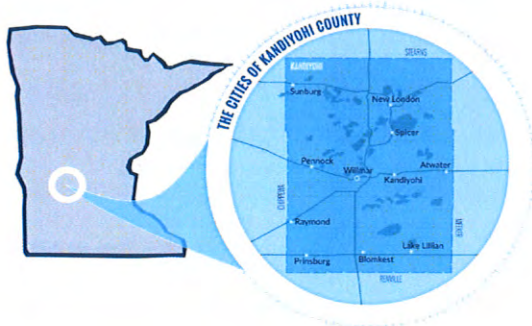
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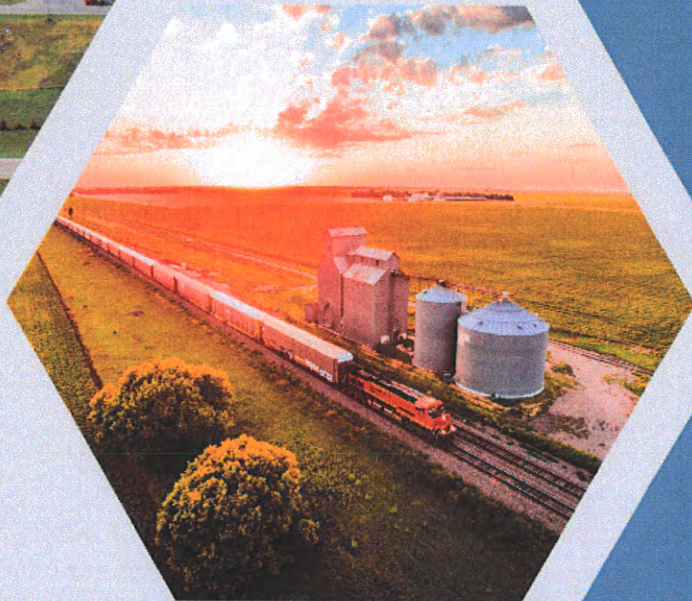
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Explore manufacturing in West Central Minnesota throughout October;

- Oct. 3-7: Kandiyohi County
- Oct. 10-14: McLeod County
- Oct. 17-21: Renville County
- Oct. 24-28: Meeker County

Follow our social media and #MnManufacturingMonth

All Aboard the Willmar WYE
A Ribbon Cutting & Train Ride Event



EDC
Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

BNSF
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m
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TRANSPORTATION

25 OCTOBER 2022 • 10:30 AM - 1:00 PM •



Here is a preview to the Fall Newsletter. Links to articles are not functioning yet. Thank you!

Fall 2022 Newsletter

October 2022 | Issue 10



Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Workforce Makes the Economic World Go Round

Workforce Support | Celebrating Manufacturing Month Childcare | Broadband

These are a few of the workforce 'buckets' we have been working in over the last quarter. Read just what we have been working on.



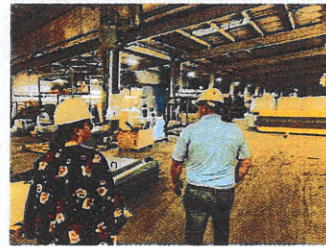
September was Workforce Development Month which honored workforce leaders.

In this issue we will learn more about how Brunswick's creative and adaptive hiring has helped it reach a new level of success as a new employer in Willmar.



Good Gracious Grants! Childcare & Broadband Internet

What could federal and state grants mean for access to these two items and how do these two things affect the workforce? Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager, shines some light on this question.



October is Minnesota Manufacturing Month.

Several manufacturers have opened their doors to us over the last month. During the tours, we met some great employees who were willing to share with us why they love their jobs.

What it means to be an Innovative Employer

Brunswick Manufacturing, the producer of Lunds and Crestliner boats, is based out of New York Mills. But after working with a local temp agency, Ag Jobs, and attending the Workforce Solutions Summit the EDC hosted in January, they discovered a talented, untapped workforce in the area.



We sat down with Veronica Garcia, HR Director of Brunswick, Supervisor George [?] and owner of Ag Jobs, Solang [?] to hear about how hiring multi-lingual leadership has created a sturdy workforce and happy employees.

[Read the Full Article to Be Creatively Inspired](#)

"Having access can open doors"

This was Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager, a matter-of-fact answer when asked just how to do high-speed broadband internet and childcare access support a successful and sustainable workforce in Kandiyohi County.

Both issues have been on the hot plate at the EDC in recent months with state and federal grants offering significant financial support.

Below citizens gather together to learn more about the USDA ReConnect grant (left) and a Kandiyohi County childcare provider works with her group of children (right).

[Read Sarah's Update Here](#)



Minnesota Manufacturing Month

Over the last few months, we were able to tour several manufacturers in Kandiyohi County. We'd like to thank the following businesses for opening their doors to us and local school groups as part of the month-long celebration this October.

Follow our social media to see highlights of our visits to each of these industry leaders.

West Central Steel - Willmar
Brunswick - Willmar
Dahmes Stainless - New London
Rambow - New London
Hanson Silo - Lake Lillian



Employer: Rambow |
New London

Employee Name: Bev & Joan
(aka the Thelma & Louis of
Rambow)

Years of Service:
Bev - 18 years
Joan- 32 years

Job Position:

Story:

Joan was a busy mother of 4. As circumstance would have it she needed to find a job. She answered the call for a 'commercial industrial sewing machine operator' and was fascinated. She has been ever since. Joan watched the company grow- was fundamental in that growth actually. And 18 years ago, over making a meal at church- Bev making the corn and Joan making the gravy they both recall- she



Employer: Dahmes Stainless
|
New London

Employee Name:

Years of Service:

Job Position:

Story:

What makes Dahmes
Stainless a great place to
work?



Employer: Ag Jobs working for
Brunswick | Willmar

Employee Name: David

Months of Service: 5

Job Position: Team Lead

Story:

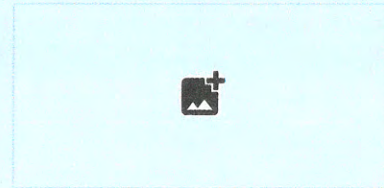
David moved to Minnesota from Florida 2 years ago. For two months he traveled to the company base in New York Mills for a full week at a time to trained for the position. It wasn't easy being away from his family, including a new baby. But the sacrifice was worth it- everyone at Brunswick works together like family.

What makes Brunswick a great
place to work?

"This is the first job I feel - I
want to come here"

proposed her friend come and work at Rambow. Both have found a career- and friendship working here.

What makes Rambow a great place to work? "We [Rambow] is a work in progress. There is always something new. It makes it hard to walk away" both Bev and Joan Agreed



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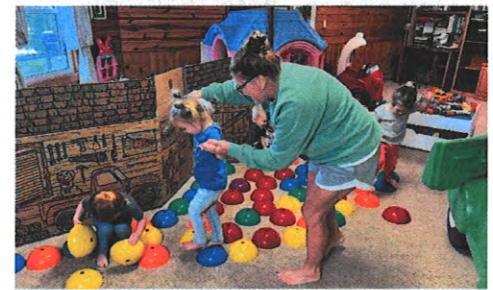
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Elevate is a free 12-week course
 on business education



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