

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)**

MINUTES

October 19, 2023

Community Room, Heritage Bank, N.A., Willmar and Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Abdulcadir Gaal, Jesse Gislason, Les Heitke and Mary Warszynski

Excused: Art Benson, Steve Gardner, Noah Hultgren and Kelly TerWisscha

Guests: Tanna Stucky, UCAP/EDC Child Care Community Coordinator and Leslie Valiant, Willmar City Administrator

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director; Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager; and Kelsey Olson, Marketing & Communications Specialist (via Zoom)

Media: Jennifer Kotila, West Central Tribune

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Tanna Stucky, the new Child Care Community Coordinator for United Community Action Partnership, Inc. (UCAP) and the EDC was introduced followed by self introductions. Vice President Jesse Gislason called the meeting to order at approximately 11:19 a.m. and announced a quorum was present.

AGENDA—There were no changes to the Agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

IT WAS MOVED BY Jesse Gislason, SECONDED BY Mary Warszynski, to approve the following Consent Agenda.

- Approve:**
1. Minutes of September 14, 2023
 2. Financial reports as of September 30, 2023
 3. Payment of the following:
 - a. Invoice No. 0152513 from NuVantage Employee Resource in the amount of \$4,416 from childcare grant funds
 - b. Invoice No. 887.01-01 from Engan Associates in the amount of \$2,503 from childcare grant funds
 - c. Invoice from Bonnema Runke Stern Inc. in the amount of \$10,974.34 to be reimbursed by the City of Willmar for BNSF Railway certification of the Willmar Industrial Park
 4. Childcare Forgivable Loan to Sarah Minnick in the amount of \$2,039.48 to be paid from childcare grant funds

5. Addition of Erik Hatlestad to the Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development Committee

Accept: Committee/Subcommittee Minutes

1. Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development 8/17/2023
2. Broadband and Advanced Technology 9/11/2023
3. Finance 8/8/2023
4. Marketing and Public Relations 8/28 and 9/5/2023
5. Leisure Travel 6/5/2023

MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—There was no unfinished business.

[The agenda was taken out of order.]

REPORTS

Economic Development Activity. Aaron Backman reported the sale to MB Rail closed on September 6th. At the October 16th Willmar City Council meeting, the Council unanimously voted in favor of a sale to Duinick Concrete of 13.67 acres of land northeast of MB Rail and northwest of FedEx in the Willmar Industrial Park at \$9,000 per acre. Duinick Concrete will first build a ready-mix plant. Long-term, it will build Duinick Concrete Construction Supply and a new corporate office. The project was presented to the Planning Commission on October 5 and was unanimously recommended for approval. A public hearing on the project will be held November 6 to introduce the sale ordinance. Backman described the project, which was discussed by the board.

Leslie Valiant announced the hiring of a Director of Planning & Development for the City of Willmar, Christopher Corbett, who will begin November 20th. The City of Willmar is also in the process of interviewing for a planner.

Backman reported he is preparing a project proposal that is due Friday morning. The Lakeland Drive housing project is moving along. The first building will be multi-family with 72 units and underground parking. Kuepers, Inc. has put up erosion control and will start sitework south of Walmart for two buildings of 36 units each. Trident continues to look at sites in Willmar and is currently negotiating with a private owner. Farm-Rite Equipment's project will be more than \$4 million. Nova-Tech Engineering laid off 10% of its staff. A one acre parcel east of the EDC office was sold by Marcus Real Estate & Investment to Gary Hendrickx, who owns Subway franchises. Plans are to move his Highway 12 Subway to this new location and be operational by September 2024. Backman has had discussions with a potential buyer of the Highway 12 Burger King.

NEW BUSINESS

EDC Office Location. Sarah Swedburg reported EDC staff has looked at and is considering two locations for relocating the EDC office, Heritage Bank and Apple Tree Square. Barbara Marks of

Engan Associates has been facilitating discussions and prepared a comparison of the two sites, which the board reviewed (see attached). Staff and board chairs met with Marks on office space needs. EDC staff is exploring shared office space with entities that have a similar focus. Discussion was held on shared conference and educational spaces. Owners of both locations are willing to remodel, have storage space and have more space available, if needed. Marks has walked through both locations. Each location works with a particular construction company, both of which have time in their schedules to work on a project this winter. The EDC's current lease expires November 2024, but plans would be to move in September 2024. Costs for leasehold improvements are unknown at this time; a ten-year lease will be considered. Next week, Marks will give a presentation to the EDC Joint Powers Board. Backman informed the Elks that the EDC may not renew its lease. The surveys done by board members as to space needs will be given to Marks. It was noted the educational/boardroom space at Apple Tree Square would have a separate entrance.

EDC Rebranding. Backman noted the EDC has been exploring rebranding and using a trade name. The EDC's legal name will remain the same. Olson noted a proposed organizational name and new logo have been discussed over the past year, but was paused once the City of Willmar started considering a new logo. Work was done with stakeholders and personas of EDC users were developed. Meetings included representatives from the cities of Atwater, Raymond and Willmar, townships and larger community organizations. From the meetings, it was determined a regional identifier is important and the regional identifier in the case of the EDC is Kandiyohi County. Olson noted that having the City of Willmar in the EDC's name feels exclusive to those outside Willmar. It was determined the term economic development was important. Proposed names that were identified are Prosper Kandiyohi County, Prosper Economic Development and Kandiyohi County Economic Development. Prosper came out of the first meeting held with board and community members. Gislason noted the Marketing and Public Relations Committee was mostly in favor of the third name, Kandiyohi County Economic Development. Olson noted the third name would be a smoother transition; the Marketing and Public Relations Committee liked the simplicity and familiarity of it. Olson indicated the third option is simpler and would help in being more marketable. Valiant noted she and Kyle Box are not in favor of dropping Willmar from the EDC's name and suggested the Willmar City Council may not be in favor as well. Valiant noted this area has difficulty in identifiers. Olson noted that using Prosper would remove any location identification, but the logo would reflect the locality. It was suggested to have possible logo designs available at the next board meeting. Valiant indicated a badge could be created and individualized by each community. Gislason noted the board's opinions will be presented to the Marketing and Public Relations Committee, which will discuss further direction.

REPORTS CONTINUED

Elevate Community Business Academy. Swedburg reported the current class has 16 students and is in its sixth week. One student is just north of Kandiyohi County's border, but she works in Willmar and her clientele will come mainly from Kandiyohi County. Graduation will be held 6 p.m., December 15 at Ridgewater College. A meal will be served and RSVPs will be required. Swedburg will be in New Jersey at Rising Tide Capital next week for the annual partner summit. Last week Elevate was highlighted in Rising Tide Capital's newsletter. She submitted a Small Business

Development Grant application, but has not heard the status. More than \$1 million has been borrowed by graduates.

GRANTS

Child Care Economic Development Grant. The partnership with UCAP has been the newest and biggest event. Stucky reported she is looking for additional funds for once the state grant is completed. She is currently working on the provider mentorship program; will facilitate revamping the Rural Child Care Innovation Program; and is working with several new daycare centers and providers. The state child care grant ends at year-end.

Main Street Economic Revitalization Program. Swedburg reported some projects are moving forward, but they are still waiting for the state. There were 35-38 projects funded and the total grant of \$744,000 was used. Approximately \$20,000 was moved from administrative expenses to grants. The EDC will receive a small portion of grant funds for administration.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Broadband and Advanced Technology. Swedburg reported the state opened the fall 2023 Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant. The EDC is pursuing two or three projects in six townships for the grant. In anticipation of the grant opening, the committee held meetings with townships. Projects are moving along well. More than \$6.3 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds has been allocated in the county for broadband.

Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment. Backman reported an in-person job fair was held September 28 at Ridgewater College. There was good participation by employers with 34 attending; he would have liked to see more attendees. He noted a significant number of students are no longer on campus, which could affect attendance. Warszynski believes more people are seeking employment online and one in-person job fair held in the fall would be enough.

Finance. The committee did not meet this month, but Swedburg is working with a couple of Elevate graduates, who may seek funding. She noted To the Moon and Back, an Asian food truck based out of Atwater, has been very active. Its first large event was the Little Falls Craft Show.

Marketing and Public Relations. Olson reported she worked with Redwood Valley Technical Solutions on personas and how design of the website will be developed. A revised site map for the website was done. The EDC was a sponsor of Minnesota Manufacturing Month in the virtual magazine by Central Minnesota Manufacturers Association. The EDC hosted its last virtual career fair, which focused on manufacturing. Invites were sent to more than 6,000 contacts and 7 people attended. She worked with Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, City of Willmar and CLUES (Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio) to promote Hispanic Heritage Month with a Latino Resource Fair. The EDC, in partnership with Willmar Main Street, applied for a grant through Southwest Initiative Foundation to develop a video. A fall newsletter was sent and featured immigrant entrepreneurs. Childcare may be featured in the next EDC newsletter.

Leisure Travel. Olson reported Leisure Travel did not meet in October, but she will be meeting with Beth Fischer next week.

WHAT'S UP?

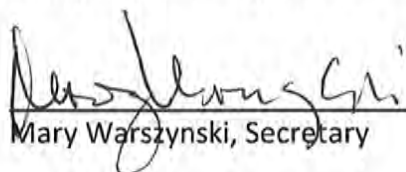
- Heitke recommended the MinnWest Technology Campus be monitored for business, for example Nova Tech lay-offs. He reported a new business, Blue Ox Moving, expanded into Willmar and is located near Sunray. The owner, Jake Sobiak, is a Willmar graduate and was recently named the top entrepreneur by Bemidji.
- Gaal visited Duluth for the first time on business. He enjoyed the new benches done by the City of Willmar.
- Backman noted the New London Food Co-op has been working on its location and plans to open in November.
- Gislason reported they just added onto Alley on Ash and will add a dishwasher to the kitchen so walls will need to be moved.
- Swedburg has been helping paint at the New London Food Co-op.
- Warszynski noted there is new siding being installed on a house on east Highway 12 and one is for sale. She is looking for a buyer for her business, Employment Plus.
- Stucky has been attending a lot of conferences and will attend one through this weekend in St. Cloud as well.
- Valiant noted the City of Willmar is working on rebranding and she attended the 2023 International City/County Management Association Annual Conference in Texas, which was attended by approximately 5,500 people. A video of Willmar was done for the conference and will be posted on the city's website.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no other business,

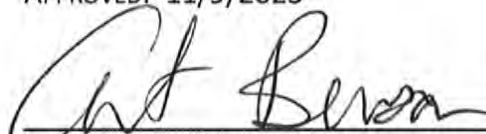
IT WAS MOVED BY Mary Warszynski, SECONDED BY Jesse Gislason, to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:17 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is 11:00 a.m., Thursday, November 9, 2023 at the Community Room of Heritage Bank, Willmar.


Mary Warszynski, Secretary

APPROVED: 11/9/2023


Art Benson, President



PROGRAM OF NEEDS

	APPLETREE SQUARE LOCATION	HERITAGE BANK LOCATION	RANK OF IMPORTANCE (1)LOW - (3)HIGH	COMMENTS/NOTES
I. SUMMARY COMMENTS				
II. CIVIC BENEFIT				
Perception	on the highway	a part of downtown		
Partnership Opportunites	near LSS and WACF	near financial institution and legal guidance		
Staff Disruption				
Public Disruption				
Historic Significance	none	none		
III. LOCATION				
Address	1601 E Highway 12	320 1st Street SW		
Neighborhood	East Highway 12	Downtown		
Near arterial road	yes	yes		
Accessibility	off of parking lot	off parking lot or city street		
Visibility	space located at buidling "front"	space located at building "rear"		
Expansion opportunities	if another suite is taken over	within suite		
Deliveries	secondary entrance available	secondary entrance available		
Off street parking available	48,000 sf + shared	47,882 sf + shared		
On street parking acailable	no	yes		
IV. BUILDING ELEMENTS				
Square feet available	2,840	3,665		
Layout of available space				
Education opportunities	yes, but shared with conference	yes, could be it's own space		
Conference opportunities	yes, but shared with education	yes		
Huddle opportunities	yes	yes		
Office opportunities	yes	yes		
Storage opportunities	limited-en suite	yes- en suite		
Building envelope	newer renovation	newer renovation		
Interiors and finishes	willing to remodel	willing to remodel		
Buidling systems				
	Structure			

APPLETREE SQUARE LOCATION		HERITAGE BANK LOCATION	RANK OF IMPORTANCE (1)LOW - (3)HIGH	COMMENTS/NOTES
	Mechanical			
	Electrical			
ADA				
Wayfinding	enter directly into suite	could enter into suite or hallway		
Anonymity	Front and back	Shared entry or individual front and back are a possibility		
Safety/security				
Exterior views	parking lot-retail and service businesses, highway, landscaping at entry	parking lot-healthcare, financial and service businesses. 1st street. landscape at entry		
Natural Light	south only	south and west		
Restroom en suite	yes	yes		
Internal expansion	no	yes		
Separate staff and public entry available	yes	yes		
III. MARKETING/IMAGE				
Sense of arrival	yes, shared impression	yes, shared impression		
Appearance	"current"	current but "back" of building		
Modification to exterior likely/possible	likely no change on exterior beyond signage	change at exterior appears possible		
Current exterior images				
III. COST				
Leasing fees				
Renovation cost				
Parking				

Joint Operations Board 10.19.2023

Agenda Item: New Business 2. Rebranding

Through community conversations with stakeholders, three new names have been proposed. They include:

1. Prosper Kandiyohi County
2. Prosper Economic Development
3. Kandiyohi County Economic Development.

Considerations include:

- A regional identifier. A logo with a Minnesota/Kandiyohi County/City of Willmar as the county hub identifier could be included in a name without a regional reference.
- Stakeholders reported that 'Economic Development' was important
- The inclusion of Kandiyohi County created inclusion