

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**DOING BUSINESS AS KANDIYOHI COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (KCED)**  
**JOINT POWERS BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING**  
**MINUTES**  
**June 10, 2024**  
**EDC Board Room, Willmar**

Present: Julie Asmus, Corky Berg, Vicki Davis, Steve Gardner, Roger Imdieke and Doug Reese

Guest: Liza Donabauer of DDA Human Resources, Inc.

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

Chairperson Steve Gardner called the meeting to order at approximately 11:10 p.m., declared a quorum was present and closed the meeting pursuant to Minn. Stat. Chapter 13D to review information on the semifinalists for the Executive Director position.

**Executive Director Search.** Liza Donabauer of DDA Human Resources, Inc. informed the board there were 14 applicants of which 5 were selected as semifinalists. One semifinalist withdrew their application as they accepted another position so four will be discussed today. The goal is to determine how many applicants to interview and who to interview.

Board members provided their rankings of the four semifinalists according to the Finalist Selection Guide provided by Donabauer. Donabauer summarized the rankings: Candidate 1 had the least number of votes; candidate 2 received a vote from everyone; and candidates 3 and 4 each had 4 votes. The board discussed each of the semifinalists, their work history, qualifications, experience and overall impressions and determined candidate 1 was not a good fit. Donabauer noted, in general, her firm is not finding candidates with a depth of experience.

Donabauer noted she has specific questions she asks of the applicant as to their role and responsibility, leadership style, what would employees say about their leadership style, their strengths, what could they improve upon, why did they leave previous positions, why are they interested in the current position, she asks for contact information for current and former supervisors—someone who will be frank in responding to questions. It was questioned if Aaron Backman could review the applicants and provide his ranking. Both Donabauer and Nancy Birkeland stated Backman wants to remain removed from any further involvement in the hiring process. Donabauer informed the board she did receive an application from a qualified individual after the position closed. That individual would not be able to move into the area for personal reasons, but is already commuting for their current position. The board discussed whether or not to reopen the position. Donabauer indicated if the position was reopened, she would extend a personal invitation to the semifinalists to reapply, along with the new individual. It was the consensus of the board to move forward with candidates 2, 3 and 4 and to have the new individual complete the same information as the semifinalists by Wednesday, but the board will not rank that individual. Once the new individual's information is received, the board will hold a special closed meeting via Zoom. Donabauer stated she will get started on the background checks today as she leaves for vacation on Wednesday and does not return until late July 1<sup>st</sup>. She noted if red flags are found she follows up with the applicant.

Interviews will take place on July 8<sup>th</sup> at the Willmar Conference Center. Discussion was held on the format of the day.

The following schedule was determined:

July 8, 2024 at the Willmar Conference Center

- 8:00-9:30 a.m. A meet and greet will be held in Galleries 1 and 2 with the Joint Operations Board, community representatives, community stakeholders and nonprofits, such as United Community Action Partnership and the Willmar Area Community Foundation. Coffee, juice, muffins, rolls and fruit will be served. The board will identify the individuals to invite to the meet and greet. Roger Imdieke volunteered to ask County Commissioners Dale Anderson and Duane Anderson to identify community representatives/stakeholders in their districts. As guests arrive, Donabauer stated she will greet them at the door, points out the finalists and gives each guest a feedback form to complete. The guests will be asked to give a 30 second introduction, including their name, organization they represent and what is important to them relating to economic development. The candidates could each be given a few minutes to tell about themselves, but will then be in the four corners of the room allowing for a freeflow of conversation between them and the guests. The feedback forms will be collected for Donabauer, who will summarize them for the board during the deliberation following the interviews.
- 9:30-11:30 a.m. A bus tour that encompasses the county will take place for approximately 20 people. The board will personally invite individuals to participate. Michelle Marotzke will be asked to lead the tour and request stakeholders on the bus to add information for their area of the tour. Backman will be asked to assist Marotzke with the highlights that should be shown.
- 12:00-1:00 p.m. Lunch with the Joint Powers Board, staff and Birkeland will be held in a separate gallery.
- 1:00 p.m. Donabauer will meet with board to outline the interview time as to what can be asked, etc.
- 1:15 p.m. First finalist will be interviewed. Interviews are open to the public and will be held in Galleries 1 and 2. Donabauer indicated she generally schedules the individual who lives the furthest away as the first interview. Finalists will be given the opportunity to give a 5 minute presentation followed by 45 minutes of questions by the board. There will be five minutes between interviews. Candidates are not expected to stay after their interview is done.
- 2:10 p.m. Second interview
- 3:15 p.m. Third interview
- 4:20 p.m. Fourth interview
- 5:10 p.m. After the final interview, Donabauer will relay feedback from the meet and greet, followed by discussion and deliberation by the board. The board will be asked to share their top candidate and possibly their close second.

Discussion was held as to whether or not staff should have individual time with the candidates during the interviews and fill out the same feedback from as the meet and greet.

It was the consensus of the board to allow the candidates to stay at a local hotel the night before the interviews, if requested, at a cost of up to \$200 plus reimbursement of mileage.

Donabauer invited the board and staff to send her any questions they would like included for the interviews.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no other business,

IT WAS MOVED BY Corky Berg, SECONDED BY Steve Gardner, to adjourn the meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:07 p.m.

**NEXT MEETINGS—**

1. Interview finalists on July 8, 2024 at the Willmar Conference Center
2. Next regular board meeting is **11:30 a.m., Thursday, July 25, 2024** at the EDC Board Room and via ZOOM video conference

  
Julie Asmus, Secretary

APPROVED: 7/25/2024:

  
Steve Gardner, Chairperson