

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
DOING BUSINESS AS KANDIYOHI COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (KCED)  
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD**

**MINUTES**

**August 8, 2024**

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

- Present: Art Benson, Jesse Gislason, Les Heitke (via Zoom), Noah Hultgren and Mary Warszynski
- Excused: Abdulcadir Gaal and Veronica Garcia
- Guests: Corky Berg, Joint Powers Board Liaison; and Beth Fischer, Executive Director, Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB)
- Staff: Patrick O'Rourke, Executive Director; Michelle Marotzke, Business Development Manager; and Kelsey Olson, Marketing & Communications Specialist (via Zoom)
- Media: Levi Jones, West Central Tribune
- Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

President Jesse Gislason called the meeting to order at approximately 11:03 a.m. and announced a quorum was present.

**INTRODUCE/WELCOME NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**—President Gislason introduced the KCED's new Executive Director, Patrick O'Rourke, followed by self introductions.

**PRESENTATION BY WILLMAR LAKES AREA CVB**—President Gislason introduced Beth Fischer, Executive Director of the Willmar Lakes Area CVB. Fischer gave a PowerPoint presentation (see attached) on tourism in Kandiyohi County and the work of the CVB Leisure Travel Committee. The KCED financially supports the marketing done by the CVB. The top outdoor recreation locations are: 1) Robbins Island, 2) Middle Fork Crow River, 3) Green Lake, 4) Sibley State Park, and 5) Diamond Lake. The top percent of visitor spending is food—first is grocery stores, second is fast food and third is restaurants. As to the collection of lodging tax, Fischer stated the airbnbs located in the cities of Willmar and Spicer should technically collect the lodging tax for the CVB, but the government entities need to collect the tax and enforce its collection. Some airbnbs outside those two communities voluntarily submit the lodging tax. Spicer is working to add the airbnbs to its ordinance. Leslie Valiant noted the city of Willmar has not adopted anything formal as to airbnbs. The CVB uses Zartico to track visitors from their cell phones and from credit card spending. Fischer noted there may be several ways the CVB can partner with the KCED for marketing and she has spoken with Marotzke and Kelsey Olson in this regard.

[Fischer was excused from the meeting.]

**AGENDA**—Added to the Agenda under New Business as item 3 was to amend the 2024 budget.

IT WAS MOVED BY Art Benson, SECONDED BY Mary Warszynski, to approve the revised Agenda and the following Consent Agenda.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- Approve: 1. Minutes of July 11, 2024  
2. Financial reports as of July 31, 2024
- Accept: Committee/Subcommittee Minutes
1. Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development 6/20/2024
  2. Broadband and Advanced Technology 6/3/2024
  3. Marketing and Public Relations 6/24/2024

MOTION CARRIED.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**—There was no unfinished business.

**NEW BUSINESS**—

**Staff health insurance coverage.** O'Rourke noted he has good health insurance coverage and does not need coverage from the KCED's policy; however, the KCED must have two employees enrolled to have group coverage. The current monthly payment for health coverage for two staff is \$2,175.02 (Marotzke \$788.48/Backman \$1,386.54, which O'Rourke believes would be close to his premium) plus \$12.80 for vision coverage. O'Rourke suggested allotting \$600 per full-time employee and 80% (or \$480) for the 32 hour employee, which would result in a savings of \$507.82 per month. Olson is currently covered under her husband's insurance. Marotzke informed the board that when she took her position with the KCED, she lost health insurance coverage for her spouse and the ability to accrue comp time. Her husband is now enrolled with Christian Healthcare Ministries, a cost-sharing medical expense program, which is not health insurance. Olson noted the reason she changed to be covered under her husband's insurance is the KCED only offers single coverage not family. Benson noted the KCED is a small business and must be compared against other like-size businesses. O'Rourke stated he received \$10,000 per year for health insurance through his last employer, a small startup, nonprofit organization. It may be possible for the KCED's employees to be covered by Kandiyohi County or the City of Willmar's insurance as they have been in the past. O'Rourke attempted to call Bill Chukuske of National Insurance Services, the KCED's local insurance representative, but was unsuccessful. Les Heitke provided information on past coverage. The board felt more discussion is needed and possibly with Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar, but the ultimate decision is by the Joint Powers Board. O'Rourke will collect more information before the next board meeting.

**Revolving Loan Fund deferral.** Marotzke presented information on a borrower, who is requesting a three-month deferral of loan payments. The request will be presented to the Finance Committee next week.

IT WAS MOVED BY Art Benson, SECONDED BY Mary Warszynski, to approve a three-month deferral of loan payments by Wings Gymnastics, LLC, subject to review and approval by the Kandiyohi County Economic Development Finance Committee. MOTION CARRIED.

**Amend 2024 budget.** Marotzke informed the board that funds are being collected from other entities to assist childcare providers and it is proposed that a new line, Childcare Collaborative Solutions Pool, be added under Revenues/Grants and Collaborative Solutions be added under Expenses/Business Retention and Expansion/Childcare Initiative/Subgrants. Marotzke noted there are a few partners willing to contribute such funds. The collection of funds from other partners started with a request from a childcare provider for a specific need that would allow her to continue her childcare business.

IT WAS MOVED BY Art Benson, SECONDED BY Noah Hultgren, to approve adding Childcare Collaborative Solutions Pool, to the Kandiyohi County Economic Development 2024 budget under Revenues/Grants and adding Collaborative Solutions under Expenses/Business Retention and Expansion/Childcare Initiative/Subgrants. MOTION CARRIED.

## REPORTS

**Office Relocation Update.** Marotzke spoke with Dion Warne, who informed her the flooring is being installed this week. Street signage and on the building will be erected the week of August 26; and Innovative Office Solutions will move in the new furniture next week. This afternoon Marotzke and Nancy Birkeland will meet with Ryan Zimmer of Advanced Ministry Technologies on placement of the TV screens in the meeting area. Staff will need to decide on a date for moving the entire office.

**Economic Development Activity.** Valiant distributed a flyer on the Willmar Comprehensive Plan ([see](#) attached). The city is hosting several workshops on the plan throughout August. Eleven individuals make up the focus group for the plan. Information on the plan is on the city's website, including an online survey. The city hopes to have a draft of the new plan ready by late fall, including a land use map. The city had a booth at Rockin' Robbins on the Comprehensive Plan and the new Hometown Fiber broadband service and received great feedback from attendees. The use agreement between the city and Hometown Fiber was approved and Hometown Fiber will be able to enter into discussions with independent ISPs. The city issued 68 building permits in July totaling \$454,489. There have been 404 permits issued in 2024 with a value of \$47,442,188. New banners will be installed downtown, including banners in five different languages. Rendezvous Axe Throwing is now open at its location on Litchfield Avenue. Clean Chickens and its Halal slaughterhouse is moving forward; it hopes to close before Labor Day and 6<sup>th</sup> Street Logistics is hoping to expand into the Willmar Industrial Park. Valiant gave an update on last night's train derailment, which was not serious. It occurred on the east side of Lakeland Drive, four tanker cars

tipped on their sides and four other tanker cars derailed. There were no leaks, no fires and no injuries. BNSF is working on the cleanup and Lakeland Drive is open again. Contact [media@BNSF.com](mailto:media@BNSF.com) for further information.

Marotzke reported she is having ongoing conversations with Brian Miller on the Willmar Rail Park and she continues to look for opportunities and how the KCED can help businesses. O'Rourke reported he and Marotzke met with Dennis Pap of Nexyst 360, who will be the speaker at Rotary in September. O'Rourke attended the last Atwater City Council meeting. Atwater would like to use tax increment financing for its new childcare project and O'Rourke will be researching that. O'Rourke attended Farmfest this week and learned more about the local ag economy and met with U.S. Senators. Marotzke noted County Commissioner Steve Gardner is staffing the KCED/CVB Farmfest booth today. Marotzke noted that yesterday Commissioner Matt Varilek and staff of the Department of Employment and Economic Development stopped by the KCED/CVB booth. Marotzke indicated that during the Congressional Candidate Forum she asked the panel a question on hemp, but no one answered it; however, U.S. Senator Tina Smith followed up with her after the panel. For other activities, see attached reports by O'Rourke and Marotzke.

**Elevate Community Business Academy.** Marotzke finished her training through Rising Tide Capital and is now a qualified instructor. Danny Carranza will be the lead instructor this fall and Jeff Miller, a recent graduate, will be the monitor. Twelve to 14 people have applied and 11 attended one of the four informational sessions. She had additional contacts after the informational sessions. The upcoming Elevate classes will be held in the KCED's new location. Valiant noted the city needs to issue the Certificate of Occupancy before the KCED can move in. Marotzke noted TerWisscha Construction will be obtaining the Certificate. Marotzke noted there has not been a cap to the number of students, but the ideal maximum number is 12-15. O'Rourke stated he would like to look at expanding the program as he understands there is a waiting list of approximately 80. He also feels it would be beneficial for the students to not only have a business plan, but also have a marketing plan. Marotzke reported she followed up with the 85 individuals on the waiting list and 2 requested to be removed from the list and the others determined it isn't the right time for them to enroll. Marotzke offered a graduate to retake the course as her business plan is changing. Technical assistance is planned for the graduates. She has also spoken with a community member who speaks Somali and will attend the fall class, about possibly being an instructor. Those who are trained as instructors are Carranza, Marotzke and Stephanie Lopez. A couple of other graduates are interested in becoming instructors. Marotzke would eventually like to engage a coordinator for the Elevate program, but this would be dependent upon funds.

**Child Care Economic Development Grant.** Marotzke noted 20-25 providers attended the appreciation night at The Land and had a good time. Subgrantee Agreements have been signed by Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center and the city of Atwater relative to their grants. See Tanna Stucky's report as of August 8, 2024 attached.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development.** Hultgren reported Niki Vandenburg of Dun Agro Hemp was the speaker at the last committee meeting. She stated there is a need to have the market, but they also need producers. Dun Agro continues to work on a location in the United

States. It was noted there was a tent regarding hemp at Farmfest. Paul Damhof of Simply Shrimp will give a presentation to the committee at its meeting next week. PBS did a special story on Damhof's business in its "Hope in the Water" series.

**Broadband and Advanced Technology.** President Gislason reported the committee is looking for help to apply for a grant. Marotzke stated NTIA (National Telecommunications and Information Administration) has a Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment Program that is offering grants—minimum is \$5 million and maximum is \$12 million. Marotzke will be meeting with Kelsey Baker, Kandiyohi County Administrator, this afternoon on applying for a \$5 million grant. O'Rourke stated he met with a provider at Farmfest. President Gislason stated a couple of projects are getting customers connected.

**Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment.** The committee last met in June and meets quarterly.

**Finance.** Marotzke noted the committee will meet next Tuesday.

**Marketing and Public Relations.** Olson highlighted work she has done since her hiring, including workforce solutions; consistency of newsletters; 2022-2023 virtual job fairs, including new employment laws; and childcare grants. The KCED has seen a large increase in its social media following. In 2024, her work has been dedicated to rebranding with the new logo and launch of the new website. This week, Olson has been at Farmfest and the Kandiyohi County Fair where the KCED is distributing information from the County Commissioner's booth. Olson will forward the most recent newsletter, which focused on women in ag, as most board indicated they did not receive it. The newsletter continues to have good open rates. New swag has been ordered and is being given distributed. Olson and Beth Fischer supported the New London Water Days as it was nearly not held. The KCED provided lemonade for Atwater's National Night Out. O'Rourke noted he plans to work with Olson to do more targeted marketing to industries that complement the businesses and industries located in Kandiyohi County. Olson noted there is a link on the new website to sign up for the newsletter and a general contact us link, which she monitors. See attached report for additional information.

#### **WHAT'S UP?**

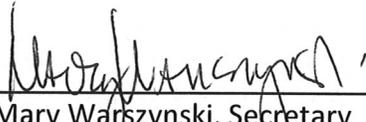
- Heitke stated he continues to be at Brookdale on 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue and continues to receive physical therapy; he is making slow progress.
- Gislason stated New London had a successful Water Days event. Bowling season starts soon.
- Corky Berg has been busy with Prairie Lakes Detention Center following the fire it had.
- Hultgren announced Hultgren Farms is hosting its annual picnic today for its landlords and staff. There has been too much rain for farming, but it isn't bad. They will start opening sugar beet fields on August 26<sup>th</sup>.
- O'Rourke noted he and his wife moved into their new home on Foot Lake last night.

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

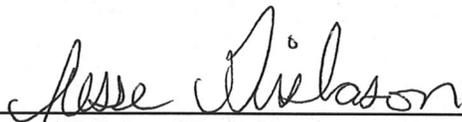
IT WAS MOVED BY Art Benson, SECONDED BY Noah Hultgren, to adjourn the meeting.  
MOTION CARRIED.

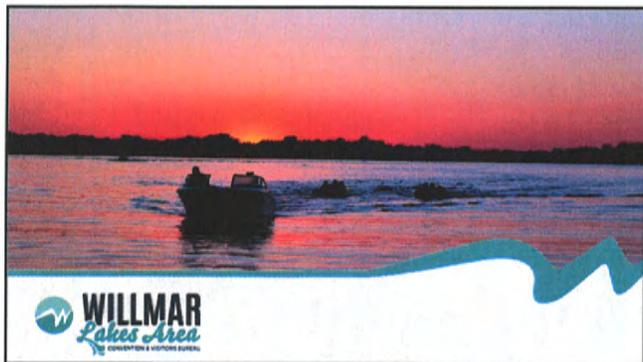
The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:17 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next meeting is 11:00 a.m., Thursday, September 12, 2024 at the Community Room of Heritage Bank, Willmar.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Warszynski, Secretary

APPROVED: 9/12/2024

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jesse Gislason, President



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3

 A collage of promotional materials including a 'SUMMER GETAWAY' poster, a 'Paddles Up' sign, and a 'TOP 10 Activities' sign.
 

- ❖ We advertise in over 40 different publications or platforms promoting the Willmar Lakes Area as a travel destination.
- ❖ Key geographical areas include Southern MN, Sioux Falls, Iowa and the Twin Cities Metro.

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### Sport Shows & Expos

- \* St Cloud Sportsmen's Show
- \* Sioux Expire Sportsmen's Boat, Camping & Vacation Show
- \* Northwest Sportshow
- \* Farmfest

 A photograph of a trade show booth for the Willmar Lakes Area, featuring a sign with the organization's logo and various promotional items.

5

 The cover of the Willmar Lakes Area Official Visitor Guide, featuring a sunset over a waterfall.
 

We create the Official Visitor Guide for Kandiyohi County & distribute 25,000 copies to the following locations:

- o Sport Shows and Expos
- o Travel Centers throughout the State
- o Explore Minnesota Stores in the Mall of America & MSP Airport
- o 18 County Tourism Racks located throughout Kandiyohi County
- o Individuals who request information

6

### Digital Passport

- Must See Attractions
- Local Restaurants
- Unique Shops
- Fun Activities

7

### Community Support & Promotion

- Event Promotion
- Websites
- Social Posts
- Contests
- Sponsorships
- Committee Involvement
- Volunteer

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### CrowdRiff Platform

11

### WILLMAR Lakes Area CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

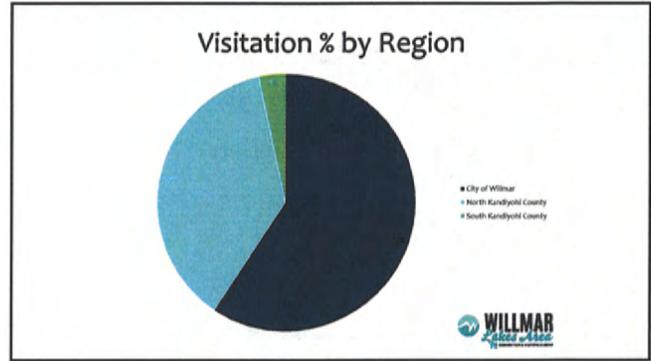
### Visitor Resources

- Monthly Calendar of Events
- Golf Brochure & Passport
- Trail Maps – Snowmobile, Bike & Water Trails
- Map Pads
- Maintain a Tourism and Events database with Explore Minnesota for the area.
- And so much more!

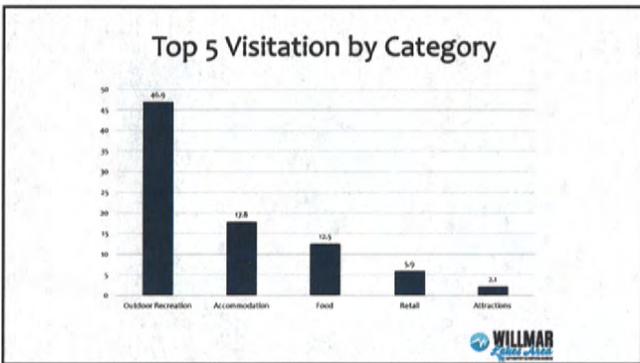
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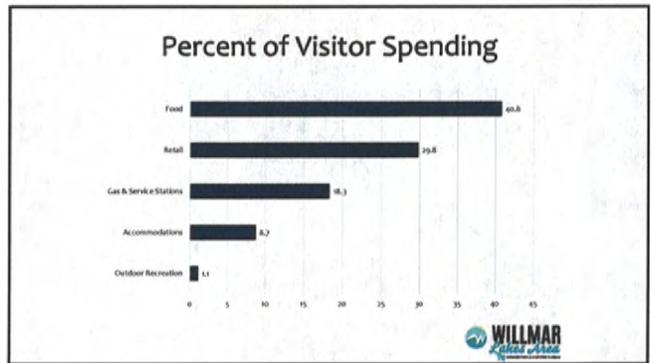
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16

- ### Leisure Committee Goals
- ◆ To encourage, promote and enhance the visitor experience in Kandiyohi County
  - ◆ Market area amenities and events
  - ◆ Maintain billboards
  - ◆ Participate in Sport Shows
  - ◆ Provide resources and information sharing for area businesses and attractions
  - ◆ The committee focuses on bringing visitors to Kandiyohi County!

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### Leisure Travel Budget

**\$93,000 – Leisure Tourism Promotion**  
 > \$25,000 – KCED Partnership  
 > \$68,000 – Lodging Tax Revenues

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### Leisure Budget Breakdown

- ◆ Advertising - \$40,000.00
- ◆ Visitor Guide & Distribution - \$25,000.00
- ◆ Sport Shows - \$10,000.00
- ◆ CrowdRiff - \$6,500.00
- ◆ Bucket List Passport - \$5,000.00
- ◆ Maps - \$3,000.00
- ◆ Billboard Maintenance - \$2,000.00
- ◆ Mayors Bike Ride - \$1,500.00

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### Tourism's Economic Impact

- \* Kandiyohi County generated \$122,996,490 in gross sales from the Hospitality and Leisure industry in 2022.
- \* State Sales Tax revenue for Kandiyohi County was \$7,880,762.
- \* The Hospitality and Leisure industry accounts for 1,750 jobs in Kandiyohi County.
- \* Every \$1.00 invested in tourism marketing returns \$180 in traveler spending and \$18.00 in state and local taxes.

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## TRAVEL FUELS EVERY INDUSTRY



21



\$985  
PER MN HOUSEHOLD  
VISITOR SPENDING = TAX SAVINGS  
FOR MINNESOTANS!



Tourism is Big Business in Minnesota.



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Questions?

Thank You!

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# WITH WILLMAR

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**THANK YOU FOR JOINING US AS WE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE WITH WILLMAR!**

## WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A Comprehensive Plan is a visioning document that outlines what the city would like to look like in twenty years.

It utilizes existing conditions to understand current issues and opportunities, sets goals for the city to achieve by 2045, and outlines specific actions that can be taken to reach our goal. The plan is built upon existing efforts, documents, plans, and policies and acts as a unifying document for city departments, partners, and community members. Over the next 20 years, this plan will be regularly used as a reference by all of Willmar to see how far we have come and what opportunities may come next. Additionally, updates should be made to the plan to ensure it responds to current trends and public input.

The With Willmar process will focus on the following topics:



Land Use + Development



Arts, Culture + Heritage Preservation



Mobility



Housing



Economic Opportunities



Natural Resources + Conservation



Parks + Open Space



Public Facilities

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Your feedback at this phase of the process will shape the goals and priorities for the community. This information will be used by the City Council, city staff, and other partners to make decisions for the next ten to twenty years!

# HOW DO I PROVIDE FEEDBACK?

## 1 VISIT THE OPEN HOUSE STATIONS

There are a variety of open house stations at this event, each with the opportunity to provide feedback. As you make your way around the room, please read the station introduction and participate!

## 2 FILL OUT A COMMENT CARD

Pick up a comment card, provide your feedback, and drop it in the "Comment Form Box" on your way out!

## 3 TALK WITH A PROJECT TEAM MEMBER

Feel free to ask questions, provide feedback, or ask for clarification from any of the project team members.

## 4 SUBMIT FEEDBACK ONLINE

In addition to providing your input at activities here tonight, please visit the community survey to help us shape a vision for Willmar and future goals. Also, please share this link with those who were unable to attend our open house today!



[surveymonkeys.com/r/WillmarDevelopment](https://surveymonkeys.com/r/WillmarDevelopment)



[surveymonkeys.com/r/WillmarHousing](https://surveymonkeys.com/r/WillmarHousing)



[surveymonkeys.com/r/WillmarEconomics](https://surveymonkeys.com/r/WillmarEconomics)



[surveymonkeys.com/r/WillmarRecreation](https://surveymonkeys.com/r/WillmarRecreation)

To: KCED Joint Operations Board Aug. 08, 2024

From: P.K. O'Rourke, KCED Executive Director

Re: ED report period 7/8 - 8/8/2024

7/8 Completed finalist interviews with KCED joint powers board; completed KCED bus tour; on 7/7 did self-guided tours of all incorporated cities and unincorporated communities in Kandiyohi County.

7/10 Attended Willmar Rotary luncheon as guest of James Chamber President/CEO - submitted membership application; Visited Chamber and CVB offices

7/15 Attended City of Willmar City Council meeting

7/17 Visited Ed of Willmar Community Center; Attended Rotary Luncheon; Attended New London City Council meeting met mayor, all council members, and city clerk; Attended Willmar City Planning Commission meeting – re: Comprehensive Plan

Various dates: Independent readings: IEDC “Managing an EDC”; Economic Development – Best Practices and scholarly publication on Incubators; have done daily readings on West Central Tribune online.

7/22 Attended KCED Marketing Committee meeting in Atwater

7/25 Met with Joint Powers Board Chair Steve Gardner; Attended Joint Powers quarterly board meeting; signed employment agreement

7/30 Began residence in Kandiyohi County 9-night stay at BnB; attended Rockin’ Robbins visited with Christopher at Planning Commission booth

7/31 Attended Willmar Rotary luncheon (#3 meeting attendance)

8/1 1<sup>st</sup> official KCED workday; 8 a.m. met with Michelle; 9 a.m. Toured new offices with Dion new landlord and other KCED staff board members; 10:30 a.m. completed new employee paperwork with Nancy; 6:30 p.m. attended Childcare appreciation event – Met Tanna

8/2 7:30 a.m. Chamber connection at Hope Pregnancy Center – encourage them to consider childcare services, too; Continued orientation and readings; reviewed priority task lists; p.m. walk-through & closing on new home: 733 11<sup>th</sup> St. NW Willmar, MN 56201

8/3 All day moving to new home in Willmar

8/4 Spice Music Fest: Dinner at O'Neil's; Discussed possible move to Willmar (wife's best friend, Gale – possible opening boutiques shop in Spicer)

8/5 8 a.m. Reviewed new brochures with Kelsey & Michelle; 9 a.m.; 1<sup>st</sup> KCED staff meeting; 10 a.m. Broadband Committee meeting at HHS; 3 p.m. meet with Kelsey re: target marketing; 7 p.m. attend Atwater City Council meeting

8/6 To Farm Fest – attend talks 9:30 to 3:00 – Meet with Senator Tina Smith; meet with MN Senate AG committee chair (and my friend) Aric Putnam; visit KCED/CVB booth and other exhibitors: 4 p.m. meet with Dennis Pap NexYst360 at KCED offices; 4:30 to 6:00 volunteer at Rotary Rockin Robbins; 5:30 p.m. attend Spicer City Council meeting

8/7 To Farm Fest talks begin at 9 a.m.; Induction into Willmar Rotary @ 12 noon; 3 to 8 p.m. (as able) at County Fair – County Commissioners Booth

8/8 11 a.m. Joint ops board meeting at Heritage Bank; 3-8 (Thurs. - Sat. At County Fair – County Commissioners booth [as able])

8/9 7:30 Chamber Connection at CentraCare Foundation (ED of Foundation, Brad, is a friend, also know & have met several times with Ken, CentraCare President/CEO



**TO:** Joint Operations Board

**FROM:** Michelle Marotzke, Business Development Manager

**DATE:** August 8, 2024 Board Meeting

**New Location Update**

- Flooring is expected to be installed on August 5<sup>th</sup> and is the last major task for this project. It is likely that we can move in the first week of September. We have a verbal agreement that we will not have to pay rent in September, but we will have to cover our utilities.

**2025 Budget**

- The 2025 Budget was presented to and approved by the Joint Powers Board on July 25<sup>th</sup>. It will be presented to the County Commissioners on August 6<sup>th</sup> and to the Willmar City Council on August 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Economic Development Activity**

- Willmar Rail Park expects to receive their engineering plans for the rail spurs any day, and will then submit the plans to BNSF for approval or further direction. Brian is having good conversations with developers that are interested in moving to Willmar, so we will continue to assist with those as needed.
- I have been introducing Patrick to various leaders and business owners throughout the county and Willmar community.

**Elevate**

- Four info sessions were held on July 17, 19, 22, and 24 with 11 attendees. Of those 11, several have submitted applications for the fall cohort. After the sessions, I met with at least 6 more interested people and have received applications from that group. We currently have 12 completed applications.
- Instructor training ends on August 1. We have a follow up session in October and I meet with our program liaison, Rupa, on a bi-weekly basis.
- Our waiting list continues to grow. Each person on it receives an email inviting them to the program. Out of approximately 90 people, two asked to be removed from the list. The waiting list is a good tool to have to ensure longevity of the program.
- The Fall 2024 Cohort should be able to start on September 10 or 12 at the new location.

**Child Care Program**

- The Provider Appreciation event was held on Thursday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, at The Land between Spicer and New London. We had approximately 45 people (about 30 providers) attend and a great time was had by everyone. There was great local business support for gift bags and door prizes.

**Ag and Renewable Energy**

- We are excited to hear from Paul Damhoff with Simply Shrimp at the August 15 Ag Committee meeting. Paul is also featured in a PBS special called Farming the Water, it is about an hour long and a good watch. [Hope in the Water | Farming the Water | Episode 2 | PBS](#)
- Staff will attend FarmFest on Wednesday, August 7<sup>th</sup>. I will take in some forums and assist with the joint CVB/KCED booth. We will hand out seed papers that have both logos on them.

**Broadband**

- The Broadband Committee meets on August 5<sup>th</sup>. A couple of items we will discuss are related to the NTIA Capacity Grant, including the potential for creating a coalition to apply for a \$5MM grant to address digital opportunity in Kandiyohi County and throughout the region.

**Finance**

- I continue to work with a potential loan client who is an Elevate graduate. This is an expansion project, with more information to come.
- We have an RLF client who is requesting a 3-month full deferment of payments due to a variety of challenges in the business. The Finance Committee meets on August 13, where we will present the deferment request.

## Joint Operations Board Update

August 8, 2024

**Mentor/ Mentee Program:** The Mentors and Mentees continue to work with each other. However, due to summertime schedules they have not been able to connect as often as they had hoped for. However, they do continue to try to connect with one another monthly. Due to having busy summer schedules. We have decided to wait until September to meet in person again.

**Child Care Appreciation Event:** A committee was formed to start planning the Child Care Appreciation Event. They decided to hold the event on August 1<sup>st</sup> at The Land. SWIFT, The Land, KCED and Bernick's will be hosting the event. The committee has been busy contacting businesses for donations to give as door prizes for the Child Care providers who attend.

**Child Care Listening Sessions:** SWIFT hosted 5 Listening Sessions for Center Child Care providers and Family Child Care providers in July. I attended 3 of the 5 Sessions to listen to the providers' concerns regarding the new draft licensing standards published by DHS. Many providers expressed their concerns with the rules and regulations.

**SSP and RCCIP:** The SSP Core Team continues to move forward with new goals to support Child Care providers. At the meeting on July 8<sup>th</sup> 3 goals were decided and committees were formed to carry out those goals. They will continue to work with First Children's Finance to reach these goals. The SSP and RCCIP meetings for August will be combined. That meeting will be held at The Heritage Bank on August 12 @ 6pm.

**DEED Grant:** KCED was awarded \$500,000 from DEED to support new Child Care programs in Kandiyohi County. The Prairie Wood's Environmental Learning Center will receive \$250,000 of that grant to start renovations to open a Nature Based Preschool Program. The remaining \$250,000 will go to Generations Child Care in Atwater to also begin renovations to begin 4 Specialized Child Care spaces. DEED has signed the contracts; therefore, construction will be able to begin soon.

Respectfully,

Tanna Stucky  
Child Care Community Coordinator



## KANDIYOHI COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Joint Operations Board Update

7.18.2024

#### Marketing Projects

- Our website went live! Feedback is good so far!
- The purchase of an eco-friendly cell phone charger has been approved and is in the process of ordering.
- Continued daily marketing support for the Child Care Appreciation event and Aaron's Retirement party were conducted.
- Interviews were conducted in person for the upcoming summer newsletter to be published on July 17<sup>th</sup>. Again, the theme is specifically related to women in ag, not by purpose but by my available and popular stories.
- An interview with KWLM was conducted to promote the Partners in Ag Conference

#### Trainings:

- AMA Virtual Conference: Marketing Analytics
- AMA Webinar: Disability Inclusion and Accessible Marketing 101
- Golden Shovel: Building Stronger Communities: Innovative Workforce Solutions for Economic Development
- Golden Shovel: Using SEO Research to Build a Successful Economic Development Marketing Plan
- SCORE: How to Create a Marketing Plan for Your Small Business

#### Social Media:

- Had 9,000 impressions and a reach of 3,500 on Facebook. The reach is up 70% in the last month, and we have an 84% rate of 3-second views, which usually encompasses a full post review.
- LinkedIn reactions are up 75%, most of these derived from Aaron Backman's retirement and new executive director candidate announcements

#### Other Projects:

- Continue to market our rebrand through follow-through with media for KCED usage, order marketing materials, and future marketing plan execution.
- Schedule unique and intentional social media posts for both Facebook and LinkedIn, which includes sharing information and resources from partners, highlighting local businesses, and sharing community celebrations

#### Outreach:

- Conducted business interviews at Woody's Trucking, KandiAcres, and with Clean Chickens
- Visited businesses in New London, collecting stories at K & Co. and others for future business highlight posts while asking for donations
- NL WaterDays prep included folding and distributing table tents with Beth Fischer from the CVB, taking pictures and volunteering at the tractor pull. KCED was the only volunteer signed up for the event before hand so was very much appreciated.
- Will provide lemonade for Atwater National Night Out