

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
DOING BUSINESS AS KANDIYOHI COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (KCED)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD
MINUTES
September 12, 2024
Community Room, Heritage Bank, N.A., Willmar and Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Art Benson, Abdulcadir Gaal, Jesse Gislason and Les Heitke (via Zoom)

Excused: Corky Berg, Veronica Garcia, Noah Hultgren and Mary Warszynski

Staff: Patrick O'Rourke, Executive Director; Michelle Marotzke, Business Development Manager; and Kelsey Olson, Marketing & Communications Specialist (via Zoom)

Media: Jennifer Kotila, West Central Tribune

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

President Jesse Gislason called the meeting to order at approximately 11:08 a.m. and announced a quorum was present.

AGENDA—Added to the Agenda under New Business was to amend the 2024 budget under the Marketing and Public Relations Committee and the Countywide Business Development/Mowing/Maintenance of Lot.

IT WAS MOVED BY Art Benson, SECONDED BY Abdulcadir Gaal, to approve the revised Agenda.
MOTION CARRIED.

CONSENT AGENDA—Added to the Consent Agenda under Approve as item 3 was to pay Invoice No. 4970 from Redwood Valley Technical Solutions in the amount of \$5,630 to be paid from the Marketing and Public Relation Committee/Website development/Maintenance line of the budget. It was noted this is the second half payment for redesign of the website, which was previously approved for payment and budgeted for in 2023; however, the website did not get completed until mid-year 2024.

IT WAS MOVED BY Abdulcadir Gaal, SECONDED BY Art Benson, to approve the following revised Consent Agenda.

Approve: 1. Minutes of August 8, 2024
2. Financial reports as of August 31, 2024
3. Payment of invoice 4970 from Redwood Valley Technical Solutions in the amount of \$5,630 to be paid from the Marketing and Public Relation Committee/Website development/Maintenance line of the budget

Accept: Committee/Subcommittee Minutes

1. Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development 7/18/2024
1. Broadband and Advanced Technology 7/1/2024
2. Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment 6/12/2024
3. Finance 2/13 and 8/13/2024
4. Marketing and Public Relations 7/22/2024
5. Leisure Travel 5/6/2024

MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Staff health insurance coverage. Patrick O'Rourke reported he spoke with the insurance agent, who informed him that because the KCED is a government agency, it is okay to only have one person on the policy. Thus, Michelle Marotzke's coverage will not be affected.

NEW BUSINESS—

2024 budget changes. Kelsey Olson requested a budget increase of \$3,000 for the remainder of the year for the Marketing and Public Relations Committee, which will leave the committee about \$500 for the remainder of the year. Part of the increase is due to the invoice received for the second half of the website redesign and monthly maintenance of the website. Les Heitke recommended staff review the requested budget changes and bring back a formal written request at the October board meeting.

O'Rourke noted there are one or two large trees that have fallen down on the KCED's empty lot and need to be removed for safety reasons. O'Rourke obtained an estimate from Paul's Tree Work for \$2,800, which includes grinding the stumps and from Unlimited Outdoors, which mows the lot, in the amount of \$3,500. Benson will contact other individuals who may be able to take care of the trees.

IT WAS MOVED BY Les Heitke, SECONDED BY Abdulcadir Gaal, to delay any action on amending the 2024 budget until the October 10 board meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

REPORTS

Office Relocation Update. Marotzke reported the office will be moved on Monday, September 16. The sign above the awnings at the new location will be installed this week and the electronic sign along the street was installed earlier this week. The cleaner will clean the new location before the office is moved in and then clean the current location after everything is moved out. The Elks will be asked to return the damage deposit once the lease ends. We will not be charged rent at the new place until October, but will need to pay rent to the Elks for October and November when the lease ends. An open house for the new location will be planned. Marotzke is working with the Willmar Chamber to do a ribbon cutting on October 14 at 4 p.m., hosting a Chamber Connection in early 2025, as well as hosting an Ambassador meeting. Olson will make social media posts relative to the move and a new banner will go over the current sign at the Elks saying we have moved. Gaal suggested

flyers be distributed to businesses. Olson stated she will be doing a “new” newsletter announcing the new office, new Executive Director, new logo and new website.

Economic Development Activity. Christopher Corbett reported the City of Willmar will hold its 16th public engagement meeting on the comprehensive plan, which are being held at the Willmar Public Library. Public surveys will close on September 30. Next week the city will launch a sweepstakes to encourage more surveys be completed. The city will get public input in early October and a draft document will be presented to the public. Corbett encouraged everyone to complete a survey; he will send the survey link to the KCED to send it out to its boards and committees. Corbett noted the city has six vacancies on its committees, including one on the Planning Commission. He encouraged anyone interested to email him. In August, the city issued 95 permits mostly for residential improvements. Commercial permits were for Popeyes, Les Schwab Tire and Happy Halal (Clean Chickens). This Saturday Welcoming Week will be held outside City Hall; the concrete planters in downtown were done and this month and banners with the new branding were put up in downtown. Corbett noted the city opted not to do the benches this year in downtown, but they were distributed to the city parks. DTW (Downtown Willmar) is looking for other opportunities for gathering spaces in downtown. Corbett noted Intuition Brewing did a DTW lager and Spurs created a DTW burger. Happy Halal just closed on its property in the Industrial Park and Dooley’s Petroleum also just closed. Corbett looks forward to the city’s continued partnerships with the KCED. Marotzke and O’Rourke met with Corbett earlier this morning on continuing projects and the relationship. O’Rourke suggested more target marketing be done to recruit businesses to the county. Marotzke will be speaking with Corbett and John Harren of Willmar Municipal Utilities on a project that is due next week to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. Benson questioned the status of the city’s electrical capacity noting a large business was lost due to the unavailability of enough electricity. Marotzke noted transmission is a national problem and Great River Energy is working on the issue. She is also on the Clean Energy Resource Teams so she is aware of alternate energy sources. O’Rourke stated he spoke with a developer who is waiting for interest rates to come down so there may be additional development once that happens. Benson noted Dennis Papp spoke to the Rotary this week on his NexYst 360 project. See O’Rourke’s and Marotzke’s reports attached.

Elevate Community Business Academy. Marotzke reported there are 22 students in the fall class; orientation was held this week. The first two classes will be held in the Community Room of Heritage Bank and after that, they will meet at the new KCED office. The lead instructor is Danny Carranza and Jeff Miller is the monitor. The business assistance services for graduates is in the process. There will be space for 15 graduates, who will complete a StrengthsFinder assessment and will be the focus group for future business assistance to graduates.

Child Care Program. Marotzke reported the two new childcare projects have started. Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center raised \$81,000 for its new nature school and Atwater is also working on its new project. O’Rourke noted he met with the Atwater City Council and city manager, who are looking at doing a tax abatement for the project.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development. Marotzke reported the committee chair will be attending the 2024 Minnesota Ag & Food Summit in November. The committee will pay for three committee members to attend the Summit. This year's Farmfest was good. The committee will meet next week and hear a presentation by Becky Wierschke of Happy Halal. O'Rourke attended the Hemp Field Day where he met with the Lower Sioux Indian Community about its hempcrete production. The Lower Sioux offered to assist any hemp operation in Kandiyohi County as the product cannot be transported very far due to economic restrictions. Olson noted she also attended the Hemp Field Day.

Broadband and Advanced Technology. President Gislason reported the Broadband Committee heard that three projects have been completed, the one in Fahlun Township by Vibrant Broadband, the west and northwest projects by Federated Telephone Cooperative in Lake Andrew, Colfax, Dovre and Norway Lake Townships. Federated is still working on engineering. Vibrant is laying lines for the Fahlun Township project. The committee is waiting for round 10 of the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Program for Vibrant to apply for Lake Lillian, Genessee and Kandiyohi Townships. The county also received awards through the state Broadband Line Extension Connection Program. Marotzke is applying for a \$5 million grant for equipment, education and a fiber tech training program. She submitted an application for \$135,000 to the United States Department of Agriculture to be used for a countywide digital opportunity plan.

Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment. The committee will next meet in October.

Finance. O'Rourke reported the committee met and passed some motions on loans. Marotzke reported the loan deferral request presented to the board last month for Wings Gymnastics was approved by the committee.

IT WAS MOVED BY Art Benson, SECONDED BY Abdulcadir Gaal, to approve a three-month deferral of all payments by Wings Gymnastics under the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Revolving Loan Fund Program and to restart full payments on December 15, 2024, unless the loan is paid off before then.
MOTION CARRIED.

Marotzke reported the committee also recommends the board write off the balance remaining due on a loan to La Manzanita Mexican Market as no payments have been received in more than a year and the business was sold. Marotzke noted the committee looks at loan write offs very closely as the KCED is dealing with public funds.

IT WAS MOVED BY Art Benson, SECONDED BY Abdulcadir Gaal, to write off the balance owed under the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Microenterprise Loan Program by La Manzanita Mexican Market, Inc. in the approximate amount of \$1,321.23 plus any accrued interest. MOTION CARRIED.

Marotzke presented a loan deferral that is being recommended by the committee for Rendezvous, LLC.

IT WAS MOVED BY Art Benson, SECONDED BY Abdulcadir Gaal, to approve a three-month deferral (October-December 2024) of principal and interest payments by Rendezvous, LLC under the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Revolving Loan Fund Program and extend the maturity date of the loan by three months. MOTION CARRIED.

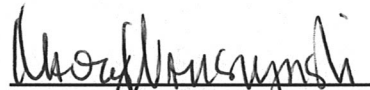
Marketing and Public Relations. Olson reported she is preparing for marketing through March 2025. She has been visiting many local businesses in regard to Manufacturing Week in October. Olson encouraged the board to like and share the KCED's social media posts to get a greater audience. She is also working on podcasts with Elevate graduates through December and continues to work on website updates.

Leisure Travel. Benson reported there was no meeting due to a lack of a quorum.

WHAT'S UP? Those present gave personal updates. Corbett encouraged everyone to attend Welcoming Week.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:40 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is 11:00 a.m., Thursday, October 10, 2024 at the new KCED office, 1601 Highway 12 SE, Willmar, and via ZOOM video conference.



Mary Warszynski, Secretary

APPROVED: 10/10/2024



Jesse Gislason, President

For Joint Operations Board Executive Director Report – KCED activities 8/1 to 8/31/2024

KCED childcare appreciation event Spicer The land
Chamber connection the Pregnancy Center
Heritage Bank Chamber Policy meeting
Broadband committee event at HHS
Atwater City Council introduction
Farm Fest
Spicer City Council Introduction
Farm Fest
Heritage bank MN HR Update
Heritage bank Joint Ops Board + Visit to City offices Leslie
To County Fair Commissioners Booth Attended Fair 3 days at commissioner's booth
To Chamber Connection
To Vision 2040 meeting
To HHS Planning Commission Meeting
To Willmar City Planning Meeting City hall
Rotary @ Eagle creek
New London EDC meeting+ Sunburg City Council
To radio station interview with Commissioner Gardner
Chamber Connection Vista Prairie
To Rotary Green Lake Event Rep. Dave baker / then to New London event
To Max's meet Roger I re: tour of NE county
To HHS City Council Willmar + Kandiyohi City Council
City of Atwater meeting with Goldie
Willmar Rotary - Michelle guest speaker
Broadband Committee meet at Eagle's Creek
To Chamber Connection and tour MinnWest campus
2 trips to library Willmar comp plan econ dev. + visit to Marketing committee
Lake Andrew Township Meeting Intro
to HHS KCHRA tour + Willmar Rotary Eagle Creek
2 trips Willmar library Comp Plan - Housing/Land + visit Jill @ KCHRA at HHS
(Glory Bra details -Elevate grad)



August 30th, 2024

Willmar City Council

C/o: Leslie M. Valiant, City Administrator

Box 755

Willmar, MN 56201

Re: Rebranding of the EDC (Your letter to Aaron Backman dated January 8th, 2024)

Dear Ms. Valiant & Willmar City Council:

I was just recently asked by Mayor Reese and several Willmar City Council members to address the letter dated January 8th, 2024 that was received by my predecessor, Aaron Backman. As most of you are aware, I just recently (effective August 1st, 2024) assumed Mr. Backman's role as Executive Director of Kandiyohi County/City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (a separate governmental joint powers entity of the State of Minnesota) now doing business as "Kandiyohi County Economic Development," (KCED). I apologize on behalf of Kandiyohi County/City of Willmar Economic Development Commission that you did not receive an earlier response from Mr. Backman to your well-reasoned letter.

In reading through the approved minutes of Kandiyohi County/City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's joint powers board of directors (equally composed of members appointed by The City of Willmar and County of Kandiyohi Minnesota), I did see that the joint powers board approved (by majority vote) the name "Kandiyohi County Economic Development," as its doing business as (DBA) name, following extensive community, staff, and Kandiyohi County/City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's joint operations board (which consists of individual business and community members from the City of Willmar and Kandiyohi County and that are appointed by our joint powers board's members) input and approval.

As indicated above, in my (personal) opinion, I do believe that your letter of January 8th was very well-reasoned and made some excellent points/arguments. I do, however, honor and will comply with the joint powers board's decision to brand the organization with the use of its DBA/ Kandiyohi County Economic Development (KCED) name. I will make sure that your letter is shared with both our joint operations board and our joint powers board (the final authority) at their next meetings.

222 20th Street SE | P.O. Box 1783 | Willmar, MN 56201 | 320.235.7370 | Toll Free 866.665.4556 | www.kandiyohi.com

Atwater | Blomkest | Kandiyohi | Lake Lillian | New London | Pennock | Prinsburg | Raymond | Regal | Spicer | Sunburg | Willmar
24 Townships | 4 Unincorporated Communities

Please know that I (personally) have developed a deep love for the City of Willmar, and for Kandiyohi County, and my wife and I purchased our home in The City of Willmar and have been residents of the city since late July 2024. As executive director of Kandiyohi County/City of Willmar Economic Development Commission DBA/ Kandiyohi County Economic Development, I deeply value our relationship with both the City of Willmar and with Kandiyohi County, and I will do everything in my power to further economic development throughout The City of Willmar and Kandiyohi County. Thank you for this opportunity to serve!

Very best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patrick K. O'Rourke', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patrick K. O'Rourke, M.P.A./C.F.R.M.

Executive Director Kandiyohi County/City of Willmar Economic Development Commission

DBA/ Kandiyohi County Economic Development



TO: Joint Operations Board

FROM: Michelle Marotzke, Business Development Manager

DATE: September 12, 2024 Board Meeting

New Location Update

- The new space looks fantastic! We will start to move on September 16th with moving activities on the 17th and 18th. Thanks to Cathy and Nancy for keeping things organized! Once we get settled in, we will set up a public open house.

2025 Budget

- The 2025 Budget was presented to County Commissioners on August 6th and to the Willmar City Council on August 19th. There were no concerns or questions to note from the presentations. The budget is tight, so we will have to watch spending as we get used to higher rent and utility costs with the new space. We are always keeping an eye on potential grants to help support the work done at KCED.

Economic Development Activity

- The Willmar Rail Park is waiting on final engineering. It was delayed with late summer vacations and other projects, but is in process.
- I continue to introduce Patrick to various leaders and business owners throughout the economic development industry, Kandiyohi County and Willmar.
- We continue to engage with business and housing developers. Current rates are still higher than desired for many, but there is hope that the Fed will cut rates in September and ease up on borrowing. We are active in attending various conferences and making connections with people who are looking at expanding and developing in Kandiyohi County and Willmar.
- KCED is assisting Kandiyohi County with a Transportation Economic Development (TED) grant to fill a 2.5-mile gap between highways 12, 71, and 5. Our role has been to obtain letters of support from businesses in Willmar's Industrial Park and encouraging them to complete a survey for job-related data. The deadline to submit this application is September 9th.

Elevate

- The Fall 2024 cohort has 21 people accepted into the program. There are several "pairs" (father/son, sisters, husband/wife) enrolled and the instructors are comfortable with the number of students.
- The first two classes will be held at Heritage Bank's Community Room. Starting with the September 24th class, we will meet at our new classroom in Apple Tree square.

Child Care Program

- We have received the first reimbursement request for the Child Care Economic Development Grant, so will process that. We will use County funds first, and then start requesting funds from the State grant.
- Tanna continues to do great work throughout the county. She has been a great asset with the Prairie Woods ELC and Atwater projects.

Ag and Renewable Energy

- Paul Damhof with Simply Shrimp spoke at the August 15 Ag Committee meeting. If you haven't watched the PBS special called Farming the Water, I highly encourage doing so. Paul does a great job. [Hope in the Water | Farming the Water | Episode 2 | PBS](#)
- FarmFest went well and we thank the people who helped staff the booth, including Commissioner Gardner and Ag/RE Chairman Kevin Halvorson.

Broadband

- We are in the process of developing the NTIA grant application for \$5 million. This project will provide funding to hire a Digital Navigator to lead the activities, develop a fiber tech training program with Ridgewater College, create a county-wide Digital Opportunity Plan, and fund other activities to ensure all people are able to access and utilize internet services. The application deadline is September 23rd.

- Kelsey is planning to feature broadband in the winter newsletter. She has a good start with collecting personal stories about the impact of the work that has been done over the years.

Finance

- I am working on a loan request for a former Elevate student. If approved at the September 10th Finance Committee, it will be added to the agenda for the 9/12 Joint Operations meeting.
- 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 did not have a quorum at its August 13th meeting so was not able to approve the deferment. The borrower was able to make their August payment, so we will present the deferment again at the September 10th Finance Committee meeting. The borrower's building and equipment are for sale and there has been interest so we are hoping for a positive outcome.

Child Care Community Coordinator Joint Operations Board Update

September 4, 2024

In July I had the pleasure to tour Ashdown Forest Preschool in Breezy Point, MN. I was accompanied by staff from Prairie Meadows Environmental Learning Center. During the tour we were able to visit their Yurt (classroom), visit their outdoor space, learn about the curriculum they use and walk through a sample of the day when there are children present. I feel that we were able to get a lot of Great information from this tour and bring back ideas for the PWELC preschool.

On August 1, 2024. SWIF, KCED and UCAP hosted a Child Care Appreciation event at The Land. The event was for all Kandiyohi County Child Care educators. The Child Care educators were treated to a meal and door prizes. They also enjoyed the live music that was hosted by The Land. Everyone had a great time and seemed to really enjoy the evening,

I attended a DEI training at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria, MN on Aug 7-8. We learned about how to handle different situations on DEI. I will be continuing this training throughout this year and the upcoming year as well.

On Aug 13-15 I attended the Brain Conference in Mahanomen, MN. At the conference there were many break out sessions to choose from. I attended various sessions throughout the 3 days.

The SSP and RCCIP teams will be meeting on September 9, 2024, at the Heritage Bank. We currently have committees formed and goals in place. The next step is to make plans on how to carry out the goals that were set.

I continue to work with new Child Care educators and provide retention support for current educators as well.

Respectfully,
Tanna Stucky
Child Care Community Coordinator



KANDIYOHI COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Joint Operations Board Update

9.9.2024

Marketing Projects

- The MPR Committee finalized a new, branded format for KCED handouts, including the 'What We Do' flyer. Updates will be made to that flyer, the Ag flyer, and the Industrial Park flyer.
- Manufacturing Month is in October and the Central Minnesota Manufacturing Association (CMMA) is sponsoring Manufacturing Week from September 30th – October 5th. Visits, tours and conversations have been conducted with Jennie-O, Hanson-Silo (in conjunction with the Ag Committee), JMD Manufacturing, Wick's Meats, Verso-Cap, Simply Shrimp, Minnesota Shrimp, and another visit planned with Marcus Construction and West Central Steel to learn more about their involvement with the Manufacturing and Production Careers in Your Community (MAP) Program.
- The teacher for Willmar High School, who leads the MAP Program, shared information during a very informative meeting, and a classroom shadow will happen at WCS next week.
- The fall newsletter, to be published in October, is being drafted. It will highlight stories of Minnesota and Simply Shrimp, the MAP Program, an update on Lower Sioux Industrial Hemp manufacturing (which was highlighted in KCED's spring 2023 newsletter), and a recognition of manufacturers in Kandiyohi County.
- A tech/broadband theme is also planned for the winter newsletter.
- After our move, we will send a "What New Newsletter." This will let our audiences and partners know we have new staff, a new look and name, a new website, and a new location.
- Elevate podcast interviews will be scheduled here over the next two weeks. Eight stories need to be recorded to complete a contract with Ten17 (Lakeland Media) to capture Elevate stories. Sarah Swedburg started this project.

Social Media:

- Business Highlight Social Media posts continue to soar on Facebook. These have included 23 likes and 18 shares of Wick's Meats, 15 likes of Pink Apron Bakery, 15 likes and 15 shares of To the Moon and Back food truck, and 20 likes and 2 shares of Rendezvous Axe. Our audience continues to crave knowing and seeing pictures of what we do, who we are and celebrate their neighbors and local businesses.
- During Manufacturing Week, unique posts will be scheduled highlighting manufacturers that invited KCED in for a tour or conversation.
- Facebook Stats:
Currently, we have 1.4K Followers and a reach of 7 K. When I started, we had 1K Followers and a reach of 1,026.
- LinkedIn:
Currently, we have 498 Followers. When I started we had 194 Followers.

Other Projects:

- Schedule unique and intentional social media posts for both Facebook and LinkedIn, which include sharing information and resources from partners, highlighting local businesses, and sharing community celebrations
- Executive Pulse continues to stay on the radar with updates to contacts needed and check-ins for functionality
- Website updates and improvements continue, including adding child care in Kandiyohi County resources, a broadband project map, and photo improvements. The addition of testimonials is in the works, and a work plan will be made pending the Executive Director's review and feedback.

Outreach:

- Continue to grow KCED's community engagement and, therefore public familiarity with the work we do through business introductions and intentional social media marketing
- Weekly responses are made by the Marketing and Communications Specialist and administrative staff to reply promptly and appropriately to the website's Contact Us email system.