

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)
BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE
MINUTES
January 4, 2006
Board Room, Heritage Bank, N.A., Willmar**

Present: Doug Dodge, Ron Erpelding, Gary Geiger, Bob Mathiasen, Bruce Peterson, Diane Schulte and Jean Spaulding

Staff: Steven Renquist, Executive Director

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland and Karen Carlson, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Co-Chairperson Ron Erpelding called the meeting to order at approximately 10:37 a.m. Nancy Birkeland introduced Karen Carlson, who has been contracted to work with LAA and will take minutes at future meetings. Self introductions were made. Erpelding announced Jeff Welker resigned from Lake Region Bank and this committee and will be moving to Park Rapids so a new chair for the Health Industry Task Force will be needed. Anyone interested should contact Erpelding or the EDC office.

MINUTES—Discussion was held about Harlan Jacobs' presentation at the December meeting. Those who attended felt it was a very good presentation. Steve Renquist stated it appears MinnWest Technology Campus is looking to the community for a significant role in its marketing campaign. MinnWest is willing to fund creation of marketing materials, but it is looking to the EDC to create the materials. MinnWest would also like the community to fund Jacobs' \$25,000 consulting fee. Renquist has spoken to the Willmar Area Development Corporation about assisting MinnWest in working with Jacobs. Renquist discussed how MinnWest may begin occupying the Willmar Regional Treatment Center campus once it takes over ownership.

IT WAS MOVED BY Bruce Peterson, SECONDED BY Diane Schulte, to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2005 meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NETWORK FOR PROFESSIONAL JOB OPENINGS—Erpelding stated a goal for 2006 will be to publicize professional jobs in the region. Diane Schulte distributed a copy of the jobs listed on Minnesota's Job Bank within a 25-mile radius of Willmar (see copy attached to original minutes). Birkeland reported this link was added to the kandiyohi.com web site under Stay for a Lifetime/Employment. Schulte reported most area banks, schools and local employment agencies use the Job Bank to post openings. Bob Mathiasen suggested creating a network of individuals who are looking for employment, if a particular opening should occur within a local business. Schulte reported she has a committee consisting of human resources people, bankers and Renquist, who meet quarterly to discuss issues.

TASK FORCE REPORTS

AIRPORT BUSINESS—Gary Geiger reported the task force will meet February 8, 2006 rather than January 11, 2006.

HEALTH INDUSTRY—Erpelding reported the Health Industry Task Force will meet January 24, 2006 and again stated that with Jeff Welker leaving the area, a new chairperson is needed. Volunteers are being sought.

TECHNOLOGY—Erpelding reported Jean Spaulding has agreed to chair the Technology Task Force and their first meeting will be January 11, 2006. Spaulding stated the first meeting will be a followup of the dialogue luncheon with more discussion on the service side of technology. Geiger recommended the task force be a network for area technology-based providers. Spaulding reported a technology directory has been placed on the kandiyohi.com web site under Build a Business. Mathiasen recommended the information be shared with the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and willmar.com. Spaulding stated it may be labor intensive to keep the technology directory updated.

NEW BUSINESS

2006 Goals. Erpelding reviewed the 2005 goals and the committee discussed the following goals for 2006.

1. Identify funding mechanisms to hire consultants, etc. and seed capital sources.
2. Identify/organize regional venture capitalists/angels.
3. Continue to assist in development of the new industrial park (**LAA** will place Bruce Peterson on the February agenda on this topic and send him a reminder e-mail).
4. Develop system to promote professional job openings regionwide.
5. Assist with marketing and promotion of MinnWest Technology Campus.
6. Continue efforts of BRE/R task forces (Airport Business, Health Industry and Technology) and other EDCOB committees.
7. Continue cooperative efforts and promotion of skills and resources, such as Grow Minnesota, Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, Ridgewater College, Willmar Area Development Corporation, SCORE, Small Business Development Center.
8. Investigate development of a broader-based business visit system.
9. Celebrate extended successes of existing businesses.

Mathiasen recommended not getting too zealous and overwhelming Renquist. The committee discussed the status of Grow Minnesota. Mathiasen stated there are no plans to scale back the Grow Minnesota project. They visit three to four businesses each month, which will be continued. The committee suggested encouraging Grow Minnesota to expand its program to include small businesses. Schulte stated the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) has business service specialists who visit CEOs of area businesses to find out their needs; they pass on any concerns voiced by the businesses to area economic developers. Schulte stated these visits are not in competition, but assist what is already there. Mathiasen volunteered that Grow Minnesota would be willing to share its visitation list with this committee. Grow Minnesota is a CEO to CEO visit. Mathiasen reported Warren Lagerquist is no longer associated with the Small Business Development Center.

Other. Geiger reported the Airport Business Task Force will meet quarterly rather than monthly. Renquist stated EDC staff has been given tasks to accomplish between the quarterly meetings. Peterson stated the city of Willmar is seeking a new airport manager, who will also have a good business background. Peterson stated the City's Airport Commission is not the group that will be able to put together a good marketing plan; the Airport Business Task Force is the group that will be assisting with marketing the airport.

Renquist would like this committee to find a way to work with Grow Minnesota and possibly have a joint meeting. Renquist stated it is important to reach the maximum number of businesses in a short amount of time. Renquist reported MinnWest Technology Campus is reviewing 43 contracts; two issues remain but should be resolved in the near future.

Peterson stated this committee needs to work with the Grow Minnesota program. Geiger stated the Grow Minnesota program has not met with other communities, but if it does, it will call the local chamber and ask them to join in on local meetings. Doug Dodge stated MainStreet Willmar and the Willmar Design Center want to continue working with this committee and the EDC office. Renquist announced there will be an informational meeting on the Willmar Area Multicultural Market 4:00-6:00 p.m., January 30 at Bethel Church, co-sponsored by MainStreet Willmar and the Willmar Design Center. Spaulding stated her primary objective in 2005 was to call on every Spicer business and was the most important goal on which she worked. Spaulding stated Grow Minnesota is good and gives recommendations, but it is still important for the EDC to make direct contacts. Geiger suggested the Grow Minnesota calls could also include a DEED representative or a local economic developer, but it is important for a CEO to be involved.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:47 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **10:30-11:30 a.m., Wednesday, February 1, 2006**, at the board room of Heritage Bank, N.A.