

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)
BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE
MINUTES
November 1, 2006
Board Room, Heritage Bank, N.A., Willmar**

Present: Ron Erpelding, Gary Geiger, Bruce Peterson and Diane Schulte
Excused: Bob Mathiasen and Jean Spaulding
Staff: Steven Renquist, Executive Director
Secretarial: Jodie Heuring, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Co-Chairperson Ron Erpelding called the meeting to order at approximately 10:36 a.m.

MINUTES—By consensus, the minutes of the October 4, 2006 meeting were approved as mailed or e-mailed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Business Visits Plan Development. Renquist reported Ken Warner is unable to attend today as he is preparing for the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce (WLACC) planning session. In regard to shared business retention activities, Renquist and Warner do not see the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) business services as a duplication of business visits and it is substantially different in what it does and what the EDC is trying to do. The important thing is people visiting with business people to let them know the EDC, the WLACC and DEED cares about their welfare. Diane Schulte distributed a copy of business services provided by the WorkForce Center/DEED (see copy attached to the original minutes). Schulte refers to DEED business services as a broker.

[Gary Geiger joined the meeting.]

Relating to DEED business services, Schulte deals with four area counties: Renville, Kandiyohi, Meeker and McLeod. Schulte stated the number of visits made from January-September 2006 reflected on her handout is 277 and represents only visits to businesses within Kandiyohi County. **Schulte** will see if DEED is able to release to the EDC the names of the businesses contacted to eliminate duplication of business visits. Schulte stated a Grow Minnesota representative is welcome to go with on DEED visits.

Erpelding believes the BRE/R Committee will continue in 2007. One goal will be the addition of a business visit component with a number that will be structurally met along with new items that may present itself as time goes on. Renquist shared thoughts from a recent conversation with Warner (see copy attached to the original minutes) and Erpelding shared a copy of Warner's e-mail (see copy attached to the original minutes). Renquist is proposing an additional 30 calls per year in the Willmar area be done jointly with the EDC and Grow Minnesota; the Grow Minnesota process will more than likely be followed so there is continuity and analysis. It is proposed an EDC representative will be invited to go with on Grow Minnesota calls. Gary Geiger suggested sending one Grow Minnesota representative and one EDC representative to leverage more volunteers and the ability to visit more businesses. The EDC proposes to select three greater Kandiyohi County

communities, i.e., Atwater, New London and Raymond for 2007. It was noted that Jean Spaulding has a good program in Spicer; however, Spaulding will be included in the process and an offer of working with Grow Minnesota will be extended. Renquist stated that both he and Kathy Schwantes have been through the state BR&E training school and plan to work with the selected communities to set up their own teams to assist with economic development efforts. It is planned that the communities will be taught about the business visit process in hopes they will conduct their own call program with the assistance of the EDC, if requested. Bruce Peterson stated it is important to let all businesses know that all area economic development professionals are available. Peterson is willing to travel outside of Willmar if his expertise is needed. This process will help the EDC go beyond the Willmar corporate boundaries and allow it to exercise its BRE/R program throughout Kandiyohi County. Erpelding suggested adding a goal number 5: Continue working closely with the WorkForce Center/DEED, including responding to referrals of need from that organization.

Consensus was that it is important to identify the issues businesses have and get on top of issues.

Renquist distributed copies of Grow Minnesota's list of targeted businesses for 2005-2006 (see copy attached to the original minutes). Members were able to review the surveys used by Grow Minnesota, but copies were not distributed.

Erpelding asked committee members for names of additional people who have an interest or level of expertise that could be involved in this process. **It was suggested a goal be to bring one person in from Atwater, Raymond and New London**, if those are the areas this committee is going to target in the first year. **Renquist stated he intends to call the Mayor of each community first as a matter of protocol. It was suggested to include a member of the New London Improvement Association.**

Business Succession Strategies Conference Followup. Renquist reported Schulte e-mailed him the compilation of comments, which were most complimentary of keeping the businesses involved, would like opportunities of training one to two times a year and suggested more meetings be held (every other year or so). Erpelding thanked Schulte and DEED for looking for partners in putting this conference together. Renquist has suggested to Schulte that the EDC would like to do a countywide community marketing program and invite all communities to one meeting with the EDC Marketing and Public Relations Committee and have experts talk about things they can do to market their communities and what the EDC can do to help them. Schulte is checking on whether there may be funding available.

Planning Session Update. Erpelding reported the EDC Joint Powers Commission and EDCOB held a successful planning session in October. Erpelding stated one observation was a complete review of the EDC's committees. Renquist stated the EDC boards agreed BRE/R will be one of its core areas. **Erpelding stated it is important for Renquist, Warner and Schulte to meet to further discuss the business visits; it appears the concept has been agreed to.**

Erpelding stated BRE/R task forces were discussed and the Health Industry Task Force will be discontinued. Renquist stated the discontinuance of a regular Health Industry Task Force should not be interpreted negatively; the EDC recognized there were very few specific items it could be of value to that group; the needs were unique to each institution. Peterson stated as a community we need to continue to work to provide the environment for that industry to grow. The key is not to forget about them. **It was suggested to host an annual health industry meeting to identify any issues the EDC may be able to assist with and educate the EDC on the current trends in that industry.** Jodie Huring suggested contacting members of that industry to see if there is a particular time of the year that may be better to hold such an annual meeting.

Geiger believes the Airport Task Force could become more of a BRE/R goal than a separate task force. It was suggested getting the task force together once every 90 days or 6 months to

identify issues and provide updates. Communication should continue with the Willmar Airport Commission. Geiger suggested the EDC send a note to Airport Business Task Force members thanking them for their work and efforts to date and inform them the EDC plans to invite them to a lunch meeting every 3-6 months to solicit new ideas and discuss issues. Erpelding recommended the EDC also send a similar letter to the Health Industry Task Force indicating annual meeting will be held and to ask about a good time of year for a 1½ hour session for discussion. **Renquist** will prepare and mail the letters.

Erpelding stated the Technology Task Force will continue. It is working hard and recently applied for a Blandin Foundation broadband grant of \$15,000, which was matched by \$15,000 through the EDC, KandiLink and other sources.

There was no other unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

Erpelding asked **committee members** to bring the following to the December 6 meeting:

1. **Names of a couple people who would be good additions to this committee to assist with business visits and recruitment, preferably people with an economic interest in those areas.**
2. **Identify a maximum of five to six goals for 2007.**

Erpelding asked **Renquist** to bring copies of the letters he will have sent to the Health Industry Task Force and the Airport Business Task Force to the next meeting.

There was no other new business.

TASK FORCE REPORTS—There were no reports at the time of this meeting. The Technology Task Force will meet November 9.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:35 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **10:30-11:30 a.m., Wednesday, December 6, 2006**, at the board room of Heritage Bank, N.A.

BRE&R and GROW Minnesota Strategy 2007

1. The EDC will determine company/corporate calls that should be conducted in Willmar that are in addition to those in the GROW Minnesota strategy. A suggested figure will be an additional 30 calls per year.
2. GROW Minnesota will share its call information with the EDC's BRE&R committee.
3. The EDC will delegate a team of BRE&R committee members that will assist GROW Minnesota members in performing those calls.
4. The EDC will initiate BRE&R activities in three greater Kandiyohi County communities. The EDC will local train the teams in BRE&R in the calling format and assist them with initial organization. The EDC will send a member to accompany the local teams if asked.
5. Continue working closely with the WorkForce Center/DEED, including responding to referrals of need from that organization.