

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)
BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE
TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE
MINUTES
December 15, 2006
EDC, Willmar

Present: Dean Bouta, Ron Erpelding, Jim Millard, Mike Nitchals, Charlie Oakes, Dave Sisser, Jean Spaulding and Jeff Tengwall

Excused: Diane Schulte and Tom Lindemann

Staff: Steven Renquist, Executive Director

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

Chairperson Jean Spaulding called the meeting to order at approximately 7:10 a.m. followed by introduction of new member, Dave Sisser, and self introductions.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Dean Bouta, SECONDED BY Jim Millard, to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2006 meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Broadband Conference. Jim Millard provided information on the October broadband conference hosted by the Blandin Foundation in Alexandria. The conference featured e-democracy.org, You Tube (a video power users group) hosted by the University of Minnesota Crookston and Google Earth (better mapping feature), which require high band width. Also featured was a community video showcase by the *Get Broadband* grant participants, where each showed what they had done with their grant dollars. A high school group showed the difference between dial up and broadband and won the contest. Millard has videos available should anyone wish to view them.

MinnWest Technology Campus Technology Business Recruitment. Steve Renquist reported loan packages were recently completed for Feedlogic Corporation, which included eight entities and involved a total of \$750,000. Feedlogic Corporation has leased 6,000 sq. ft. at MinnWest Technology Campus for its engineering department and offices. Renquist stated the area will need to work on providing more gap financing for intellectual property loans. Renquist believes the contract with Harlan Jacobs for consultant work on MinnWest Technology Campus, financed by the Willmar Area Development Corporation, will not be renewed. Most of the EDC's approximate 30 referrals from Jacobs have been in the medical field, but the majority of the businesses needed financing between \$250,000 and \$5 million. Renquist and others are working to get a local investment group started to address these types of businesses.

Blandin Broadband Meeting. Millard reported on his attendance at yesterday's *Get Broadband* introductory meeting. Monticello and Willmar were the final two communities to be involved in the current program. This task force will be the steering committee for the grant process. Monticello reported on what it plans to do and stated they are having difficulties with local providers. Blandin

Foundation's review of the program has shown the communities in the *Get Broadband* program have seen a higher percentage growth in broadband use than the average community. The task force reviewed a draft of the grant agreement (see copy attached to original minutes), which covers January 1, 2007 to January 1, 2008. Millard highlighted the upcoming deadlines in the information he distributed (see copy attached to original minutes). Dean Bouta stated broadband information is online through Blandin Foundation's site (http://www.blandinfoundation.org/html/public_broadband.cfm) and shows what communities have done with their grant dollars. Millard stated that in the next month Bill Coleman will implement a telephone survey to determine the benchmark for current broadband use. Millard believes the task force will have input on how the survey is implemented and the questions asked. Bouta stated the *Get Broadband* program will help the community decide what it should accomplish. Millard reported conference calls will be held in the first month, followed by video conferences. Ron Erpelding reported the EDCOB approved the \$15,000 funding yesterday at its board meeting.

The strategic goals will be developed by this task force and the achievement of the goals will be assisted by the program. Bouta volunteered to hold a conference call with Bill Coleman. Millard reported Coleman will be in Kandiyohi County to conduct the survey. Mary Magnuson at Blandin Foundation is the grant contact person. **Millard, Bouta and Renquist** will work on the next items needed for the grant. **Erpelding** volunteered to review the other communities' online information and provide a summary at the next meeting. The grant will be placed first on next month's agenda.

Technology Showcase. Renquist reported he met with MinnWest Technology Campus concerning a \$100,000 funding request to help sponsor the showcase. The EDC has been asked to contribute \$70,000. MinnWest Technology Campus declined the requested amount, but would consider a smaller amount. Renquist stated the proposed showcase budget of \$350,000 will have to be reduced.

NEW BUSINESS

Implementation of 2007 Action Plan. Renquist reviewed with the task force his "Strategic Priorities for 2007" (see copy attached to original minutes), which was presented to the EDCOB yesterday. Renquist suggested this task force produce a brochure, with the help of the EDC's Marketing and Public Relations Committee, to market the area's technology and that the task force determine to whom the brochure should be marketed. Renquist and Erpelding stated the EDCOB unanimously endorsed the Action Plan. Bouta and others believe this task force is intertwined with all of the strategic priorities identified. The task force reviewed its 2007 Goals and Renquist asked for an action plan to those goals. Bouta suggested these goals be used by the task force when it looks at the *Get Broadband* program, which will provide some action plans. Mike Nitchals recommended each goal be addressed at the next meetings. Millard suggested each area provider inform the task force of its service area. Bouta stated the *Get Broadband* survey will cover that topic. Spaulding recommended the **task force** review the 2007 Goals with the *Get Broadband* grant in mind when assigning action items. It was suggested that a survey of area providers should be done at a separate meeting. Task force members stated connectivity speed is the issue, as the provider may provide coverage, but connectivity speed may be low. The FCC's definition of broadband is 256K while Blandin Foundation's is multi MG. This task force can set its own definition on services.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular task force meeting is **7:00 a.m., Friday, January 19, 2007**, at the EDC office.