

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)  
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)  
TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING  
**MINUTES**  
December 4, 2006  
O'Neil's, Spicer

Present: Alan Carlson, Bob Dickerson, Connie Filley, Deb Geister, Trudie Guptill, Helen Heinen, Marilyn Johnson, Dean Shuck and Ed Walhof

Excused: Jolene Garberich, Richard Larson, Mona Nelson, Janet Olney and Dave Pederson

Unexcused: Betty Bollig and Tim Johnson

Guest: Richard Falk, Kandiyohi County Commissioner

Staff: Kathy Schwantes, Assistant Director

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

Chairperson Alan Carlson called the meeting to order at approximately 11:50 a.m.

**MINUTES**—Expansion of the trail was clarified that an expansive plan has been approved, but not a specific plan.

IT WAS MOVED BY Connie Filley, SECONDED BY Helen Heinen, to approve the minutes of the November 6, 2006 meeting as mailed or e-mailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**Trails Subcommittee.** Kathy Schwantes gave a summary of the October 17, 2006 meeting with Bonnema Surveys and E\*Tap Marketing (see copy attached to original minutes) at which meeting a number of questions were addressed. Schwantes stated this committee set aside \$2,500 in its 2006 budget for this project. Connie Filley stated a presentation of the e-map system will be made December 14 to the snowmobile club, which may contribute \$2,000 to the project. Schwantes stated a memorandum of understanding is being discussed and entered into between the parties. The cost estimates are \$5,520 for Bonnema Surveys, Inc. and \$1,240 for E\*Tap Marketing. Carlson reminded the committee this project was initially started with Brain Magnet, a St. Cloud company, and was changed to working with local companies when it was discovered the county surveyor was already doing this work. Richard Falk stated entities pay a fee to the county for use of its GIS information. Bonnema Surveys, Inc. has a contract with the county that should cover this fee.

[Deb Geister joined the meeting.]

IT WAS MOVED BY Connie Filley, SECONDED BY Bob Dickerson, to pay \$2,500 toward the e-mapping project with Bonnema Surveys, Inc. and E\*Tap Marketing. MOTION CARRIED.

**Visitors' Guide.** Carlson distributed the new visitors' guide and stated the 2008 guide will be started earlier to accommodate advertising and other deadlines. Carlson stated working with Lakeside Press went very well. Schwantes reported the committee met very few times and Lakeside Press did a very good job on the project. Carlson reported proposals for bids on the 2008 guide will be sent out in mid-December. Carlson reported there are 10,000 (out of 30,000) 2006 guides remaining at the Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building. **Bob Dickerson and Carlson** will check into

why there are so many guides remaining. Schwantes stated they may not have been disbursed through the Minnesota Office of Tourism as in the past.

**Advertising Tracking.** Schwantes reviewed with the committee the kandiyohi.com web site statistics and the Willmar Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) request for information data (see copies attached to original minutes). Carlson reported because of the high response rate this year, the committee will again apply for a Minnesota Office of Tourism (MOT) grant in 2007 and place ads in *Metro Iowa Plus* and *AAA Living*. Filley reported *Minnesota Itineraries* is in the area soliciting ads for next year's issue where it will feature the Little Crow Lakes area and have a New London location (possibly the church on the Mill Pond) on the cover. **Schwantes** will followup with the *Minnesota Itineraries* representative. Deb Geister provided the contact information as the representative is her sister. Carlson reported Shari Courtney provided a spreadsheet of the scheduled advertising.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**EDC Strategic Planning Session.** Schwantes reported the EDC boards had a strategic planning session in October and determined the EDC must be staff and board driven rather than committee driven. Staff was tasked with reviewing the committees, which resulted in the suggestion that this committee be brought intact under the CVB. The EDC does not want to lose the vision of the present Tourism Committee nor its volunteers. Schwantes stated the EDC's 2007 budget for the Tourism Committee would be funded and given to the CVB, but future funds would decrease over approximately five years. Initially, it will be a one year trial to be reevaluated after one year. The intent is for the Tourism Committee to continue its countywide effort and not just be a city of Willmar "heads on beds" effort. Schwantes stated the CVB's long-term marketing plan is more countywide than it has been in the past. Schwantes stated there is a contract between the city of Willmar and the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce (WLACC) that includes a 5% management fee, which is retained by the city. Schwantes does not know if there would be a similar fee charged after a merger with the EDC. Schwantes stated a merger has been discussed for a couple of years. Funding will need to be negotiated and a number of questions answered. Dennis Wallenta and Dave Baker from the CVB have been assigned to work on the merger issue with Alan Carlson and Schwantes. The committee commented on a potential merger. Dickerson voiced his opposition to such a merger after having finally reached positive relationships with the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners and purposely moving away from being tied to an entity that does not encompass a countywide vision. Dickerson feels this is a step backward.

[Bob Dickerson was excused from the meeting.]

Dean Shuck stated this committee is one reason the EDC was created and is not in favor of a merger. Filley stated CVB board members must be members of the WLACC, which could be a problem. Filley stated this committee features so much more than just hotels, which is the only thing the CVB does; county parks contribute to the lodging fee, but make up a small amount of the CVB budget. Filley is concerned this committee will not have a voice if it is merged. Schwantes stated committee members would not have to be WLACC members. Schwantes stated the CVB's marketing plan shows the CVB is expanding and growing and discovering it needs to attract people to come and stay and market activities for those guests. Geister encouraged this committee to look at the CVB's long-term marketing plan. Filley would like the committee to come into a merger with some clout and without funds there will be no clout. Heinen estimated the campgrounds contribute approximately \$12,000 through lodging tax. Trudie Guptill commented that with a merger there would be only one entity paying for ads so only half the amount currently contributed on joint projects may be available. Schwantes stated the CVB would have to a presentation to the EDC boards for funding each year. Falk believes the county would continue funding tourism and would look at reducing the EDC's budget in order to fund a separate county tourism committee, if that became necessary. Schwantes stated another reason for a merger is to reduce duplication of effort. Schwantes stated this committee is very

appreciated and the volunteers would be of great benefit to the CVB, whose staff does all tasks. Carlson stated this committee will be kept updated as discussions continue.

**Billboards.** Carlson showed a photo of the new billboard installed on north Highway 71. Schwantes reported the new billboard does not have reflective material. The billboards were negotiated to \$1,275 per sign. There would be an additional \$150 per sign to use reflective material and \$135 per flag, if flags are used. Schwantes stated flags were installed on the north Highway 71 billboard by mistake; however, committee members liked the flags. Schwantes stated if all five billboards have flags and four have reflective material, the cost will be \$8,520. Shuck reported the County Board of Commissioners is willing to fund one-half the cost of the new billboards. Schwantes stated the Community Marketing Coalition also agreed to fund a portion of the billboards and made an exception to its rule to have the "See You in Willmar" logo. Schwantes thanked the County Board for funding the billboards. Schwantes stated Quick Signs will install one billboard per week after they receive approval.

IT WAS MOVED BY Trudie Guptill, SECONDED BY Connie Filley, to approve five new billboards with flags and a reflective coating on four billboards at an updated cost of \$8,520 with some funds coming from other sources. MOTION CARRIED.

**Fishing the Midwest Ad.** Schwantes reported an article was drafted and showed the committee a copy of the ad that will be used. The show will be aired some time in January 2007. Carlson asked that this committee and the CVB be provided with copies of the magazine with the article and ad. Committee members asked that when the CD arrives, it be shown during a future committee meeting. Geister recommended getting an advance copy of the CD.

**January meeting.** It was decided the January meeting will be held January 8. Carlson recommended holding an upcoming meeting at the new winery in Lake Lillian. **Marilyn Johnson** will check into meeting there in February.

**Sport shows.** The sign up sheets to staff the 2007 sport shows were sent around during the meeting with no one volunteering.

**Glacial Ridge Trail.** Shuck reported the site should be up and running and completion of tasks must be done soon to comply with the grant deadline. The state grant representative would like the Trail Association to submit an application for \$80,000 or \$90,000 for new signs and kiosks.

**Kandiyohi County Historical Society.** Johnson reported the sign was designed and painted by Bill Gabbert. Installation of the sign was delayed as they changed from wood posts to steel posts. The Sperry House is in its fourth year of a five-year restoration project and is now handicap accessible. The Sperry House holds teas and hosts a dinner in October. Johnson distributed a flyer on their holiday programs (see copy attached to original minutes). **Johnson** will make arrangements for the committee to meet at the Sperry House in January.

**Little Crow Water Ski Team.** Geister reported a couple families who are involved with the ski team, but have not lived here are now moving into the county. Mike Schroeder will be the announcer next year and Chad Thompson (Wayne Thompson's son) will be the director. The team will be speaking with the New London City Council to get approval for a flea market to showcase area businesses.

**New London.** Guptill reported the city of New London is focusing on extending the trail from New London to Sibley State Park; updating its comprehensive plan and establishing an emergency action plan. The Santa train will be in New London Saturday at 6:00 p.m. with carriage (or sleigh) rides.

**New London to New Brighton Antique Car Run.** Ed Walhof reported a tentative day tour is scheduled to the baseball bat production company in Brooten with lunch at John O's.

**Spicer.** Filley reported plans for WinterFest are underway. They are looking for new ideas and activities that are family related. There will not be the antique snowmobile races or radar runs. Advertising is through table tents only (no posters).

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:21 p.m.