

**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  
February 24, 2006  
EDC Board Room, Willmar**

Present: Bob Bonawitz, Jay Bosch, Dean Bouta, Lee Byberg, Ron Erpelding, Jay Kroona, Jean Spaulding and Roy Stiff

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

Jean Spaulding called the meeting to order at approximately 11:39 a.m. and welcomed new members Dean Bouta of Bennett Office Technologies and Jay Kroona, Kandiyohi County Communications Director.

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Roy Stiff, SECONDED BY Jay Bosch, to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2006 meeting as mailed or e-mailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**KandiLink Update.** Dean Bouta read the mission statement of KandiLink and gave some background on their work. KandiLink's goals were to inventory area services and capabilities, inventory the demand requirements, educate the businesses and users on what providers there were and educate the providers on the needs, lobby legislatively, address public utilities issues, redundancy, LATA (local access and data transport), local right-of-way issues between the city of Willmar and Kandiyohi County and increasing competition. They also testified before a U.S. Senate Committee and assisted Willmar in obtaining its E-Commerce Ready Certification from the state of Minnesota. Bouta stated KandiLink has not met for approximately one year as it met its goals. Bouta stated Qwest does not have redundancy, but Onvoy does.

Ron Erpelding stated Southwest Minnesota Foundation picked up on KandiLink's efforts and replicated those efforts in the southwest region (see TNT brochures filed with original minutes). Erpelding stated the McKnight and Blandin Foundations have announced increased technology capacity as a major need in southwest Minnesota. **Erpelding** will followup on this with Southwest Minnesota Foundation. Bouta reported Blandin has been involved in an initiative to bring broadband into the home.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Task Force members.** Spaulding stated that in addition to Jay Kroona, she spoke with Teri Beyer, IS/IT Manager of Rice Memorial Hospital, who has agreed to be involved in this task force. Spaulding stated Steve Renquist was to contact the others mentioned at the January 11 meeting. **Renquist** will be asked to report on these individuals at the next meeting. A representative from Charter was also recommended by Jay Kroona, but Spaulding was unsuccessful in contacting anyone.

**Questions relative to services.** Roy Stiff provided a list of internet service providers (ISP) he was able to obtain (see copy attached to original minutes). Bouta stated Meeker Co-op and others have satellite service, but there is too much delay in satellite service for businesses to use it. Bouta stated KandiLink worked very hard on Qwest's infrastructure and it has improved greatly. Bouta reported TDS has extended its DSL toward the lakes, which has been good. Bouta stated most providers continue to improve and expand their reach. Dial-up service is available anywhere, but DSL and cable are not readily available. Some cell phone companies are starting to add more broadband capabilities.

Bouta stated there are no lines that cross the bypass and it is now cost prohibitive for companies to add service in that direction. Stiff stated computer users are not getting the updates they need because of limited services. Bouta stated Redred (Redwood Telephone) provides wireless internet service and has a tower at Christianson Systems in Blomkest. Clearwire's towers are located along the highway system.

Erpelding stated KandiLink provided an excellent educational tool for businesses and legislators in the area.

Bouta stated the EDC needs the information provided by Stiff and it is important for them to know whom to contact and use as a resource on what is available. Stiff stated there is a need for advocacy to be up to date on what is available to get the rural community the same quality of services as the city of Willmar. Spaulding suggested Blandin may be their avenue. Bouta stated WiMAX (a standards-based technology enabling the delivery of last mile wireless broadband access as an alternative to cable and DSL) will be mainly in metropolitan areas.

Bob Bonawitz reviewed the comments in his February 22 e-mail (see copy attached to original minutes) on a long-range technology plan. He has not seen a picture of where this community is going. **Spaulding** will invite Bruce Peterson to the next task force meeting relative to the new airport, infrastructure improvements when new construction is done and expansion of southern Willmar. Bonawitz showed the city of Willmar's proposed electrical usage through 2015 and asked what is the city doing in terms of generation and mix. Bonawitz stated the area could see more than the 2% growth it has seen in the past 20 years and suggested it could be up to 4%. Bonawitz stated the new wastewater treatment facility is not included in the chart he showed. Erpelding stated no specific road map has been done. Spaulding stated the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development is helping with an ENS (Enterprise Network System) Analysis to identify the types of businesses that could grow in the region.

**Greater Minnesota Technology Showcase.** Jay Bosch reported a subcommittee has met a couple times (see February 7 and 21 subcommittee minutes on file) on a technology showcase to be held in spring 2007 and highlighted information from the minutes of the two meetings. Bosch stated there has been good response from the entities that have been asked to be involved in the showcase. Erpelding reported the BRE/R Committee will be bringing in a venture capitalist from the St. Cloud area. Bosch stated he has connections to a number of venture capitalists in the metro area. Spaulding stated it will be important to bring out a positive message and success stories. Lee Byberg stated the most effective way to feature the MinnWest Technology Campus would be to find a local individual to help along, obtain as the first tenant of the campus and feature that individual at the showcase. Spaulding suggested contacting the Inventors Congress. It would be good to educate the locals on how the MinnWest Technology Campus started. Task force members stated "technology" is a broad word and the task force needs to find a way to expand it from computers. Byberg stated MinnWest Technology Campus should have tenants by

midsummer. Jay Kroona suggested doing a story on the MinnWest Technology Campus and asking the community if they know anyone who could be a tenant of the campus.

**Information for kandiyohi.com web site.** Those who reviewed the site were pleased with its contents and offered no changes at this time.

**Information for community packet.** Task force members stated the community information packet is good for people who are looking to move here, but not necessarily good information to start a business. Additional items recommended were internet/utility providers, grants available, business insurance providers and a capacities statement for the future. This information will be provided to Kathy Schwantes, who helped with this packet. **Bosch** will provide web site links he has to various information.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**2006 Goals.** The goals were tabled until the March meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next regular committee meeting is **11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., March 31, 2006**, at the EDC Office, Willmar.