

**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
March 31, 2006
EDC Board Room, Willmar**

Present: Jay Bosch, Dean Bouta, Lee Byberg, Ron Erpelding, Marie Ostby and Jean Spaulding

Staff: Steve Renquist, Executive Director

Guests: Jim Millard, Millard's IT Services of Paynesville; and Bruce Peterson, City Planning Director, Willmar

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

Chairperson Jean Spaulding called the meeting to order at approximately 11:30 a.m. and welcomed guests. Jim Millard of Millard's IT Services in Paynesville is a prospective new task force member.

MINUTES—The minutes of the February 24, 2006, meeting were received.

IT WAS MOVED BY Jay Bosch, SECONDED BY Dean Bouta, to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2006, meeting as mailed or e-mailed. MOTION CARRIED.

New Airport Update. Bruce Peterson gave an update on the airport project and industrial park development. All new airport runways and taxiways are paved. The FBO hangar for Willmar Air Service is complete. The terminal should be done in about two weeks. Carpet is being installed this week. Lighting and navigation aids are done and being tested by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Bid specs are being prepared for moving 11 existing hangars from the existing airport to the new airport. City and state funds are paying the bulk of the cost to move the existing hangars and the owners will be asked to give them a fresh coat of paint. There is \$500,000 available from the state for construction of some additional new T hangars. The city is looking for additional funds to build more. Qwest does not have sufficient capacity in place for phone service so the city is paying more than \$100,000 to run phone lines to the new airport terminal using a \$96,000 grant from the federal government, which will cover the bulk of this cost. A large conference room has been included in the construction of the new airport terminal. The room, completely wired for internet and PowerPoint, will seat 30 to 40 people. Furniture for the room has not yet been purchased. The airport fuel system is being bid now. Fuel tanks are in short supply so there may be a delay in completion of the fuel system. Peterson stated there is another BRE/R task force working directly on airport development. The new airport will have full ILS and GPS navigation aids. The VOR had already been moved. MALSR system, medium intensity; glide slope lighting and VASI are in place. The new runway is 5,500 feet compared to the 5,700 feet at the existing airport. However, the new runway has an additional 1,000 foot overrun at each end that was not on the existing runway. The cost to extend the new runway 1,000 feet would be approximately \$2 million. The new runway can handle all aircraft up to the largest business jets. Larger cargo or passenger plans would not be able to land. Peterson reported the insurance companies dictate runway length. There was discussion on the issue of the current loan from the

State of Minnesota on the existing airport. Peterson reported the State has agreed to consider a local proposal for using the funds from the development of the existing airport into a new industrial park to repay this loan.

Peterson reported on the redevelopment of the current airport site that includes developing a new right of way for County Road 5. The county estimates this road will carry 8,000 to 9,000 cars a day. The industrial park development (700 acres) is planned in phases mostly due to costs, but also keeping in mind changes in technology and infrastructure. The city does not want the development to be outdated before it is complete. The new Willmar city sales tax dollars are available to cover costs of development for industrial park technology infrastructure. The city is looking for a group or body of people who could assist and make recommendations in planning for the technological infrastructure of the industrial park as development happens. The first phase will be from the County Road 5 right of way east to State Highway 40. The goal is to use sales tax dollars to cover this first phase and to make drainage improvements in the area. Hopefully the sale of land will cover future costs. **Dean Bouta** volunteered to visit with Onvoy about the possibility of adding additional phone services in Willmar in the new industrial park area.

Input from this task force for development of the new industrial park technology time line would be mid-summer 2006. This task force requested a map of the new development to assist in making recommendations. **Peterson** will get maps to Steve Renquist when they become available.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Additional Task Force members. Renquist reported on inviting additional task force members.

Southwest Minnesota Foundation and Blandin Foundation followup. Ron Erpelding reported on the Get Broadband Program through the Blandin Foundation. Blandin has \$15,000 grants available to add broadband to rural communities. Bird Island, Minnesota, received one of these grants. By broadening their perspective to include a larger area they could receive an additional \$10,000. The current Blandin newsletter gives additional grant details and is available on its website. Another round of grants will be reviewed May 19, August 18 and November 10, 2006. Blandin requires a dollar for dollar match for all of the Broadband Program grants. Currently the majority of Kandiyohi County is covered by broadband with just a few dead areas in remote, rural locations. Fiber to every home can only be done in communities and there are issues behind it (see copy attached to original minutes.) If a community is not on the telecommunications highway it is greatly disadvantaged. A task force member stated he did not agree that Willmar and/or communities in the county should not pursue Wi-Fi and felt this topic is not being given enough discussion. Task force members stated Wi-Fi needs are hard to gauge because Wi-Fi capability is more for mobility than for access. It is important some places in each city have Wi-Fi access, however, it is not cost effective to do the entire community due to technical support required to keep it running. It is easy to add wireless connectivity to a building that already has internet access, but there are security issues that go with it. **Renquist** will ask the BRE/R Committee for suggestions on specific buildings they feel would benefit from Wi-Fi capability and why they see the need for the entire community to have Wi-Fi. **Bouta** will contact Bill Coleman of the Blandin Foundation for more information on the Broadband Program details to see if there is something available that would benefit Kandiyohi County.

Task Force Note: Wi-Fi accessibility at the new airport would be very important to travelers.

Greater Minnesota Technology Showcase. Jay Bosch reported on the Greater Minnesota Technology Showcase being planned for spring 2007. This showcase is being designed to entice

business decision makers to relocate to Kandiyohi County. The showcase task force met yesterday, March 30, with many partners present, including Minnesota Technology, Ridgewater College and Southwest Minnesota Foundation (see copy of attendance attached to original minutes). The showcase task force is looking for speakers and presentations that give business people a reason to attend. Tom Gillespie of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) office was recommended. It would be important to get early commitments from significant people so this showcase would become something no one will want to miss. The entire showcase task force is thinking big. The Minnesota Technology representatives present asked a lot of insightful questions at the meeting and challenged the group to get clarification and focus. One issue that needs to be addressed is to define the term “technology” in “technology showcase.” The term is very broad and can mean different things to different people. There also needs to be a connection between the technology being showcased and the financial side of business. The larger showcase task force will meet again May 5. The local group will get together in a couple of weeks to define the plan more clearly. A conference planner will be consulted to make sure the showcase is successful. Local legislators will need to be involved and become champions for this conference. If the objectives are achieved it will be a very time consuming project and there will need to be outside help. There was discussion on comments from metro-based businesses that one of the largest deterrents to moving a business to Kandiyohi County is workforce availability and that will need to be addressed at this event. A comment was made that the showcase task force might consider renaming the event to science and technology showcase. Tom Freidman, author of *The World is Flat*, was mentioned as a possible speaker for the event.

Note: This task force bought up the idea for hosting a high school science and technology camp in Kandiyohi County. This will be considered as a future agenda item.

Booth at March 15 Technology Forum. Renquist passed around some handouts and gave a brief report on the forum (see copies attached to original minutes).

NEW BUSINESS

Regular Meeting Schedule. The meeting time will be changed to 7:00 a.m.

2006 Goals. The task force’s goals for 2006 will be at the top of next month’s agenda. Members are asked to give some thought as to how this task force can participate in the technology showcase workload and be of assistance to the city of Willmar for infrastructure technology planning.

Upcoming Events.

April 5, 2006 Everyone is invited to attend the BRE/R meeting to hear a guest venture capitalist speaker.

May 5, 2006 Everyone is invited to the Technology Showcase subcommittee meeting.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:26 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **7:00 to 8:00 a.m., Friday May 12, 2006**, at the EDC Office, Willmar.