

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)
BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE
MINUTES
March 5, 2008
Willmar Airport, Willmar**

Present: Bev Dougherty, Jim Ellingson, Gary Geiger, Oliver Hagen, Les Nelson, Bruce Peterson and Diane Schulte

Staff: Steve Renquist, Executive Director

Excused: Ron Erpelding and Tom Lindemann

Secretarial: Jodie Heuring, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Chair Bev Dougherty called the meeting to order at approximately 10:35 a.m.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Gary Geiger, SECONDED BY Les Nelson, to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2008 meeting as mailed or e-mailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Business revisits completed. Steve Renquist distributed a Report on Visit Tabulation of the 11 visits completed (see copy attached to the original minutes). Renquist also distributed a company profile report (see copy attached to the original minutes). Renquist would like to see one visit per week. Renquist asked **committee members** to assist with company names to visit, possible first contacts to set an appointment and provide those to EDC staff. Discussion was held about a few issues brought up by some of the companies revisited.

[Diane Schulte joined the meeting.]

Business revisits scheduled. Renquist stated a company has agreed to meet with him next week, but an exact date has not been set. Committee members were invited to contact Renquist, if they would like to attend. Renquist stated committee member Tracy Mullin suggested the EDC bring a gift for the businesses being revisited. Renquist showed the EDC coffee mug, visitors guide and some candies, which was recently used. Consensus was to refer this idea to the EDC's Marketing and Public Relations Committee to possibly develop a uniform "gift" for use by the EDC committees.

Business recruitment plan.

Prospective businesses to consider locating in downtown Willmar and assist where needed. Renquist reported a business downtown enhancement committee has been formed. He also reported a small group has started traveling to area cities to identify businesses to possibly join a billion dollar marketplace in Kandiyohi County; they are looking for unique and niche market businesses. Renquist intends to draft a letter to be sent to these businesses and copied to their area Chamber of

Commerce and/or economic development authority. There is a conscious effort to recruit businesses that are non-competitive with current local businesses. Les Nelson suggested having a downtown tool box. **Nelson** will e-mail Renquist a list of different items to be included in such a tool box. In these efforts, it is believed a success will be if a business locates somewhere within Kandiyohi County, not necessarily downtown Willmar. Dougherty stated there is a grid being produced showing all the available spaces in downtown Willmar.

High-tech prospective businesses. Jim Ellingson stated he and Mullin have not talked yet. Renquist stated several high-tech businesses have been identified for possible recruitment to the MinnWest Technology Campus.

Aviation/airport businesses. Bruce Peterson reported he intends to meet with Matt and Melissa Galvan from the airport to develop a plan to sell aviation attributes to area businesses.

Agribusiness/Renewable Energy Development (Ag) Committee's BRE/R efforts. Renquist stated the Ag Committee created a wind energy subcommittee, which developed into an independent corporation Whirlwind Energy LLC. The Ag Committee also held a half-day focus session in January from which came an outright dedication of the committee's efforts somewhere in the renewable energy area. The committee is not talking about the research and development (R&D) itself, but the commercialization of R&D. Discussion was held about MinnWest Technology Campus and its interest. The Ag Committee is now working on setting up a renewable energy website for Kandiyohi County.

Health industry dialogue. Renquist has tentatively reserved Blue Heron on the Green for Tuesday, April 8, 2008 for a health industry dialogue. Renquist expects to have a nice noon luncheon to talk about possible ways the EDC can assist the health industry. Oliver Hagen suggested inviting the area clinics with branches in Kandiyohi County, i.e., Paynesville Clinic and Stevens County Community Medical Center. Gary Geiger suggested having a speaker who would cause them to think "outside the box."

Airport industry dialogue. Renquist is looking forward to working with Bruce Peterson and Melissa Galvan on this.

Forum on status of Kandiyohi County's economy. Renquist stated about four years ago, Tom Lindemann had Cameron Macht put together applicable data and a presentation on the status of Kandiyohi County's economy, which was well received. An update is being considered.

NEW BUSINESS

Atwater BRE program. Renquist stated Atwater has agreed to allow the EDC to teach the BRE program to the Atwater community and an EDC BRE/R committee member may be invited to be involved with visits.

TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE—Renquist reported the Technology Task Force has had very successful broadband seminars, including residential training seminars via the *Get Broadband* grant used to enhance the use of broadband and marketing. The EDC has awarded 20 \$500 scholarships to assist with production of websites. It was suggested more residential classes be held. Ellingson suggested if residential classes are continued, it may be good to include education about communicating via cam.

Other. Dougherty reported an optometry business is moving into downtown Willmar.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:45 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **10:30 a.m., Wednesday, April 2, 2008**, at the Heritage Bank training room, Willmar.