

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB) MEETING
INFORMATIONAL MINUTES
March 8, 2007
EDC Office, Willmar

Present: Ron Erpelding, Oliver Hagen and Larry Knutson

Ex Officio: Richard Falk and Bruce Peterson

Excused: Betty Bollig, Bev Dougherty, Duane Hultgren, Milan Schmiesing and Jean Spaulding

Staff: Steven Renquist, Executive Director and Kathy Schwantes, Assistant Director

Media: Bev Ahlquist, KDJS/K-95/KRVY Radio and Anne Polta, West Central Tribune

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

Vice President Oliver Hagen called the meeting to order at approximately 11:12 a.m. Hagen declared there was not a quorum present and the meeting would be informational only.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Agribusiness/Renewable Energy Development (Ag). Ron Erpelding reported the committee is staffing a booth with the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce at the Willmar Ag Show. Steve Renquist reported he is still attempting to get the city of Willmar Finance Department to pay Kim Larson under his independent contractor agreement, which the city has opposed. Erpelding reported the small wind and large wind subcommittees have expanded into a separate legal entity. Renquist reported the Sixth Annual Animal Ag Conference had approximately 150-200 attendees and recognized LAA and Kim Larson for their work on the conference.

Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment (BRE/R). Erpelding reported the committee is putting together a business visitation program to 33 businesses and devising a survey.

Finance. No report.

Marketing and Public Relations. Kathy Schwantes complimented the committee on its work and reported the following: the committee held a very good planning session with MinnWest Technology Campus; is partnering with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to hold a regional community marketing workshop May 31; finalized the spring Bring Them Back Home newsletter; and is planning an Oscar-style celebration for the annual Appreciation & Awards Reception April 18.

Tourism. Nancy Birkeland reported the committee is attending sport shows in Omaha, Sioux Falls and Minneapolis and created new tourism information highway signs that will be located outside each of the tourism rack locations in the county. Schwantes reported the following: Fishing the Midwest is interested in coming back this summer to film; the printer is contacting advertisers for the 2008 visitors guide; and the e-map trail program is progressing with a demonstration recently given to the trail subcommittee. Bruce Peterson recognized Bonnema Surveys for its technology and superior product. Peterson stated the GIS mapping done by Bonnema was used to correct the flood zone recently designated by FEMA.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES—Peterson reported on redevelopment of the former airport. Erpelding reported the city of Willmar received input from the BRE/R Technology Task Force on the expansion of the new industrial park and it is working with area technology providers. Renquist reported on projects in Lake Lillian, New London and Touchstone Business Park and work continues in regard to a Veterans Home Board.

MINNWEST TECHNOLOGY CAMPUS—Renquist reported Feedlogic moved onto the campus and hired a couple employees. Renquist's goal is to become more active in marketing the campus. Peterson complimented Renquist and Schwantes on the work they did to bring Feedlogic to the area.

WILLMAR DESIGN CENTER—Renquist reported the Design Center had its annual planning session where they focused on five core activities for the upcoming year. Peterson stated the Design Center is working with city of Willmar staff on a pedestrian bridge across the railroad bridge and which now may be moved along the First Street Bridge to Bum's Alley. The Design Center's concept is to urbanize the northern end of First Street and connect it to the downtown area. Peterson stated the city is working on getting away from the manicured look and creating more wildlife habitat.

OTHER—Schwantes reported the Business Expo and Job Fair the EDC cosponsored was very well attended with approximately 475 attendees and 40 businesses with booths. Falk reported the Work Force Center's December unemployment rate for Kandiyohi County was 4.1%, which is the lowest in the region. Peterson stated counties to the south and west of Kandiyohi County are showing low unemployment rates because once people lose their jobs, they leave that area.

TREASURER'S REPORT—Treasurer Larry Knutson presented the financial reports for period ending February 28, 2007, which are at 15% of the total budget and are in line for the year.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:58 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next board meeting is **11:00 a.m., Thursday, April 12, 2007**, at the EDC office, Willmar.