

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)**  
**JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)**  
**BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**  
**April 5, 2006**  
**Board Room, Heritage Bank, N.A., Willmar**

Present: Doug Dodge, Bev Dougherty, Ron Erpelding, Gary Geiger, Chris Huisinga, Bob Mathiasen, Bruce Peterson and Diane Schulte

Staff: Steven Renquist, Executive Director

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

Co-Chairperson Ron Erpelding called the meeting to order at approximately 10:36 a.m. and introduced new member, Chris Huisinga of Life Science Innovations, who attended in place of Lee Byberg.

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Bruce Peterson, SECONDED BY Gary Geiger, to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2006, meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

**Program.** Brian Johnson agreed to attend this meeting, but called Monday stating he could not make it. Erpelding announced the Willmar Area Development Corporation's (WADC) annual meeting is noon, Friday, April 28, with Harlan Jacobs speaking at the event. **Renquist** will attempt to line up a venture capitalist speaker for the next BRE/R meeting.

**Minnesota Job Bank.** Diane Schulte reported two of the requests from this committee will be integrated into upcoming updates to the Minnesota Job Bank website. As requested, a security padlock key will be added to the bottom of the screen where employers are asked to enter their tax identification number. The job bank update will also increase searches to within 35 miles of Willmar versus the current option of just 25 miles. Another change will be the ability to search by occupation rather than location. Erpelding and Renquist met with *West Central Tribune* Editor, Steve Ammerman, today regarding the feedback this Committee has gotten from employers and their concerns on attracting professional people to the area and finding work for their spouses. The goal is to entice the *Tribune* to publish an article on the capabilities of the Minnesota Job Bank website.

This Committee is still looking for a clearing house, whether a person or an organization, for confidential, non-public job postings. The committee discussed the use of a password protected web page to communicate these openings. There will be a need to build this system so potential employers can feel safe entering the job or skills necessary and only one person would have access to the information. It would be absolutely necessary to keep it confidential if it is going to work. It may be difficult to get employers to share what they are thinking about doing for fear of current staff or other employers gaining access to this information. A current need is for employers hiring new professional people to find work for their professional spouse. Maybe Ken Warner, Executive Director of the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce would be interested in taking on this responsibility. **Bob Mathiasen** will follow up with Ken Warner and report back to the committee next month.

[Bev Dougherty joined the meeting.]

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**March 15 Technology Awareness Forum report.** Renquist reported on the Technology Awareness Forum at the St. Paul Traveler's Auditorium put on by Minnesota Technology. The EDC was a co-sponsor of the event. Renquist gave a five minute presentation to the attendees (50 to 70 people) and spoke about the Willmar community and Kandiyohi County, but mainly concentrated on the MinnWest Technology Campus; the presentations were web cast to the entire state. The PowerPoint presentation was put together with Chris Huisinga's help. Huisinga and Renquist will attend a BIO 2006 Conference in Chicago April 10-12 with Southwest Minnesota Foundation. It will include a presentation to representatives from 36 countries. The Nanotechnology Conference will be held May 3 in the Twin Cities. The EDC will be the only booth outside of the University of Minnesota.

**WADC 2005 Annual Report .** Erpelding reported the 2006 WADC member fee is now \$100 per year. The WADC Annual Report to Members (see copy attached to original minutes) shows its goals and that of the EDC are very much intertwined. The WADC represents private business and the EDC represents the public sector making them necessary compliments of each other. Erpelding encouraged everyone to attend the WADC Annual Meeting Friday, April 28, at noon.

**OTHER.** This committee discussed the possibility of organizing a meeting with a group of possible venture capitalists. A presentation would be made and anyone who is interested in the venture could meet with the presenter after the meeting. No one will be asked to contribute anything, rather they will be encouraged to visit with the presenter if interested. There was also discussion on facilitating the transition for family-owned businesses. This funding mechanism may not be as organized as a venture fund and could be two separate groups. The EDC would be in communication with this group but the WADC would take the lead. Consultant, Harlan Jacobs, is already sending information to Renquist on companies looking for a new location. The EDC and the WADC need to make a joint effort in visiting with these prospective businesses. Erpelding encouraged everyone to join the WADC.

## **TASK FORCE REPORTS**

**Airport Business Task Force**—This task force will meet April 12 for a planning session.

**Health Industry**—Erpelding reported this group is still working on forming its role. The task force is meeting quarterly with its next meeting July 25.

**Technology**—Erpelding reported this group has many things on its task list. They are hoping to set goals for 2006 so they can get some direction and purpose.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**2007 Budget.** The EDCOB meets in two weeks. The EDCOB will make a recommendation for funds available for 2007. This committee will be asked to bid for the financial resources it and its task forces need for 2007. The EDCOB will then make funding allocations. Some of the funding needs include task force lunches, marketing materials, clerical support, etc. The committee discussed the need for a new marketing display for conferences. The EDC currently uses the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) and Willmar Convention and Visitor Bureau's large display. This purchase may be a part of the Chamber's marketing plan and the

EDC could be part of this purchase. Renquist stated the 2006 BRE/R budget was \$11,000 and he did not see any big change from this number for 2007. The committee will discuss its 2007 budget at the May meeting.

**MinnWest Technology Campus.** Husinga gave a brief report on the MinnWest Technology Campus and stated his role is just beginning to take shape. Steve Salzer is the general manager of the campus overseeing the remodeling of three buildings to house Nova-Tech, Life Science and Epiōpix with the Epiōpix construction taking longer as it is more complex. Husinga is putting together a formalized marketing plan and plans to partner as much as they can with all area organizations such as the Chamber, EDC, WADC, etc. The construction of the campus will provide jobs and growth to the community.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:30 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next regular committee meeting is **10:30-11:30 a.m., Wednesday, May 3, 2006**, at the board room of Heritage Bank, N.A.