

**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  
May 12, 2006  
EDC Board Room, Willmar**

Present: Teri Beyer, Dean Bouta, Bev Dougherty, Ron Erpelding, Bill Jagow, Charlie Oaks, Marie Ostby, Mike Nitchals and Jean Spaulding

Guests: Jeff Roiland, En-Tel Communications

Staff: Steve Renquist, Executive Director

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

Chair Jean Spaulding called the meeting to order at approximately 7:15 a.m.

**MINUTES**—The minutes of the March 31, 2006, meeting were received.

IT WAS MOVED BY Dean Bouta, SECONDED BY Marie Ostby, to approve the minutes of the March 31, 2006 meeting as mailed or e-mailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**2006 Goals**—Proposed goals for 2006 are as follows:

1. Assess needs and opportunities for technology-based industry recruitment and expansion.
2. Narrow the focus of the Technology Task Force and concentrate efforts on technology or technologically-based industry recruitment and expansion.
3. Support Technology Showcase Task Force efforts to host the Greater Minnesota Technology Showcase June 19-21, 2007.
4. Identify and share with elected officials the necessary technological infrastructure to be included in new construction, repairs and improvements to state highways, county roads and city streets, especially in the area of the new Willmar industrial park.
5. Identify and implement ways to support entrepreneurial efforts in technology by individuals and companies.
6. Identify locations in the area that have and do not have wireless and/or high speed internet capability and cellular telephone service. Market those areas that have the services and attempt to have those services provided to the other areas.
7. Identify and implement ways to attract, retain and support technologically-based educational offerings.
8. Identify the possibility of using sales tax funds for technology infrastructure at the new Willmar industrial park.

This task forced discussed the need for local government to focus long term on how best to create infrastructure that is technologically friendly and makes future change or updating possible and relatively easy. The new industrial park is a relatively blank slate. The main focus needs to be on what types of technological infrastructure should be installed so that Willmar can attract the types of industry the area needs for future growth. It will be important to provide technology information, such as access to wireless networks, etc., when marketing and recruiting prospective businesses.

**Greater Minnesota Technology Showcase update**—Greater Minnesota can be and should be a host for more technologically-based companies. There is a great opportunity to take companies from metropolitan areas and have them relocate or put satellite offices in the Kandiyohi County area. MinnWest Technology Campus is the largest, privately-owned technology park in the United States. We also have a new, state-of-the-art airport and a new industrial park is being developed. The proposal is to hold an event to showcase everything the area has to offer. The MinnWest Technology Campus and the new airport will be involved in demonstrations at the event. The Showcase Task Force is hoping to attract about 300 people to the event. Renquist handed out a copy of a letter from the Technology Showcase Task Force Chairman, Jay Bosch, addressed to Senator Norman Coleman requesting endorsement and participation in promoting the event (see copy attached to original minutes). The Showcase Task Force is currently looking for partners in the formation of the event. Showcase Task Force members are visiting with the Blandin Foundation, the Southwest Initiative Foundation and others for financial support for the event. The Technology Task Force would like to know how they can help with the showcase. **Renquist** to invite the Technology Task Force to the next showcase planning meeting. The Showcase Task Force is looking for an event planner to put the showcase together and a high-end speaker or partner connection to attract people. One way the Technology Task Force could help is to provide input in determining what industries the showcase will target. One idea discussed is to break the focus of the event into three different technological specialties—medical, biotechnology and nanotechnology (robotics). With the incubator area being planned on the MinnWest Technology Campus, both startup businesses and nationally-recognized companies could be invited to the showcase. Marie Ostby mentioned Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, has a technology campus that focuses mainly on web-based industries. **Renquist** will contact Detroit Lakes to gather additional information. The Showcase Task Force would appreciate any assistance or advice on whom to recruit for the event. It was suggested that larger, local businesses be surveyed on whom they use for technology services. This would give the Showcase Task Force an idea of companies that are already providing support to this area and may be interested in relocating or expanding their services to this area. **Renquist** will follow up on this idea.

**Blandin Foundation Broadband access grant**—The Blandin Foundation has created a technology grant that will pay \$15,000 for anything related to broadband service in rural areas; however, the grant must be matched dollar for dollar. The Blandin Foundation website has detailed information on this grant and what other grant recipients have accomplished with their grant dollars. August 15, 2006, is the next grant cycle. Bob Bonawitz visited with the Blandin Foundation to gather more information. Adding technological resources in rural areas is difficult as there are not enough customers to support the cost of implementing these services, leaving no immediate profit opportunity to private industry to put the services in. This task force requested inviting a Blandin Foundation representative to address the task force and assist in coming up with some ideas for use of the grant, such as increased rural access, industrial park infrastructure, technology education, etc. Providing service to areas that do not currently have any service and wireless access in key areas would be two very important issues to discuss.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Regular Meeting Schedule.** It was the consensus to meeting the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 a.m. at the EDC office.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 a.m.

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