

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

Present: Dean Bouta, Dave Sisser and Jeff Tengwall

Excused: Jim Millard

Guest: Kathy Schwantes, Ridgewater College

Staff: Jean Spaulding, Assistant Director

Secretarial: Allison McGeary, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Assistant Director, Jean Spaulding, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:40 a.m.

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Dean Bouta, SECONDED BY Jeff Tengwall to approve the minutes of the May 30, 2008 meeting as mailed or e-mailed. MOTION CARRIED.

The agenda was taken out of order.

Spaulding introduced Kathy Schwantes of Ridgewater College followed by self introductions.

**Future business seminars.** Dean Bouta, Jim Millard and Spaulding met with Pat Kelly and Schwantes of Ridgewater College to discuss a partnership for business seminars to be held in February 2009. The seminar evaluations were given to Schwantes to review. Schwantes stated Ridgewater College is interested in doing the seminars with the assistance of this committee. Ridgewater College would like this committee's suggestions on what it wants included in the seminars. Comments from the last seminar included information on spyware and adware. Schwantes suggested a website recipient that succeeded share how a website has worked for their business. Bouta stated the committee will have to determine the topics for the session and whether it will be a repeat of the previous seminar or something new. Bouta stated attendees at the last seminar wanted more time for e-commerce. Spaulding stated the last seminar on e-commerce focused on the banking side of credit card transactions and most businesses wanted to know how do I make it work for me. **LAA** will update the list of providers and web designers on the EDC website's BRE/R Technology page. Ridgewater College will provide administrative services, confirm and make all arrangements with speakers and etc. and the EDC will recommend and contact speakers, assist with content and partner in marketing of the program. Spaulding feels the third session was forgotten by attendees, because it was on a different day.

Suggestions for future seminars:

- An e-commerce session focused on how to get set up and how much it will cost
- Include information on options for internet; but do not have Cloudnet or Charter present
- Placing ads at the bottom of the *West Central Tribune* and statement stuffer, because they were a good marketing tool last time

- Use the Local-e-Connected logo
- Based on 20 people attending each session charge \$49 for each session or \$99 for three sessions, \$89 or \$70 for two sessions
- Have only two sessions on one day
- Narrow the sessions down so people will feel they have walked away with a \$49 value of information
- Provide lunch for an additional fee
- Offering the sessions to Lac Qui Parle County because they are trying to replicate what this committee has done
- Give a price break to Lac Qui Parle County
- Start information from Session 201 from the last seminar

Jeff Tengwall stated Bill Coleman with Blandin is doing a presentation, much like the one he did with Kandiyohi County, but to a wider county base on September 17, 2008 in Mankato, which he will be attending. Spaulding reported Blandin is working with different areas in Minnesota to increase broadband use. **Spaulding** will invite Lac Qui Parle County to attend, but not offer assistance for their location. Schwantes stated Ridgewater College will become the coordinator with this committee doing the marketing. Pat Kelly will be the contact person for Ridgewater College.

Suggested time line for seminars:

- Hold seminars on Tuesday, February 17, 2009
- 30 days before advertise in the *West Central Tribune* and distribute statement stuffers
- By December 8, 2008 confirm speakers

**The committee** will contact banks and other businesses to distribute statement stuffers. **Spaulding** will develop a budget for marketing and printing, which the Technology Advisory Committee will bring to the BRE/R Committee for approval. Spaulding stated the content for the seminars will be the most difficult to develop over other tasks. Spaulding suggested a meeting be held on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday the week of October 6, 2008. Schwantes suggested a meeting be held at the end of October to decide content and at the end of November to confirm speakers.

{Kathy Schwantes was excused from the meeting}

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS—**

**Mapping service area.** Spaulding stated Bonnema Surveys, Inc. is having problems with launching the broadband map due to technical glitches with their software. **Spaulding** will check with Matt Runke of Bonnema Survey's, Inc on this matter.

**Website grants.** Spaulding distributed Jim and Mary Millard's comments regarding the websites (see copy attached to original minutes). The committee reviewed the websites listed on the EDC website. Spaulding stated the process for awarding the website grants will need to be improved before the committee offers grants again. In the Website Grant Program Criteria (see copy attached to original minutes) having the Local-e-Connected logo on the home page was not spelled out clearly. Discussion was held on websites. Spaulding stated there had been a lot of discussions in previous meetings about what the committee can approve in regards to a website, which the committee decided to approve the website designers, but did not think it had the right to critique the websites created. Spaulding stated the process started with approving the website designer, which information was sent to the committee. Spaulding suggested in the future to consider hiring a consultant to evaluate website designers and websites before they are completed. Spaulding stated the committee helped create approximately 20 websites, even if they are not perfect, and in the process the committee learned some lessons. Bouta stated the feedback he heard was good and some who attended realized a

family member may not be the best person use. The committee reviewed Millard's list of websites that have been paid (see copy attached to original minutes), which is not the most current. Discussion was held on why some companies did not follow through with the grant. Spaulding stated in a previous meeting it was suggested the EDC information be kept on the website for one year. It was the consensus of the committee to leave funded grants as is and let it be a learning experience for the committee. Bouta suggested future website grants contain tighter criteria.

**Spaulding and LAA** will create a followup letter based on the following suggestions to website grant recipients and e-mail a draft letter to the committee:

- Ask them to speak at future seminars
- Ask them if they feel their websites are doing well and what can be tweaked to make them better
- Ask if the website is functional
- Include three different letters into one letter with the following information:
  - ▶ Those that started the process of wanting a grant, but never took the grant, so the committee can figure out why;
  - ▶ They started a website that does not seem to be complete;
  - ▶ Ask those that have a completed website how it is profitable and successful for them
- Have recipients e-mail comments to the EDC

**Infrastructure meeting with city of Willmar and Kandiyohi County.** The committee met with the City of Willmar earlier this year, which went well; replatting of the industrial park has not been finalized. Spaulding suggested if committee members want a copy of the final plat to contact Bruce Peterson. Discussion was held on possible tenants for the new industrial park. As per the committee's goals Spaulding questioned whether they should meet with Gary Geer and Gary Danielson with Kandiyohi County. Tengwall stated Kandiyohi County interaction with providers still could be improved. Spaulding suggested the committee be clear on what to discuss with Kandiyohi County, whether it be common trenching and common pipe.

{A local construction technician joined the meeting via speaker phone.}

The technician stated it would be beneficial to have a joint meeting with Kandiyohi County and currently technicians do not receive information from Kandiyohi County prior to plats completed. The technician stated it would be beneficial ahead of time to know what the plat will be for design purposes to service the area.

{The technician left the meeting}

Providers to invite are Charter Communications, En-Tel, TDS Telecom, Qwest, Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission, Kandiyohi Power Cooperative, Xcel Energy, Red Red and Hansen Communications. **Spaulding** will speak with Geer and Danielson to schedule a meeting with Kandiyohi County in October or November after the ground is frosted; an agenda will be developed closer to the meeting.

**Local-e-Connected web page.** Spaulding stated Shelley Paulson is redoing the EDC's website home page to make it more user friendly.

## **NEW BUSINESS—**

**Emerging issues or needs relating to technology.** Sisser stated Sunburg will be getting a tower and Unicef is converting to become joined with Verizon and more will be known once the merger is completed. Swift, Stevens and Pope Counties will have good reception once the merger is completed.

Discussion was held about service in areas of Kandiyohi County. Tengwall suggested focusing on healthcare and e-rate getting reimbursed and explained every time a long distance call is made a little bit of the money goes back into the school system, Avera Network out of Sioux Falls, South Dakota and Greater Minnesota Telehealth Broadband Initiative (GMTBI) can be found at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/rural/rhcp\\_applications.htm](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/rural/rhcp_applications.htm), scroll down to GMTBI. Tengwall stated it is releasing a Request for Proposal (RFP) soon. Tengwall stated Maureen Idecker, now with Rice Memorial Hospital was part of the RFP in the beginning. Tengwall stated once the RFP is posted on the Universal Service Administrative County (USAC) and during the 28 days after the contract date, vendors can contact GMTBI to ask what can be done in Kandiyohi County and Minnesota. **Tengwall** will notify the committee once the RFP is out so it can decide what it would mean for the committee.

**Next meeting.** The committee's regular meeting time will be the first Friday of every third month. **Spaulding** will notify the committee of other meetings it is planning as the meetings are planned.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:25 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next regular committee meeting is **7:30-9:00 a.m., Friday, December 5, 2008**, at the EDC office.