

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)
BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE
MINUTES
September 6, 2006
Board Room, Heritage Bank, N.A., Willmar**

Present: Ron Erpelding, Gary Geiger, Bob Mathiasen and Diane Schulte
Excused: Tom Lindemann and Bruce Peterson
Guest: Ken Warner, Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
Staff: Steven Renquist, Executive Director
Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Co-Chairperson Ron Erpelding called the meeting to order at approximately 10:32 a.m.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Gary Geiger, SECONDED BY Diane Schulte, to approve the minutes of the August 2, 2006 meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Angel Capital Program. Steve Renquist reported a meeting of potential investors and financial representatives was held last week with approximately 33 attending. Those who attended commented on the presentation.

[Ken Warner joined the meeting.]

The EDC office sent approximately 98 invitations. The program is a minimum investment of \$50,000 over a life of 15 years. The fund is looking to raise \$1 to \$2 million. Ken Warner stated the community will rally if there is a cause, but not if it is speculative. Those who attended believe followup meetings should occur. Renquist advised the WIN Fund the EDC is available to assist, if needed. The committee would like to see the fund move forward.

Manufacturer's Week. It was the consensus that the EDC, the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce (WLACC), Willmar Area Development Corporation, City of Willmar Planning and Development and Spicer Economic Development should do a joint letter to the editor thanking area manufacturers during Manufacturer's Week. Warner also suggested recognition could be printed in the WLACC insert in the *West Central Tribune*. Another possibility is a Manufacturer's Week mayoral proclamation.

NEW BUSINESS

Business Visits. The committee discussed conducting more business visits other than those being done by the WLACC Grow Minnesota program. Renquist would like the visits to extend into the county and not just on Willmar. It was estimated there are 1,200 businesses in the county.

Warner tries to do 30 (5%) individual WLACC member visits each year plus others as needed. He stated the challenge is to find people to go with him on the visits. The purpose of additional visits was discussed. Some Grow Minnesota contacts have declined participation. Warner suggested teams from each community visit with their businesses. Renquist stated visits will be an opportunity to gather the communities, talk about economic development and train community volunteers to market their community. Warner recommended making a presentation to the county mayors at their quarterly meeting. The intent is not to compete with the Grow Minnesota program. Diane Schulte stated the local Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) office makes 30 business contacts each month, calling on businesses, listening to their issues and finding out about the companies. If DEED staff encounters issues, they forward them to whomever can help, i.e., WLACC, EDC, Ridgewater College, etc. The consensus was that any visits need to be coordinated with a clear purpose. Renquist stated the EDC cannot market a community unless it knows how the businesses in the community are doing and how they feel about the community. The committee determined the first step is for the WLACC, EDC and DEED to meet, define and put into writing the following relative to their business visits or proposed visits:

1. Mission of the visit process;
2. Purpose/goal of the visit;
3. Techniques used;
4. Number of visits to make each year; and
5. Assumptions common to all visits.

Erpelding stated there are possibly four business group categories:

1. large Willmar businesses;
2. remainder of all other Willmar businesses;
3. other large businesses in the county; and
4. other smaller businesses in the county.

At next month's meeting, the committee will determine who else should participate in the process, i.e., New London Improvement Association, Willmar Design Center, Spicer Economic Development, or if they should just be made aware of the visits and their purpose.

TASK FORCE REPORTS—There were no reports at the time of this meeting. Upcoming task force meetings are listed below:

Technology—September 15
Airport Business—October 11
Health Industry—October 24

Gary Geiger reported there was a soft opening of the new Willmar airport yesterday. It is unknown if the city of Willmar sent invitations to this opening.

Other. Renquist announced there will be a tour of Bushmills Ethanol for gas station owners and operators on September 26. The committee suggested conducting a business survey of the attendees.

IT WAS MOVED BY Gary Geiger, SECONDED BY Diane Schulte, to provide lunch for the Kandiyohi County gas station owners and operators, who attend the Bushmills Ethanol plant tour. MOTION CARRIED.

Warner stated this committee is on the Grow Minnesota agenda for 7:30 a.m., September 12, at the West Central Tribune. Erpelding was invited to update the WLACC Grow Minnesota group on this committee's progress to date and the discussion on additional business visits.

The committee will look at the status of its 2006 goals at the October meeting.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:34 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **10:30-11:30 a.m., Wednesday, October 4, 2006**, at the board room of Heritage Bank, N.A.