

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB)
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
April 27, 2015
Board Room, EDC Office, Willmar

Present: Donna Boonstra, Caroline Chan, Lindsey Donner, Jean Geselius, Sarah Isdal, Ann Winge Johnson and Heather Koffler

Excused: Shari Courtney, Mitra Engan, Mike Negen and Julie Redepenning

Consultant: Betsy Bonnema, REDstar Creative

Staff: Jean Spaulding, Assistant Director

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

Jean Spaulding called the meeting to order at approximately 11:07 a.m.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Ann Winge Johnson, SECONDED BY Caroline Chan, to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2015 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Website. Spaulding updated the committee on development of the EDC's new website. Spaulding has been making changes to the EDC's site based on other economic development sites, including Greater MSP's site. Johnson Group has populated the information from the current site into the new site.

[Jean Geselius joined the meeting.]

Johnson Group has not evaluated the current content nor suggested changes. Spaulding expected a content audit to have been done before the information was transferred and believes that was part of the contract, however, Johnson Group stated it is not. Geselius commented that content changes are always at an additional cost. EDC staff will evaluate the current content and recommend changes. Possibly hiring an intern to rewrite content for the new site was suggested. Spaulding is aware of one individual who is seeking an internship. Spaulding reported on a meeting with the New London Alumni Association, which has a good database, but they are not doing anything with it.

NEW BUSINESS

Marketing plan. Betsy Bonnema questioned what to do with the old tag line “supporting local business, assisting area entrepreneurs and recruiting targeted industry” and the Jump In campaign versus the Open for Business tag line used on the new website. Spaulding distributed the SWOT analysis from the recent BRE survey done with the business community (see attached). It was felt there is a higher expectation for being recognized as a regional center and the area needs to start acting more like a regional center. Marshall has been marketing with the comment that they are the southwest leader.

[Donna Boonstra joined the meeting.]

If the county claims to be a regional center, what area are we claiming? West central Minnesota? There is not a clear defined area of what we cover. The county has good collaboration between its business leaders. Spaulding stated the EDC needs to prove and make a claim in its marketing and website for recruitment presentations that we have a plan and communication with future workforce and are doing something to keep and gain its young workers. Spaulding reported on a meeting held with the CEO program—8 of the 12 students plan to return to the county to work; at the beginning of the program it was only 2 or 4 of the 15 students. Discussion was held on the Brain Gain presentation by Ben Winchester, who indicated he could provide data specific to Kandiyohi County. In reviewing the SWOT analysis, some of the weaknesses are also claimed as strengths—communication may not be clear on what is being done in those areas. Kandiyohi County is in good proximity to the metro area and is a transportation center (accessible). Rural lifestyle could be a weakness. Bonnema prefers to use the lakes area way of life rather than rural in her marketing. Comments were made on The Goodness coffee shop’s new ads referring to it as a metro style coffee shop.

The intent of this planning session is to take the BRE SWOT analysis and use it as a starting point for the EDC’s marketing plan and the larger community.

The EDC needs to be clear as to whom it is marketing: 1) local/regional community and 2) external recruitment. When are we marketing the EDC and when are we marketing the community? Need to define objectives for each audience and focus on one or two areas. Spaulding stated the overarching goal is always going to be about building the county’s tax base and provide good paying jobs. Bonnema noted the inserts focused on how the EDC played a role in local expansions and projects. Spaulding stated an inquiry will start with a facility/location then looking at packages that include location and financing. The EDC provides more guidance on site selection than sales, a comprehensive overview of financing and acts in an advisory capacity on issues for existing and new businesses. It was the consensus that the general awareness of what the EDC does is better now than five years ago, but it can still be better. The committee felt the statistics information is still good for the website, but it needs to be updated. Possibly changing the stats section on the home page to a rolling section was mentioned. Spaulding noted Greater MSP uses innovation on its site.

As to recruitment, businesses want to know what the community is doing to meet workforce needs. We need to show we are working toward solutions, i.e. the CEO program, connection to millennials, collaboration between the EDC and Ridgewater. As to quality of life, business life

and personal life have to mesh. If you don't have what the business needs, they don't care about the quality of life.

Audience: Local/regional
Awareness of EDC services

Objectives:

1. Refine our "brand" with new website + old JUMP IN campaign
2. Complete website
3. Agent of positive messaging around our economy
 - a. Build website content
 - b. Social media content
 - c. Newsletter
 - d. Flight plan for advertising/PR
4. Educate community about services/resources of EDC
 - a. WORKUP networking/lunch 'n learns—create events and opportunities to connect—partner with Ridgewater?
 - b. Create signage or visibility with projects they work on
 - c. Support community organizations—be a part of messaging where appropriate
 - d. Social media/LinkedIn

Audience: Recruit/outside of region

1. Specific metrics they are shopping for:
 - a. Workforce
 - b. Demographics
 - c. Accessibility
2. Customized packages
 - a. incentives
 - b. financing, etc.

Objectives:

1. Become a resource for business/workforce/talent recruitment
 - a. Work with HR departments to develop resources
 - b. Create LinkedIn page
2. Showcase area as destination for new business
 - a. Proposal template—refined message
 - b.

Bonnema will edit the above marketing plan, adding more detail to tasks and email it to the committee to review.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:15 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, May 18, 2015** at the EDC Board Room, 222 20th Street SE, Willmar.

SWOT Analysis:

STRENGTHS (no significance in order)

- Business Leadership: We have stable and engaged business leaders.
- Workforce: We have a diverse skill set and value work ethic.
- Expansion: We have planned expansion and future investment into our county for both CRTS and Manufacturing.
- Regional Center: We have strong business mix, education opportunities, utilities, emergency and health care services, anchor businesses, existing workforce and job availability.
- Rural Lifestyle: We have the benefits of rural living and recreational opportunities with lakes, parks and trails.
- Agricultural Economy: We have agricultural roots and cluster of agribusinesses.

WEAKNESSES (no significance in order)

- Workforce Availability: We have job openings that exceed current workforce.
- Lack of Expansion of Existing Businesses: We have 43% of respondents not looking to expand their business.
- Aging Workforce: We have an aging population in traditional-type positions.
- Housing: We have a gap in housing compared to needs.
- Race Inclusion: We have a failure to embrace diversity and demographic changes.
- Broadband: We have inconsistent speed, quality and access to broadband.
- Transportation: We have no four-lane access connection to another regional center or metropolitan area.
- Amenities: We have limited variety and access to national chains for shopping and entertainment venues.
- Community Leadership: We have a perception of closed community and against diversity.
- Millennials: We have a disconnection between wants and needs of young workforce.
- Community Planning: We have beautification and aesthetic needs in downtown Willmar.
- Education: We have students graduating without the skills to enter the workforce and a changing student body.
- Business Access: We have a lack of key business services in small communities.
- Pay: We have low pay level job positions.

OPPORTUNITIES (no significance in order)

- Specialized Jobs: We have openings to recruit skilled workers to the county.
- Highway Transportation: We have legislators' acknowledgement for four-lane highway.
- Global Markets: We have many existing businesses selling globally.
- Revenues: We have increasing sales among existing businesses.
- Grants: We have state and federal enhancement assistance opportunities for housing, telecommunications, parks and trails.
- Tax & Government Reform: We have business opportunities through tax reform, including but not limited to changes to mental health mandates.
- Airport: We have capacity and demand for passenger and cargo air travel.
- Immigration: We have an immigrant base and history.

THREATS (no significance in order)

- Mandates and Regulatory Changes: We have unfunded state and federal mandates, including but not limited to health care reform.
- Transportation: We have limited capacity and access on Highway 12 and Highway 23.
- Taxes: We have tax considerations impacting state competitiveness.
- Perception: We have a closed community perception and against inclusion of outsiders.
- Manufacturing: We have minimal industry variety of manufacturers.
- Immigrants: We have a large immigrant population.
- Broadband: We have inconsistent speed, quality and access to broadband.
- Housing: We have a gap in housing availability.
- Government Assistance: We have government benefits influencing desire for employment.
- National Markets: We have 60% of local manufacturers selling nationally, reducing the importance of corporate location.