

# Meeting of the Koochiching Economic Development Authority

Wednesday, December 16th, 2015

City Council Chambers

- Board Members Present:** Mike Hanson, Brian McBride, Allen Rasmussen, Bob Anderson, Harley Droba, Wayne Skoe (Alternate)
- Members Absent:** Wade Pavleck
- Staff Present:** Paul Nevanen, Kyra Briggs
- Others Attending:** Emily Gedde (The Journal), Dan McCarthy, Crystal Clance

Meeting called to order at 10:01a.m. by Chairman Rasmussen.

- 01 Approve agenda – Nevanen requested an addition to the agenda of the Northome Industrial Park Inquiry – **Motion by McBride, a second by Droba to accept the agenda with the addition of Northome Industrial Park Inquiry under Other. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 02 Approve minutes from 11/23/15 –**Motion by McBride, a second by Hanson to approve the 11/23/15 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 03 Public Comment – None
- 04 Treasurer’s Report – Treasurer McBride presented the financials for November and bills for December noting a transfer of \$11,000 to JLR as their payments are wire transferred to the KEDA bank account. Nevanen noted IRRRB funds have been received in the amount of \$96,000, but is not showing on the November financials as the payment was received in December. **Motion by McBride, a second by Droba to approve the November KEDA financial reports and bills for December in the amount of \$21,957.48. Motion carried unanimously.** McBride then presented the CWT financial reports for November and monthly bills for December. McBride questioned the bill to Greg Smith Equipment. Nevanen responded JLR made a request after the project list had been completed, for a tire machine to which they will pay back over the course of the next 4 years. **Motion by McBride, a second by Hanson to approve the November CWT financial reports and bills for December in the amount of \$18,401.90. Motion carried unanimously.**
- 05 Voyage Forward Update – Mike Wellcome gave an update the Stewards have drafted the “Destiny Drivers” which are in the process of being finalized and narrowed down to include community and economic development. Wellcome stated a Community Call to Action meeting is being planned for late January to early February, noting at the last action meeting there were 165 attendees. Wellcome mentioned the importance for elected officials, community members, business owners, etc. to all be in attendance. Wellcome added people will be asked to stand up and show their passions to get behind the projects and move them forward as he referred to Hermantown and the projects their “Destiny Drivers” have pushed forward. Rasmussen questioned how often the teams meet. Wellcome responded that all teams have now been consolidated into one, adding a subcommittee is in charge of putting together an agenda and plan the meeting. Nevanen applauded Welcome and his role with Voyage Forward, noting there is a good core group of 18-25 people with Randy Lasky facilitating the meeting. Nevanen stated this area is a bit different than Hermantown or Bemidji as here it is county wide with Fort Frances involved also, adding the challenge is getting behind the drivers and keeping people engaged. Anderson echoed Nevanen’s comments and thanked Wellcome for his coordination and working with Lasky and others. Wellcome stated just because there are 10 drivers identified, it does not mean all 10 will move forward, adding the need to be cognizant of funding, resources and many other things. McBride stated the importance to not

overwhelm the community and pick 4-5 most important drivers to move forward with. Wellcome added the need for a quick “win” to show the community what is being done. Nevanen noted that resources are a challenge for funding and the need to identify some resources for funding are a necessity.

06 Personnel Committee Update – No update given, a report will be made in January.

07 Director’s Report – Nevanen congratulated Rob Ecklund on his victory of District 3A House Representative. Rasmussen questioned when he will be resigning from the County Board. McBride noted Ecklund turned in his resignation letter effective tomorrow and will be sworn in tomorrow. Rasmussen questioned when a special election will be held to fill Ecklund’s seat. McBride responded it will be May 1<sup>st</sup>, and explained the process. Nevanen reported on the Healthcare Forum that he and Provost Carol Helland of RRCC hosted on Wednesday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at Rainy River Community College, noting 64 people attended and explained the history of how the forum transpired and touched on the struggles the healthcare industry is facing. Nevanen stated there was a forum person panel of healthcare representatives. Nevanen mentioned how pleased they were with the turnout in terms of the number of attendees, and the diverse mix of healthcare employees and public officials. Nevanen reviewed a few of the top concerns/issues with childcare being number one and touched a little on the events that took place at the forum. McBride mentioned the importance for the college to focus on finding funding sources to rebuild the program back up and to have a “champion” on the ground as well as talk to MNSCU for support. Anderson stated there is a leg ahead with the experience the college has and the new lab that was recently put in is as real as real can get. Anderson also thanked Nevanen for putting the forum together and questioned if nurses from Canada hold the same license to be able to work in both the US and Canada. Rasmussen responded he believes Canada has a different set of requirements and is not the same as the board exams that are required in the US. McBride noted the County had a shortage of public nurses and did fill one position with someone from Canada. Nevanen mentioned the concern is that a lot of employees are looking at retirement and healthcare officials are not sure how they will fill those upcoming positions. Discussion on the education system, concerns and possible options. Discussion on obtaining degrees through hospitals, funding and approvals of MNSCU and the Nursing Board. Nevanen reported he recently received a request for assistance from a Customs Broker whose client had a container held at the local Customs due to labeling issues, adding they were looking for a warehouse/bonded warehouse and someone who could re-label boxes that were coming into the country. Nevanen stated they are working with their web host to update a number of areas on the website and as a follow-up to the last meeting, he met with the International Falls All Class Reunion Committee to discuss how they might be able to integrate the Your Ticket Home initiative into the reunion, however they cannot share the database but will allow the KEDA to have a table at registration for people of interest to sign up. Nevanen stated he and Jenny Herman were recently interviewed by KCCTV about the services that the KEDA and the SBDC provide to local businesses and entrepreneurs. Nevanen reported a local business recently contacted him to discuss their concerns with the increased cost of local wood fiber, adding he was able to set up a meeting with Nate Heibel the Koochiching Land Commissioner and Danae Schafer, Assistant Land Commissioner to better explain the current dynamics that are affecting fiber costs. Discussion on mills that purchase the wood, wood sales and County/State/Federal/Public land.

08 Other (City/County Updates) – Nevanen referenced an email from Andy Martin of the Ridge Runners Snowmobile Club in Northome, who is looking at purchasing approximately ¼ acre lot with about 120 feet of street frontage in the Northome Industrial Park to construct a groomer garage on the property. Nevanen questioned the board on their thoughts, noting it is unclear who owns the property however, he believes the KEDA actually owns the property and the KEDA has just been marketing the property. McBride suggested referring Mr. Martin to the County. Discussion on support of the construction and details of proximity. No formal action was needed from the KEDA and Nevanen will refer them to the KEDA. Anderson reminisced on the past year, noting it was a better economic year and great to see businesses making investments in the community. Anderson

stated in looking ahead to it being a bonding year, he is hopeful of the need to see funding for the Sewer and Airport projects, adding the City is looking at a comprehensive plan and will be moving forward. Anderson questioned property in the middle of the county that is all bog and wondered the possibilities of using for cranberry growth. Hanson stated he believed a study of the county as a whole was done and mentioned possibly talking with Soil and Water. Skoe noted the bulk of the bogs here are State grounds adding there are low bush cranberries that grow here. Hanson questioned as a part of the KEDA By-laws, a State Representative is to be a part of the Board makeup and recommended asking Ecklund to be that representative as he explained the purpose of having a representative as part of the board makeup. Discussion on Statute and By-laws.

- 09 Public Comment Period – Dan McCarthy thanked Nevanen and the KEDA office for providing financial documents as requested and questioned meeting notice postings and posted office hours.
- 10 Nevanen recommended holding the next KEDA meeting at the Koochiching Historical Museum and meet the director, adding the IWBN recently met there for a meeting and had great feedback. The next board meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. at the Koochiching Historical Museum. **Meeting adjourned at 11:27 a.m.**