



**Visions Northwest Regional Economic Development Group**  
A Division of the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation

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**MEETING MINUTES**  
**VISIONS NORTHWEST REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP**  
**WITC Hayward – Room 4**  
**November 8, 2017**

1. Meeting called to order at 10:05 AM by Chairman Kelly Klein.
2. **Roll Call/Introductions:** Scottie Sandstrom – Representing Bayfield County, Kelly Klein – Representing Iron County, Dale Heikkinen – Representing Price County (ITV), Don Semler – Representing Sawyer County, Mari Kay-Nabozny – Representing NWWIB, Geri Dresen – Representing Chambers of Commerce, Ruthe Batulis (for Becky Haase) – Representing Private Industry (Enbridge), Jim Caesar – Representing Douglas County (ITV), Betsey Harries – Representing Economic Development Organizations, Joel Zimmerman – Representing Washburn County, Leo Naumann – Representing Private Industry (Jeff Foster Trucking)

**Members Absent:** John Richards – Representing Burnett County, Mike Bebeau – Representing Private Industry (Xcel Energy), John Will – Representing Education (WITC), Jenice Meyer (for Renee Wachter) – Representing Education (NorthWERD Group), Andy Albarado – Representing Rusk County (ITV),

**Others Present:** Thomas Michels – Department of Workforce Development, Ken Pearson – Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Crystal Rohde – Visions Northwest Administrator,

**Vacant Seats:** Ashland County, Taylor County, Tribal Representative

3. **Approval of September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Meeting Minutes**  
A motion to approve the September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting minutes was made by Geri D.; a second was made by Don S. Motion carried unanimously.
4. **Wood Industry Collaborative Update**  
Crystal referred to materials from the packet and noted that the group moved into the final stages of strategic planning identifying three areas of focus including:
  - Increase awareness and support of industry through branding/marketing strategy
  - Increase workforce and education through k-12/industry/higher education partnerships
  - Expansion and further development of the collaborative – including legislative partnershipsThe mission statement and vision statement for the collaborative were also developed during the planning session. At the next meeting of the collaborative, the strategies developed during the session will be prioritized and a work plan will be set.

Crystal also noted that the forest products industry breakout session at the Governor's Summit was a success. Brian Brashaw with the US Forest Service presented on wood innovations, providing an overview of the industry, market updates, and emerging markets such as mass timber and the bio-economy. Kelly Klein also provided an overview of the wood collaborative and our efforts and focus. Piggybacking on the summit was the Cabinet on the Road Event organized by the wood collaborative at Northwood School District – many of the collaborative members were in attendance along with the DNR Secretary, COO of WEDC, and the Northern DNR Director. The group toured the Northwood FabLab, learned about the Forestry Technician Program in cooperation with WITC and Ericson Logging and Trucking and was able to witness a demonstration of the logging equipment by the students in the program.

## **5. Inspire Northward - Update**

Crystal referred to the Targeted Industry Project (TIP) program pre-application in the packet that was submitted to WEDC last month. After finalizing the draft budget and the approval of the pre-application, the full application for the program was distributed by WEDC. Crystal will be finalizing the application materials within the next week to submit to WEDC to fund the deployment of Inspire Northward across the 10-county region. The grant will cover direct costs related to staff time/travel for Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board who will be the contracted entity performing outreach and management of the platform. Leverage for the grant will be provided by Crystal's time (dedicated to program management and outreach assistance) as well as the participating school district's counselors/ACP Coordinators time to manage the program in the schools and provide student counseling and instruction.

Crystal also gave a presentation on the Inspire Northward Initiative in a break-out session at the Governor's Summit on October 26<sup>th</sup>.

A motion to submit an application to the Targeted Industry Project Program through WEDC for the Inspire Northward deployment was made by Dale H., a second was made by Don S. Motion carried unanimously.

## **6. Regional Housing Issues – What role can Visions Northwest serve? (open discussion)**

Kelly K. led the discussion stating that although the housing issues may not be uniform across the region, we can all agree that there is shortage issue. Jim C. discussed that the main issue he sees lies with financing and the developers – not as many developers are building because of upfront costs. He stated that Duluth (Minnesota) incentives for developers/housing are working. Douglas County and the City of Superior developed a housing study to identify needs and developers listened. Programs that do currently exist such as the READI Program or WHEDA programs require reporting that is cumbersome and challenging and developers see this as a barrier. The following questions/ideas surfaced during the meeting:

- Is there an opportunity for Visions Northwest to look into the development of a Regional Housing Study to collectively identify total needs?
- Can we bring in a presenter from DOA to further inform and educate us on the READI Program?
- Can we bring in a presenter from WHEDA to further education us on their programs?
- Do we organize a "Housing Summit" to help share information with stakeholders across the Region? ...would the RiSE Series be a platform that can be used to focus on housing?

Crystal will check with DOA and WHEDA on bringing presenters to our next meeting in January. She will also review what counties have housing studies in place besides Douglas County.

## **7. Around the Table – Other Business**

- Ken Pearson, Loan Fund Manager with NWRPC gave a brief overview of the various loan programs offered across the region administered by NWRPC.
- Ruthe B. gave an update on Enbridge and the six pipeline events that were recently held across the state focused on information and safety. These events provided a platform for community members to interface directly with industry experts.
- Kelly K. informed the board about a potential training event to be hosted by Ignite WI, in collaboration with the Dunn County Economic Development Corporation. They have applied for a WEDC Entrepreneurism Support grant to help with bringing Ernest Sirolli from the Sirolli Institute to give a Trinity of Management/Enterprise Facilitation class.
- Mari K.N. updated the board on the Superior Talent Initiative being scheduled for March 15-18. This inaugural Superior Talent event is focusing on attracting top level healthcare professionals through an innovative, experiential recruitment method. This immersion event gives college students an opportunity to explore life as a young professional in the Chequamegon Bay. Through this event, employers will have the opportunity to engage young professionals on a personal level before they enter the ultra-competitive job market.

## **8. Confirm Next Meeting Date**

The next Visions Northwest meeting will take place on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at WITC Hayward at 10:00 AM. The 2018 tentative meeting schedule was reviewed and accepted with no known conflicts.

## **9. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:49AM was made by Don S.; with a second by Joel Z.