



**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, WI**  
**September 12, 2018**

1. Meeting called to order at 10:03 AM by Chairman Kelly Klein.

2. **Roll Call/Introductions:**

**Members Present:** Kelly Klein – Representing Iron County, Scottie Sandstrom – Representing Bayfield County, Dale Heikkinen – Representing Price County (Remote), Lynn Fitch – Representing Sawyer County, John Richards – Representing Burnett County, Mike Bebeau – Representing Private Industry (Xcel Energy), Geri Dresen – Representing Chambers of Commerce,

**Members Absent:** Leo Naumann – Representing Private Industry (Jeff Foster Trucking), Betsey Harries – Representing Economic Development Organizations, Mari Kay-Nabozny – Representing NWWIB, Becky Haase – Representing Private Industry (Enbridge), Jim Caesar – Representing Douglas County, Joel Zimmerman – Representing Washburn County, John Will – Representing Education (WITC), Andy Albarado – Representing Rusk County, Jenice Meyer – Representing Education (NorthWERD Group)

**Others Present:** Jim Miller – Congressman Duffy's Office

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

3. **Approval of July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 meeting minutes was made by Scottie S., a second was made by Lynn F. Motion carried unanimously.

4. **Sponsorship Opportunity Discussion – Nancy Lyons – Workplace Culture for Gen Z to Baby Boomers**

Visions Northwest was approached by the Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board regarding a sponsorship opportunity for an upcoming speaker coming to WITC Ashland featuring workplace culture on September 27<sup>th</sup>. Nancy Lyons is a CEO/entrepreneur who speaks about the intersection of leadership, entrepreneurialism, technology, and people. Nancy and her company, Clockwork, were featured on [NBC Nightly News](#) as Best Place to Work in America.

The sponsorship for \$500 includes three complimentary event registrations, being featured in all of the event marketing and communication, and verbal recognition prior to the event.

After discussion regarding potentially broadcasting the event remotely at WITC Hayward, Geri D. made a motion to approve the sponsorship for \$500, a second was made by John R. Motion carried unanimously.

5. **Election of Visions Northwest Executive Committee Members**

Tabled until future meeting when a quorum of board members is present. If a quorum is present, elections and further conversation regarding our meeting schedule will be put on the November agenda. Discussion at the meeting focused on potentially scheduling our board meetings on a quarterly basis as we move into 2019.

## **6. FY19 Base Funding**

Crystal explained that the Visions Northwest application for base funding was submitted in early August and is currently in underwriting at WEDC. The contract for base funding in FY19 will be increased from \$50,000 to \$75,000 per the new funding structure proposed and set by the Regional Leadership Council to WEDC. This increase was approved to support the regions and provide additional capacity to accomplish core requirements set forth in the application. As we work through FY19, Crystal will work directly with the board to decide how these additional funds will be utilized.

## **7. Gold Shovel**

Scottie Sandstrom proposed this agenda topic after having a discussion with Seth Hudson from Cedar Corporation regarding the [Gold Shovel](#) certification program that currently exists in the Momentum West region. This program is designed to identify both publicly and privately-owned sites throughout the region which are suitable for development. The goal is to gather uniform site information to increase the quality of site documentation, as well as the overall number of sites that are ready for development.

Crystal explained that she had conversations with the West Central Regional Planning Commission (who processes the Gold Shovel applications in their region) in preparation for the discussion at the meeting. Momentum West serves as the marketing entity for the sites, while the RPC processes the applications and verifies the information. Applicants (i.e. communities) would pay a \$500 fee to "gold shovel certify" their site.

Much discussion occurred around whether or not this program would be a good fit for our region. Crystal reminded the group that we currently have a "[Buildings and Sites](#)" portion of our website that features locations available for purchase or development across the 10-county region (this is a regional focus of the [Locate In Wisconsin](#) site). This utility is currently underutilized by most of our member counties (we have 13 buildings listed and 18 sites region-wide on the current site). It was decided that Crystal would gather more information to share with the county economic development colleagues regarding access to the Locate In platform and further market the current and future buildings and sites featured through the site. If and when the site is utilized more frequently, we could then inquire as to whether or not communities would see value in "certifying" a site.

## **8. Visions Northwest Key Initiative Updates**

### Inspire Northward

A recent article on Inspire Northward in [Positively Superior](#) (page 62) was featured to begin the discussion. Thank you to Jim Caesar for coordinating the interview and content.

Crystal explained that onboarding businesses to the Inspire platform continues to be a challenge. New ideas regarding our approach are being generated. At this time, approximately 25 businesses have signed up region-wide. Direct targeted outreach to in-demand industry employers will begin in areas where school districts have expressed interest in piloting the project in the coming month. Engagement with the pilot K-12's will begin as the '18-'19 school year moves forward. A Memorandum of Understanding was recently created to help facilitate the preliminary conversations with school districts and staff dedicated to ACP/Inspire.

### Wood Industry Collaborative

An overview from the August Wood Collaborative meeting was distributed and included content regarding wood market updates, workforce training, and marketing updates. Crystal noted that many important conversations between education, workforce, and industry are happening as a result of the collaborative effort. The next meeting will take place in October – the Discover Media Works representative will be invited to discuss potential options that the group could pursue to help market the industry.

## **9. Around the Table**

Crystal asked for input regarding any regional businesses that are making changes to assist with retention, general issues, or improve the home-life balance for their employees. If anyone has ideas regarding a business that could potentially participate in a panel discussion at the Workplace Culture event in Ashland, please let Crystal know ASAP.

Scottie Sandstrom (Bayfield County):

- Building Business and School Relationships is scheduled for October 17<sup>th</sup>, at WITC Ashland. This event is geared toward manufacturing businesses and K-12 school districts with an interest in learning more about enhancing their tech ed programs. For more information and to register, contact Scottie at 715-685-1210 or [info@bayfieldcountyedc.com](mailto:info@bayfieldcountyedc.com).

Dale Heikkinen (Price County):

- Dale noted that housing is an ongoing issue for his county. Many others at the table echoed his sentiments. Lynn F. noted that Sawyer County is currently working on a comprehensive housing study that was recently funded in part by the Sawyer County Housing Authority. Jim Miller commented on housing developments (multi and single family) and conversations that are currently underway in the Hayward area, utilizing land contract credits. A reminder that the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority ([WHEDA](#)) can be a resource for communities looking for some solutions regarding housing issues.
- Further discussion around the table regarding population decrease and workforce challenges occurred. Immigration and the need for welcoming communities was also discussed. A "Minority Business Conference" was suggested for the region as a way to showcase some of the successes of minorities coming to our region.

#### **10. Confirm Next Meeting Date**

The next Visions Northwest meeting will take place on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 10:00 AM. Angie Dickison with the Wisconsin Public Service Commission will be presenting to the board at the November meeting regarding broadband.

#### **11. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:50AM was made by Geri D.; with a second by John R.