



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

MEETING MINUTES
VISIONS NORTHWEST REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP
WITC, Hayward, WI
April 10, 2019

1. Meeting called to order at 10:05 AM by Chairman Kelly Klein.

2. **Roll Call/Introductions:**

Members Present: Kelly Klein – Representing Iron County, Cole Rabska – Representing Bayfield County, Dale Heikkinen – Representing Price County (ITV), Leo Naumann – Representing Private Industry (Jeff Foster Trucking), John Richards – Representing Burnett County, Geri Dresen – Representing Chambers of Commerce, Jim Caesar – Representing Douglas County, Joel Zimmerman – Representing Washburn County

Members Absent: John Will – Representing Education (WITC), Becky Haase – Representing Private Industry (Enbridge), Betsey Harries – Representing Economic Development Organizations, Mari Kay-Nabozny – Representing NWWIB, Mike Bebeau – Representing Private Industry (Xcel Energy), Andy Albarado – Representing Rusk County

Others Present: Ann Kozak/Chris Ruckdaschel (for Lynn Fitch) – Representing Sawyer County, Andy Donahue (for Jenice Meyer) – Representing Education (NorthWERD Group), Jim Miller – Congressman Duffy's Office, Jason Church – Senator Johnson's Office, Julie Fox – Department of Tourism,

Vacant Seats: Ashland County, Taylor County, Tribal Representative

3. **Approval of January 9, 2019 Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the January 9th, 2019 meeting minutes was made by John R.; a second was made by Leo N. Motion carried unanimously.

4. **Presentation: Tourism in Northwest Wisconsin**

Julie Fox, Regional Specialist with the Wisconsin Department of Tourism provided a comprehensive overview of the power of tourism in Wisconsin, including the economic impact of traveler expenses, and the many resources available to our region through the department.

- Tourism had a **\$609.8 million** impact on the economy in the 10-County Region of NW WI
- Direct visitor spending totaled **\$418.7 million**
- **\$49.4 million** in state and local revenue
- Tourism supports **5,646 jobs**

For more information about resources, visit www.industry.TravelWisconsin.com. To view the presentation, click [here](#). Any questions regarding the data presented can be directed to Julie Fox at 715.225.8253 or jfox@travelwisconsin.com.

5. Visions Northwest Key Initiative Updates

2019 RIsE Series Update

Crystal updated the board on the details for the upcoming series: Rising to Success: Business Startups in Northwest Wisconsin.

- ✓ Thursday, May 2nd, 2019 - Hayward
Flat Creek Lodge, Hayward, WI - 8AM to 10AM
- ✓ Wednesday, May 22nd, 2019 - Phillips
North Central Technical College, Phillips, WI - 8AM to 10AM

We will be featuring guest speakers from the Small Business Development Center at UW-Superior and Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's Entrepreneurship and Innovation program. We'll also guide a local panel of entrepreneurs through a discussion of what encouraged them to take the leap of starting their business, what challenges they have faced, and how persistence and hard work have led them to success in Northwest Wisconsin.

Board members are encouraged to share this information with local partners!

Inspire Update

Crystal noted the "new approach" handout for employers, that virtually eliminates any work on their part for the sign-up process. Inspire Northward staff are now offering to build company profiles for businesses with their permission. This initiative continues to be a challenge in our region. Although employers seem to have interest in discussion, the follow through to register and participate is minimal. Students in our region that are engaging on the Inspire platform are now exploring careers statewide so it is imperative that more of our employers get involved to show these students that we do offer high-quality opportunities here.

Wood Industry Collaborative - Update

Kelly K. recently put together a press release for a Lakeland Times publication focusing on the wood industry. Key highlights from the press release include information about the potential "Know Your Wisconsin" project and the upcoming Timber Tour.

Crystal has received the Capacity Building Grant application from WEDC for the "Know Your Wisconsin" project with Discover Mediaworks and will be building the project over the course of the next couple of months with a small advisory group of members from the Collaborative. Once the outline of the project is complete, we will begin seeking financial support from industry partners for the match portion of grant opportunity.

6. Fall Housing Summit Discussion

Through our executive committee discussions in planning RIsE, the ongoing topic of housing issues rose as a high priority for 2019. The committee is suggesting a Housing Summit for sometime later this year to showcase some potential solutions.

Jim C. noted that oftentimes, summits are organized and include a lot of "fluff", but no action. He also stated that it all comes down to the fact the developers need to be able to make money.

Dale H. questioned whether a standard design of an affordable home could be approved regionally and municipalities across the region could work with one big contractor to move projects forward.

Our July Visions Northwest board meeting will be mostly dedicated to this topic. It was also noted that outreach to the Builders Association should be done in the planning phase. Prior to the meeting, Crystal will work on outlining the summit and will welcome suggestions from board members PRIOR to July.

7. REMINDER: 2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) SWOT Analysis

In 2020, the CEDs will require a full update including a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Aspirations (SWOT) analysis. From the analysis, priorities and goals will be set forth for the next five-year plan. Please mark Wednesday, **October 9th, 2019** on your calendars to participate in a full day planning session (9AM to 2PM) at Flat Creek Lodge in Hayward – this will be the first (and most important) step in revising the 2020 CEDs for Northwest Wisconsin.

8. Around the Table

- ❖ Crystal handed around a flyer for two upcoming workshops in May called “Opioids & Your Workforce” – this event is free to attend and is geared toward regional employers. [Registration](#) is required – questions can be directed to Mary Lois Bolka at mbolka@nwwib.com.
- ❖ Crystal noted that Marie Steenlage, current NW WI Regional Director with WEDC will be leaving her position to take another role in southwest Wisconsin. Her last day in her northwest regional office will be May 3rd. WEDC will be looking to fill this vacant position for our region in the coming months.
- ❖ Cole Rabska noted that Bayfield County will be applying for Building All Season Economic Development (BASED) grant in Bayfield County for reconstruction of County Highway A from Iron River to Highway N and then west to Highway 27 will provide year-round transportation options for forestry and construction work in a crucial part of Bayfield County. Letters of support are being sought – follow up with Cole at info@bayfieldcountyedc.com for more information.
- ❖ Jason Church with Senator Johnson’s office stated that there will be an upcoming event regarding the delisting of the gray wolf in the Hudson area on May 3rd. As more information becomes available, it will be shared.

9. Confirm Next Meeting Date

The next Visions Northwest meeting will take place on July 10th, 2019 at WITC Hayward at 10:00 AM.

10. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:58AM was made by Jim C.; with a second by Kelly K.