

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION
WSI BOARDROOM and TEAMS AUDIO/VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**1600 E Century Avenue, Bismarck ND
Tuesday, August 24, 2021
1:30 - 4:45 p.m.**

Economic Development Foundation members present: Kyle Blanchfield, Tom Campbell, Erik Diederich, Lyn James, Vicki Monson, Bruce Gjovig, Kari Ness, Mike Seminary, Paul Steffes, Jamal Omar

Guests Present: Ellen Huber

Commerce staff present: Shawn Kessel, James Leiman, Joshua Teigen, Sara Otte Coleman, Katie Ralston, Sherri Frieze

WELCOME and ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Chairperson Lyn James called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. welcoming the Economic Development Foundation members and guests.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES and FINANCIALS REPORT

Motion: It was moved by Mike Seminary, seconded by Tom Campbell to approve the EDF & RDC joint meeting minutes of May 18th, 2021. Motion carried.

Motion: It was moved by Mike Seminary, seconded by Vikki Monsen to approve the financial report for \$90,923.00 as of July 31, 2021. Motion carried.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Leiman

James discussed various topics ranging from newly appointed foundation members, the need for more member input to the internal and external view of Commerce, statewide workforce shortages, prospective billion-dollar projects in ND, the upcoming Main Street Initiative (MSI) Summit in October and allocated federal funds to ND from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

James closed his conversation with an ask of \$5,000 from the foundation. The ask would cover incurred client/company expenses that are considered non reimbursable per state fiscal policy, over the timeframe of one year. It was noted that fiscal updates would be given to the foundation at the quarterly meetings. Tracking will be done by the receiving of receipts and recorded in the Foundation's online accounting system by Sherri.

Motion: It was moved by Mike Seminary, seconded by Paul Steffes to approve the ask of \$5,000 from the Foundation to cover incurred client/company expenses that are considered non reimbursable expenses per ND state fiscal policy over the timeframe of one year. Fiscal updates will be given to the foundation at the quarterly meetings. With no further discussion the motion was carried on a roll call vote.

Kevin Black – absent; Kyle Blanchfield – yes; Tom Campbell – yes; Eric Diederich – yes; Bruce Gjovig – yes; Lyn James – yes; Tommy Kenville – absent; Megan Laudenschlager – absent; Vicki Monsen – yes; Kari Ness – yes; Jamal Omar – yes; Mike Seminary – yes; Paul Steffes – yes; Eric Trueblood – absent.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Sara Otte Coleman – Director – Tourism

- ND is down 18% in tourism revenue due to the closed Canadian border.
- Vehicle traffic is going up slowing, according to the NDDOT, and airline boarding is 30% below national average.
- Quarter 2 results showed travel was up 82% in the Theodore Roosevelt National Park.
- The ND Tourism website is up 30% from last year's numbers.
- The marketing plan for this year will be enhanced to include an optimized website, a media plan with iHeart Radio, new visual assets, geofencing, digital advertising and other marketing details.
- The Commerce webpages/website will be updated within the next month, or soon thereafter.
- Tourism office space has been updated in the new office space, located in Suite 6 of the Workforce Safety Insurance (WSI) building.
- A new format to the Tourism newsletter is being updated.
- The ND I94 Oriska Rest Area has been updated with a new hardware brochure display and materials.

Katie Ralston – Director – Workforce

- ND unemployment rate currently stands at 3.6%.
- ND labor participation rate is 68.8%, confirming the need to recruit employment to the state.
- A company has been identified to expand the workforce marketing efforts within the Workforce Division, a contract will be completed soon.
- The ND Relocate portal is being elevated with a revised recruiter network. More relocation inquiries are coming through the portal.
- Commerce received \$1M in Covid funds to provide grant support for workforce training programs for displaced workers, giving them the technical skills necessary to make a career change and remain employed in ND. Funds awarded under this grant must be expended by December 30, 2021.
- Leveraging of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) dollars is being done with Job Service ND. They have a new campaign; JobUP – that launched this summer, showcasing their services and to promoting industries that are looking for employees.
- Katie attended a ribbon cutting recently at the ND State Penitentiary for the Last Mile Program. This information technology program launched with WIOA dollars in July has much enthusiasm from the inmates and what they can learn for their future upon release.
- The In Demand Jobs List was recently approved by the Workforce Development Council at their quarterly meeting. The list was expanded from 75 jobs from last year to 102 for this year. The WIOA federal program states that the training/degrees needed for the jobs on the list must be 3 years or less, but the Scholarship program of the ND Career Builders, uses the list and a few jobs do require a 4-year degree.

Joshua Teigen – Director - Economic Development & Finance (ED&F)

- Economic Development projects worth \$20B are being put together by the Commerce Economic Development Division staff, regarding projects with value added activity of natural gas, to natural gas to liquids, to soy to corn.
- The bioscience industry in the state is growing, creating more innovation for newer greener products.
- The Innovation Technology Loan Fund (LIFT) is helping to attract companies and entrepreneurs take on more risk. The program was put in place in the 2019 legislative session and to date has awarded \$8M of the \$15M appropriated by the 67th Legislative Assembly for the 2021-2023 biennium.
- The State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI), a federal program will deploy \$56M to the state soon, that will incentivize early stage and equity type investments.
- The VANITS network team in the state is seeing a return on investment with a \$2M contract with NASA.

Shawn Kessel – Deputy Commissioner - Commerce

- The Commerce Department has moved from Suite 2 to Suite 6, in the WSI building encompassing the Century Center. The move was initiated due to the onset of Covid. Commerce employees took to an at-home worksite space, therefore creating less footprint for the Commerce Department. The new Commerce workspace created hoteling stations, a conference room, a collaboration room and other spaces for occasional employee working in the new office.
- Bonnie Malo, Director of the Division of Community Services (DCS) is retiring this year. A shift change will happen soon, that will entail improving the Regional Council relationship.
- The Main Street Initiative (MSI) will be moving to DCS. Federal dollars, that are dispersed to DCS, can be leveraged for smaller and larger communities in ND incorporating the MSI program.
- The HOME program within DCS will be transferred to the Housing Finance Agency.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) COVID RELIEF

- \$650M requests from ED&F
- \$92M requests from Tourism
- \$78M requests from Workforce
- \$37M requests from Community Development

A special legislative session will be held this year to address the 2020 census redistricting of ND and the allocation of the nearly \$1.1B in federal ARPA dollars allocated to ND.

MAIN STREET INITIATIVE (MSI) STAFFING UPDATE

Shawn Kessel

Shawn talked about the planned events for the MSI Summit on October 11th and 12th. The event is located at Rustad Recreation Center in West Fargo, seating for 600. The 11th starts with a presummit event in West Fargo and the 12th, the summit begins at 8:00 a.m. central standard time with registration, welcome, keynote speakers, and breakout sessions. The day concludes at 4:45 p.m.

Partners include: City of West Fargo, Fargo-Moorhead CVB, EDND, and the ND Planners Association

Motion: It was moved by Mike Seminary, seconded by Tom Campbell to sponsor \$5,000 from the Foundation for the 2021 Summit. With no further discussion the motion was carried on a roll call vote.

Kevin Black – absent; Kyle Blanchfield – yes; Tom Campbell – yes; Eric Diederich – absent; Bruce Gjovig – yes; Lyn James – yes; Tommy Kenville – absent; Megan Laudenschlager – absent; Vicki Monsen – yes; Kari Ness – absent; Jamal Omar – yes; Mike Seminary – yes; Paul Steffes – yes; Eric Trueblood – absent.

FOREIGN TRAVEL REPORT

Commissioner Leiman

James spoke of the recent trade mission with officials from the Agriculture Department, and the ND Trade office to Qatar and Turkey. The mission was to build relationships with government and business leaders.

NEXT STEPS

Commissioner Leiman asked that a financial development strategy for the Foundation be discussed at the next meeting or a team be put together for strategizing.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned unanimously at 4:55 p.m.

Lyn James December 9, 2021
Lyn James Date
Chair

Sherrí Frieze December 9, 2021
Sherrí Frieze Date
Boards and Commissions E.A.