

## SouthEast (Nebraska) Resource Network (SERN)

Minutes from SERN Meeting

March 9, 2011

Mary's Café, Hebron, NE

Hosted by Arlis Hohl, Thayer County Economic Development Alliance

Facilitated by Jen Olds

**Present:** Craig Eberle (SEND); Craig Vincent (NPPD); Patt Lentfer (Fillmore County DC); Mike Collins (Ayars & Ayars); Bill Stazzoni (Ayars & Ayars); David Bartholoma (NDED); Mary Kruger (Nemaha County Tourism & Five Rivers RC&D); Gary Muell (American National Bank – Fairbury); Nick Harling (American National Bank – Falls City); Jim Green (Village of McCool); Roger Meeks (USDA-RD); Lydia Wiles (DED); Laurie Richards (Heritage Nebraska); Mary Simmons (Black Hills Energy); Larry Trease (Pleasant Dale); Tom Hamer (Five Rivers RC&D); Dennis Kahl (UNL Extension); Kyle Svec (City of Geneva); John Yochum (Cass County EDC); Cheryl Brandenburgh (NDED); Tammy Timms (Five Rivers RC&D); Scott Willet (NE Great Plains RC&D); Arlis Hohl (TCEDA); Merle Hartley (Hebron); Alan Richard (Pawnee City ED); Steve Peregrine (NIFA).

### Agenda Items:

Meeting called to order at 10:05 by Jen Olds.

**Welcome:** Jen Olds, SERN Chair, opened the meeting with expressing appreciation to Arlis for setting up meeting location, speakers, and lunch. Members were encouraged to complete Roundtable Summary Sheet (new form) to ensure correct information about their business in SERN minutes.

### Regular meeting:

- a. **Treasurer's report** – No expenses since last meeting. Current balance is : \$1,392.99
- b. **Minutes** from November 19, 2010 meeting were accepted.
- c. **Nomination of Officers** – Jen Olds reported that due to reorganizing at NDED, Whitney Bumgarner has asked to resign as Co-Chair. Motion by Richard, second by Lentfer to re-instate current officers to office for another year. Officers remain as Chair – Jen Olds, Secretary – Tammy Timms, and Treasurer – Devin Meisinger.
- d. **Meeting Format / Topics**– Jen Olds asked members if current meeting format meets members' and communities' needs. Members all favor current format. Meeting hosts have flexibility to adapt meeting as necessary. Mike Collins offered Ayars & Ayars facilities in Lincoln for SERN to meet if IT technology is needed or not. Also, is willing to present on Green Zone – assistance to businesses for green facilities.
- e. **SERN Info on Rural Initiative Website** – UNL Partnership for Rural Nebraska has offered to keep and update SERN information on their Rural Initiative Website. If anyone has information to add to website, send to Jen Olds.
- f. **Broadband Forum** – Dennis Kahl, UNL Extension announced that several broadband forums will be held across Nebraska. The closest forum will be at Embassy Suites in Lincoln on April 13<sup>th</sup>. For information on broadband usage across Nebraska, go to the Public Commissions website. Broadband usage includes download and upload time. Uploading time is slower than downloading. These listening forums are open to the public and will ask the questions of “What are you using it for now?” “How will it be used in the future?” - all to determine how to keep Nebraska viable for business competition. A limit to broadband services is the cost of installing fiber to distant locations.

- g. Update to Elected Officials Training** – SERN used to present “Small Communities, Big Opportunities” to communities. SERN is asked to support committee in offering two training strategies:
- a. Local officials training at next SERN meeting in June. Sessions planned include an elected officials training provided by the League of Municipalities together with a panel of City Administrator/Experienced Elected official. Dale Comer, Assistant Attorney General, has been asked to discuss the Open Meetings Act in a second session with question and answer time. A Resource Round table will allow one on one time with communities and resource providers. Planning has begun for this strategy.
  - b. Resource Briefing in August for western half of SERN area. DED, Rural Development, and SENDD will discuss the resources and programs available to communities, more specifically for the elected officials. Planning to occur for this strategy

Dennis Kahl noted city elected officials are invited to attend NACO training (previously for county officials only). Brochure was distributed.

#### **Roundtable Updates:**

**Steve Peregrine – Nebraska Investment Finance Authority:** First-time homeowner loan rate is at 4.5% and 5% for homebuyer assistance loan with down payment. Loan value is averaging \$3-4 million a week. NIFA’s annual 2010 Nebraska Housing Profile was released February 15. Go to [www.nifa.org](http://www.nifa.org) for more info. NIFA and DED are working together to create a Capital Access Program and a Modernization of Assets Grant program to provide lenders incentives to lend for equipment and industrial facilities modernization – program addresses needs identified in Battelle Study.

**Lydia Wiles – NDED:** Housing dates to remember are April 8 Optional Full application due for review; May 6<sup>th</sup> full application due to DED office by 5 pm; June interviews, July 27<sup>th</sup> CDBG OOR applications are due to DED by 5 pm.

**Pat Lentfer – Fillmore County Development Corp:** Geneva continues with downtown revitalization and rehab projects. New hospital is under construction with anticipated completion in Spring, 2012. City wide homeownership program called HOP- Homeownership Opportunity Program has been funded and will soon be assisting people to purchase homes. The program also includes some rehabilitation. County is having a celebration of 50-years for Fillmore County Hospital. Shickley and Strang are working on a new community center. John E’s and H&R Armenments are new businesses in Exeter and Meyer Supply in Iowa.

**Alan Richard – Pawnee County Development Corp:** CJ Foods is expanding, offering 28 new jobs. New library planned to be done in June and sewer plant is expanding; both done with USDA-RD funding. Six to eight businesses are participating in storefront renovation.

**Scott Willet – Ne Great Plains RC&D:** RC&D program has benefited communities for over 40 years. Funding is in jeopardy, contact your Senators.

**Merle Hartley , Hebron:** Auction House owner and helps at the Lunch Box.

**Nick Harling, American National Bank, Falls City:** Looking for new lending opportunities in SE Nebraska. Banks located in Fairbury, Falls City, Humboldt, Tecumseh, Elk Creek, Nebraska City, Lincoln, Plattsmouth, and Omaha.

**Gary Muell, American National Bank, Fairbury:** ANB is seeking good financing opportunities and willing to branch out to find them. Personally is member of Little Blue Area Development Corp which exists to help foster economic development in Fairbury and Jefferson County.

**Kyle Svec , Geneva City Administrator:** Two housing developments are in process. Downtown Revitalization projects with CDBG offer 75% grant with the remaining 25% loan with no interest for commercial rehab. Looking at sewer plant expansion.

**Roger Meeks, USDA RD:** Four programs currently available – IRP, RMAP, REAL&G, and RBEG. RD helped Falls City with broadband project.

**Dennis Kahl, UNL Extension:** Broadband Regional Forums April 13 in Lincoln and April 14 in Minden. NACO training for County officials is available for City officials as well. Entrepreneur Acceleration Program offers coaching assistance to existing business with 5 or more employees in the fields of planning, financing, and managing.

**Craig Vincent, NPPD:** NPPD is available to help communities with recruitment, business retention issues and community preparedness.

**John Yochum, Cass County ED:** Main Street redevelopment in Plattsmouth should be done in August or September.

**Laurie Richards, Heritage Nebraska:** Advocates and promotes heritage in order to build stronger communities and maintain the essential character of the state. Small town survival starts with revitalization of the commercial core which is best done through 4 point approach through Main Street – design, organization, promotion, and economic restructuring. Schools, barns, libraries, industrial, post offices are all icons of our heritage.

**Bill Stazzoni, Ayars & Ayars:** Engineering services to help communities identify opportunities; example is the Loft Community Building.

**Tammy Timms, Five Rivers RC&D:** Offered copies of the RC&D Highlights, Wine School scheduled for October 21-22<sup>nd</sup>, QuickBooks training in April/May.

**Dave Bartholoma, NDED:** Develop IT industry cluster group to promote innovation in Nebraska. Working on a few data center projects.

**Cheryl Brandenburgh, (NDED):** Discussion on rail sites and buildings (Seward and Columbus) and other rail sites – Plattsmouth, Schuyler, Dawson County, Kimball, Sidney, and Sarpy County. Encourage all communities to look at LOIS System and new reports. LB388 moved to General File.

**Jim Green, Village of McCool:** New subdivision on 18 acres, 8 residential lots, 2 commercial lots, along Hwy 81. Selected for site of Nebraska Cattleman's Ball in 2012. Two Men & an Oven – new business opening April 2011. Two electricians and one plumber are new tradesmen in town.

**Jen Olds, SENDD:** SENDD continues to assist their membership of 15 Counties and 106 municipalities with Grant Administration and project development. The Villages of Mead and Jansen have received planning grants to conduct preliminary engineering reports for Water and Wastewater. SENDD is administering Housing Rehabilitation Grants in the communities of Fairmont, Fairbury, Geneva, Diller/Odell, Tecumseh, Pawnee County, Plattsmouth and Auburn. Additional Regional and Disaster housing rehab programs are ongoing in Otoe, Polk, Saunders, Butler, and Cass Counties. There is a high demand for eligible contractors in those areas. Please direct any contractors interested in bidding on projects in those towns/counties to SENDD.

**Craig Eberle, SENDD:** Provides administration of CDBG, EDFL and LB840 Program Plans. Is out of GAP funding under IRP Loan Fund. Still have Micro-loan funding available up to \$35,000. SENDD is working on an application for a new IRP Loan Fund.

**Mary Kruger, Nemaha County Tourism:** While Cooper Nuclear Plant is in shut-down mode, is distributing tourism attraction flyers across Nemaha County to encourage employees/spouses to visit local attractions.

**Tom Hamer, Five Rivers RC&D:** National Budget has zeroed out RC&D program funding.

**Leroy Trease, Village of Pleasant Dale:** Seeking assistance for vacant Quick Stop buildings and other public buildings that are under a threat of closing.

**Mary Simmons, Black Hills Energy:** Offers economic development assistance to communities.

**Mike Collins, Ayars & Ayars:** Engineering services to communities for development sites, etc. Appreciates the great job the SERN secretary is doing. 😊

**Arlis Hohl, Thayer County EDA:** Cheese plant building is available and for sale. Zero Pantry is expanding. Deshler announced remodeling building on Hwy 136 and moving café. 4-5 business inquiries in the area. Davenport has new business coming, possible burnt café rebuilding in Davenport. Trailblazers RC&D if hosting Fun Run/Walk on June 11. Motel in Geneva is for sale.

**Community/Business Spotlight:**

- 1) Spring Creek Model Trains Store – Deb Tucker. Deb purchased old grocery store (3,500 ft<sup>2</sup>) downtown Deshler 1 ½ year ago. Her store is the largest model train inventory store in the nation. Most sales are conducted during trade shows around the US or by small ads in trade magazines. Her website [www.springcreekmodeltrains.com](http://www.springcreekmodeltrains.com) is not yet interactive. Deb works full-time on this business and her husband, Dave, part-time.
- 2) True Value – Ryan Luttrell. Ryan purchased True Value Store in Hebron March 2010 (an example of a successful business succession). The #1 goal is to provide for the community. Ryan's wife runs a gift store at the front with main hardware supplies in the back. Other community service-minded services include propane exchange and free shipping to the store for True Value products. They will also search for those hard-to-find items not carried at the store per customer request. They have partnered with Davenport landscaping business to offer trees to customers. Social networking has benefitted the Luttrell's business by having a Facebook page. True Value gives them a free website. Luttrell's worked with the local banker and USDA Rural Development to purchase this business.

**Meeting Adjourned at 12:10 pm.**

**Lunch: Mary's Café, Hebron.**

**Guest Speaker:** Presentation by Andrea McClintic, Nebraska DED. Topic: LB840 Local Municipal Option Tax with Panel Speakers: Craig Eberle, SENDD; Patt Lentfer, Fillmore County; and Pat Haverty, Nebraska City.

Respectfully,

Tammy Timms, Secretary