

SouthEast (Nebraska) Resource Network (SERN)
Minutes from SERN Meeting
June 24, 2015
Falls City, NE

Hosted by Beckie Cromer, Falls City EDGE
Facilitated by Craig Eberle, SENDD

30 individuals were present for the business meeting including the following: Joshua Sheffield (Nebraska Department of Labor – Beatrice), Judy Murphy (City Council – Falls City), Keith Ellis (Nebraska Public Power District), Janelle Moran (Rural Enterprise Assistance Project), Austin Duerfeldt (Richardson County), David Branch (Falls City Chamber of Commerce), Dan Hanson (Peru State College), Charlie Rodatz (Falls City EDGE), Emily Bausch (Olsson Associates), Stephanie Shrader (Nebraska City Area Economic Development Corp.), Lisa Beethe (Southeast Nebraska Development District – Humboldt), Craig Eberle (Southeast Nebraska Development District Lincoln/Bradshaw), Kevin Burnison (Humboldt), Elaine Hanson (Peru State College), Sarah Skinner (Senator Deb Fischer’s Office), Bob Walters (Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership), Marguerite Himmelberg (Southeast Community College), Jessica Jones (Nebraska Extension – Johnson County), Paula Rhian (Excel Development Corporation), Alan Romine (Falls City Utilities), Gary Jorn (City of Falls City), Hung Vo (USDA-Rural Development), Chuck Whitney (Southeast Nebraska Communications), Scott Honan (NioCorp), Brook Aken (Omaha Public Power District), Jerry Oliver (Falls City Mayor), Bart Keller (Falls City EDGE), Mike Flood (FCTV), Beckie Cromer (Falls City EDGE), Cassie Whalen (Falls City EDGE).

Welcome/Regular Business

Called to order at 10:05 A.M. by Craig Eberle, SERN Chair. Craig Eberle welcomed attendees to The Grand Weaver Hotel in Falls City. He then provided an initial orientation to everyone in attendance on the meeting agenda and format.

A. Treasurers Report

Chair Eberle directed the attendees to the treasurer’s report that was included in the meeting packet. The current balance in the general fund is \$1,186.88. The treasurers report was accepted as presented.

B. Acceptance of Minutes

Minutes from the previous SERN meeting (March 12, 2015) were distributed with the meeting packet and posted on the SENDD website www.sendd.org. With no changes or corrections from the attendees, the previous meeting minutes were accepted as written.

C. Other Items

There were no other items to discuss at this time.

Welcome by Beckie Cromer – Falls City EDGE

Beckie Cromer welcomed everyone to Falls City. She is the Executive Director of Falls City EDGE. She stated that business is booming with 50+ new jobs in the community. No buildings are currently available in town. Goldstar Sausage is a new start-up business in Falls City. Excel Phase II housing development is expected to be completed in the spring of 2016. The Grand Weaver Hotel has been renovated. A tour of the renovated hotel facility will be available to everyone at the end of the meeting.

Round Table Updates – Resource Providers & Community Updates

Judy Murphy (City Council – Falls City) – She is the Falls City Council President. Falls City has been on the rise for the last few years. All factory buildings are currently filled and in use. A food service company, Goldstar Sausage will be open soon. They are creating 40+ new employment opportunities in the area. New housing construction will begin in phase 2 of Wilderness Falls.

Charlie Radatz (Falls City EDGE) – He serves on the Falls City EDGE Board of Directors. He is in the radio business. Brought up Rulo bridge work and workforce training opportunities.

David Branch (Falls City Chamber of Commerce) – Combining Falls City Chamber and Main Street into one organization. John Falter Museum opened recently. Library gift shop is opening this weekend. Store fronts in downtown Falls City are mainly occupied. Chamber golf tournament is this weekend. A new youth center is being planned. July 10-11, 2015 is the Sauce and Cycles BBQ Event. August 20, 2015 is the Cobblestone Festival. Thanked Falls City EDGE for what they do for us.

Austin Duerfeldt (Richardson County) – Richardson County Treasurer. Livestock Friendly Designation for Richardson County is in process. Working on bond issue to renovate the old Armory Building into a new county jail.

Kevin Burnison (Humboldt) – Richardson County resident who lives in Humboldt. Deferred to David Branch of Falls City and his roundtable update.

Keith Ellis (Nebraska Public Power District) – Recruitment for Lead Generation trips. September 15-18, 2015 Process Expo – Food Processing in Chicago (food and beverage). November 9-12, 2015 FAB Tech in Chicago. Over 40,000 attendees and 1,500 exhibitors.

Joshua Sheffield (Nebraska Department of Labor – Beatrice) – Beatrice Career Center – Job Club next meeting is July 2, 2015. This meeting will be held at SCC-Beatrice from 3-4 p.m. Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a tax credit for businesses to hire disadvantaged workers.

Jessica Jones (Nebraska Extension – Johnson County) – Working on Entrepreneur Community Activation Process (ECAP) curriculum and train-the-trainer model to get the program to more communities. Working with a team of Nebraska Extension and UNMC personnel to create a multi platform program to address human risk management issues on farms/ranches and main street businesses.

Lisa Beethe (Southeast Nebraska Development District – Humboldt) – SENDD services include grant writing and administration, assisting communities and counties in obtaining grant funds for housing, streets, public infrastructure and water/wastewater projects. We are a resource for communities and counties to assist with their needs. Recently SENDD has been assisting Public Housing Authorities with HUD environmental reviews. In Falls City we are facilitating a CDBG DTR project (sidewalks, curbs, facades) as well as a housing rehabilitation program.

Craig Eberle (Southeast Nebraska Development District – Lincoln/Bradshaw) – Funding through LB 318 was included in the new budget signed by Governor Ricketts. This funding is for all Development Districts in the state to assist the Nebraska Department of Economic Development with programs, projects and communications. Judi Meyer was recently hired as our new

Programs Manager. She started in May at our Lincoln office. Judi previously worked as the Housing Director for SIMPCO. SENDD has microloan funds available to lend to small business in the 15 county area. The City of York was recently awarded \$350,000 of CDBG ED funding for a York Cold Storage business expansion. The business has committed to creating 10 new jobs, utilizing the SEND, Inc. Non-Profit Development Organization (NDO).

Marguerite Himmelberg (Southeast Community College) – 1. President Dr. Paul Illich is working on the following initiatives: A. Strategic plan covering the next 5 years. President's goal is to add up to 5 learning centers. Last week the board gave initial authority to support up to 5 learning centers to meet the needs of a 15 county service area. Now analysis begins to determine where the locations need to be for the best coverage and to determine what the centers will look like. Will look at opportunities to provide credit, non credit and dual credit offerings beyond SENCAP. B. Massive Facility Master Plan in process. Looking at modernization and expansion. 2. SENCAP (Southeast Nebraska Career Academy Partnership) – participating schools involved with our Career Academy Program in the area include: Freeman, Tri-County, Beatrice, Southern, Diller-Odell and Nebraska City. Other schools they have been working to include but have not chosen to participate at this point include Auburn, Pawnee City, Falls City and Tecumseh. 3. Allied Health – Nurse Aid and Med Aid classes in Falls City and Beatrice. Nursing workshop at Brownville and Beatrice. 4. Fall catalog for Leisure Learning/personal enrichment courses will be coming out in late August. Area coordinators welcome class suggestions and contact from individuals interested in teaching.

Bob Walters (Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership) – 1. Problem solvers for NE manufacturing. 2. Work with and through ED community. 3. ExporTech 2015 very successful, 2016 planning is underway. 4. Manufacturing assessments in your community?

Dan Hanson and Elaine Hanson (Peru State College) – They had their largest freshman class in 40 years. 20% more students living on campus than 5 years ago. Percentage of students attending out of the Omaha Metro area has increased from 33% to 42%. They are also seeing more and more students from Falls City enroll at the college. Enrollment growth is putting pressure on existing facilities. New Oak Bowl Football Stadium – can host groups. Park Avenue project is now underway. This project will result in a completely re-modeled entrance to the college. UN Medical Center program to reserve seats for PC students to get into the Medical Center. Phi Beta Lambda last summer had three national champions – state champs.

Hung Vo (USDA-Rural Development) – USDA-RD still has plenty of funds to spend this year. Water and Sewer projects: this year we have search grants available up to \$30,000. This is a 100% grant for towns that are in need of a project for the payment of a Preliminary Engineering Agreement to be completed and submitted through the Water/Wastewater Advisory Committee. The town's Median Household Income must be at or below \$41,056. USDA-RD has both loan and grants available for water and/or sewer projects. Projects funded include the City of Crete (new sewer treatment plant), Village of Barneston (grant for emergency water repairs due to freezing and flooding), and Village of Cook (grant for emergency water repairs due to freezing). There are still funds available under the Community Facilities program under the loan section. The State of Nebraska has exhausted their grant funds, but we can still go to the national office for funding. If the project does not get funded this year, the application is held over for our next fiscal year and will be one of the first to get funded. The maximum grant available is \$50,000 and the grant is based on Median Household Income of the service area. Projects that can be financed can be anything from a fire truck, fire barn, ambulance, library, clinic, hospital, community center, renovations and upgrades to your existing community center. If anyone is interested please contact our office and we can discuss your projects in more detail. Projects

we have completed this year include the Village of Byron (grant for library equipment \$50,000), Village of Milligan (grant for library and city offices \$50,000), Village of Unadilla (grant for a new roof \$10,900), Blair Public Library Foundation (loan for construction of a new building \$4,972,000) and Fillmore County Hospital (adding a new wing to the hospital).

Jen Olds (Peter Kiewitt Foundation) – The foundation has identified three areas of impact through a strategic planning process. They are 1. Strong and vibrant communities, 2. Youth Pathways, 3. Economic Growth and Opportunity. We hold a quarterly grant application cycle. The next grant application deadline is July 15.

Emily Bausch (Olsson Associates) – Olsson Associates is an engineering and consulting firm with office across Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Colorado and Arizona. We work with a variety of projects including public infrastructure, land development, site development, water resources and landscape architecture.

Janelle Moran (Rural Entrepreneurship Assistance Project) – REAP is a statewide program. She offices out of Tecumseh. Hosted marketing sessions in Plattsmouth, Beatrice and Seward. Plans for QuickBooks training in Plattsmouth/Cass County in July. Insurance session planned in Lincoln on July 9, 2015.

Stephanie Shrader (Nebraska City Area Economic Development Corp.) – On July 4th the new Three Hills Event Center holding a concert including Jon Pardi with Back Forty. Fourth of July fireworks and Carnival. Unveiling of the Treehouse Business Incubator in Nebraska City – a collaborative effort between American National Bank and SCC's Entrepreneurship Center. Holding a coffee on the third Tuesday of each month. ESI camp July 6-10, 2015/15-16, 2015. Highway 2 & 75 intersection construction to start in the fall. Syracuse Farmers Coop looped rail facility. A \$9 million investment in the Lied Lodge and Conference Center. A \$2+ million investment in Diversified Food and Seasoning of Nebraska City. Construction on the new swimming pool and aquatic center in Nebraska City will start this fall.

Sarah Skinner (Senator Deb Fischer's Office) – These initiatives are what Senator Fischer is working on: 1. EPW Committee Hearing – Affordable Reliable Energy Now Act (ARENA) bill, importance because of Nebraska as a public power state. 2. "Internet of Things" letter to Gov. Accountability Office (GAO) – need to analyze new technology to promote economic growth and consumer empowerment, piggy backs "Internet of Things" resolution approved in March. 3. Senator Fischer weekend visits – recently in Pilger, Omaha and Lincoln.

Paula Rhian (Excel Development Corporation) – Wilderness Falls II was awarded LIHTC last week for 14 family rental units in Falls City. We will start construction next year. Will apply for tax credit projects in Wahoo and Lincoln in 2016. Working with multiple communities to build market rate for sale or rental units.

Brook Aken (Omaha Public Power District) – OPPD pursuing and working through the USDA-RD REDLG program. Working with NioCorp on the mining project near Elk Creek. She is doing a lot of business visits. Offering assistance to communities that need help with LOIS.

At this time Beckie Cromer addressed the group. She informed them that Partners for Progress (P4P) has applied for funding through the SET (Stronger Economies Together) program. This is a joint venture of USDA-RD and Nebraska Extension. The SET program is to assist in developing a strategic plan for the five county area (Otoe, Richardson, Nemaha, Johnson and Pawnee). They should find out in early August if they are funded. The first event is a FAM tour

of the five county area. This tour is scheduled for August 29, 2015. They are currently looking for five people from each county to represent at the tour, as well as volunteers.

Community and Business Spotlights

Scott Honan, SE Nebraska's Niobium Mine Project

Scott Honan gave a power point presentation on the SE Nebraska Niobium Mine Project near Elk Creek, NE. Scott is the Vice President of Business Development with NioCorp. He has 22 years experience in mining. NioCorp is based out of Denver, CO. The organization has 10 employees and is partnering with larger companies for financing of the SE Nebraska Niobium Mine Project. Olsson and Associates is helping with permitting. Drilled 18 holes last year. Products include Feroniobium (saleable product), Titanium (used with paints, iron allow), and Scandium (used with aluminum, oxide fuel cells). The shaft would be 1,200 feet deep and work like an elevator. Will require 30 megawatts of power. Approximately 7,500 tons of Niobium/yr. Niobium is added to steel reduce weight and still have the same strength. This steel is primarily used in construction projects, the automotive industry and oil/gas pipelines. Estimating a 30 year operation life, with employment of 300 people to start with more employees needed when they reach full production. There will be the need for 30 mw of power to operate everything.

Mike Flood, Owner B103

Mike Flood owns two radio stations in Norfolk, two in Nebraska City, and one in Omaha. Discussed his history and how he acquired the Nebraska City radio stations. Mike has established local news teams in Norfolk and Nebraska City. He has established FSTV, which reports on local news, events and activities in Falls City. He has located a reporter in Falls City to cover stories and events. He stated that Falls City has more bandwidth than many communities. This fiber allows for the streaming of news casts and events in the community. This includes coverage of local sporting events. He believes in the product he is providing. It can be used as a way to promote your community and recruit people to the area.

LUNCH – The Grand Weaver Hotel (catered by Dickey's BBQ in Falls City)

Adjourn SERN Business Meeting

SERN Business Meeting was adjourned.

Feature Presentation: Tour of The Grand Weaver Hotel

The Grand Weaver Hotel, originally the Hotel Weaver, was built in 1924 by the Falls City Hotel Corporation, a group of local investors. Named after the Honorable A. J. Weaver, who was a Falls City resident and governor of Nebraska from 1929 to 1931, and as a major investor, and President of the Falls City Hotel Corporation, he worked diligently to insure the success of the project. The hotel has been operating continuously since its original opening, even through past and current renovations.

The Grand Weaver's current renovation has made this stately hotel the jewel of the southeast sector of Nebraska, and a stay at the hotel will provide a nostalgic experience for the discriminating traveler. The boutique style rooms each have their own personality, are appointed beautifully, have the original doors and phones; all making for a delightful stay.

At this time tours of The Grand Weaver Hotel were conducted for SERN meeting attendees by staff of the hotel.