

SouthEast (Nebraska) Resource Network (SERN)  
Minutes from SERN Meeting  
July 31, 2014  
Grafton, NE

Hosted by Patt Lentfer, Fillmore County Development Corporation  
Facilitated by Jen Olds, SENDD

36 individuals were present for Business meeting including the following: Jim Frager (Fairbury Business), Monica Braun (Rural Enterprise Assistance Project Women's Business Center), Keith Carl (Hanna Keelan Associates), Pat Compton (Nebraska Department of Economic Development), Max Kathol (City of Crete ED), Bob Doty (Nebraska Department of Economic Development), Ray Ringlein (Senator Johanns Office), Karen Margheim (Shickley Village Clerk), Laurie Richards (Nebraska Film Office), Jim Ulrich (Plattsmouth Main Street Association), Charles Jones (Plattsmouth Main Street Association), Rod Armstrong (AIM Institute), Willow Holoubek (A-FAN), Steve Peregrine (NIFA), Kyle Svec (City of Geneva), Cheryl Brandenburgh (Black Hills Energy), Lisa Hurley (York County Development Corporation), Brook Aken (Omaha Public Power District), Dave Hahn (Nebraska Information Network), Terry Keebler (Johnson County Commissioner), Corrinne Pederson (NMPP Energy), Dudley Beyer (Nebraska Investment Finance Authority), Lisa Scheve (Cass County EDC), Karla Jacobsen (Fillmore County Development Corporation), Mary Johnson (Fillmore County Development Corporation), Patt Lentfer (Fillmore County Development Corporation), Craig Eberle (Southeast Nebraska Development District-Lincoln/Bradshaw), Jen Olds (Southeast Nebraska Development District-Lincoln), Becky Cromer (Falls City EDGE), Jay Brown (USDA-Rural Development), Neil Ely (Ely Farms, LLC), Jim Green (Village of McCool Junction), Dacia Kruse (Nebraska Department of Economic Development), Stephanie Shrader (Nebraska City Area EDC), Jeremy Voss (Thayer County Economic Development Alliance), Sue Baumann (Grafton Community Volunteer-Author).

### **Welcome/Regular Business**

Called to order at 10:08 A.M. by Jen Olds, SERN Chair. Jen welcomed attendees to Gary's Brickhouse Grille in Grafton. She then provided an initial orientation to everyone in attendance on the meeting format, and reminded everyone to sign in on the attendance/sign-in sheet that was being passed distributed.

#### A. Treasurers Report

Current balance of \$1,042.29. Missed a couple of lunch payments from the February meeting due to weather.

#### B. Acceptance of Minutes

Minutes from the previous SERN meeting (May 22, 2013) are posted on the SENDD website [www.sendd.org](http://www.sendd.org). With no changes or corrections from the attendees, the previous meeting minutes were accepted as written.

#### C. Other Items

Chair Olds discussed the Local Elected Officials Training. An Education Committee was set up and met by conference call. Local Elected Officials Training scheduled for October 16, 2014. The committee is discussing doing another elected officials training in the summer of 2015.

At this time Dacia Kruse was introduced. She was recently appointed as the Acting Director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

### **Round Table Updates – Resource Providers & Community Updates**

*Stephanie Shrader (NCAEDC)* – Stated that the Village of Palmyra is leading the county in building permits for houses. There are currently 13 construction projects on Central Avenue in Nebraska City, Highway 75 is on target to be open for the Apple Jack Festival (September 19-21, 2014). Three acres have been sold in the North Industrial Site to a growing business, a five county regional group is involved with the Niobium mine project, the extraction process will be determined with the test results expected by 12-31-14.

*Beckie Cromer (Falls City EDGE)* – A new welding class is underway which will assist our industry with openings. Falls City received a planning grant for downtown revitalization. Consolidated Grain & Barge broke ground for additional storage capacity. Sacred Heart school broke ground on a \$2.7 million activity center. Industry employment is at an all-time high and growing. Launched an asset modernization grant with \$500,000+ in investments planned at our industries. Looking at a regional initiative focused on workforce, housing, and people recruitment.

*Steve Peregrine (NIFA)* – Eight housing grant applications are currently under review. 50-60 SF loans per week (approximately \$500,000). Beginning public input period for 2015 LIHTC allocation plan. First Friday Club meetings are scheduled in Grand Island and Imperial in September. They are currently looking for communities to host October through December. Special disaster mortgages available for Seward, Clay and York Counties (3%, allow higher income limits).

*Jim Frager (Fairbury Business)* – Cobblestone Hotel is a new 44 unit hotel in Fairbury that is doing well. Capri Motel in Fairbury has also added on and remodeled. Aurora Cooperative is placing a fertilizer storage facility in the industrial park. The Bonham Theater is undergoing a \$1.0 million project to renovate and re-open the theater, Tetra has been bought out by Loveland Ag Products, the downtown square has added seven new businesses, Fairbury Foods has expanded, and PVI is at capacity and having their best year ever. The City of Fairbury has a new Housing Director who will give the okay for renting out over 100 rental properties in the community.

*Jim Green (City of McCool Junction)* – Three years ago they started a new subdivision. Three new houses are a part of this subdivision, with two complete and one more to go. Sewer/lagoon updated and making changes to their wastewater facility. The Village is in the process of building a new fire barn in town (approximate cost \$800,000). Putting in a new park in on the west end of town. The ground was donated and they are putting in new sewer, water and streets. They are also upgrading the Northside Park. They updated their Blight and Substandard study. The McCool Junction Public School is putting three new rooms on to the existing school. This will fill up their existing available space at the school location.

*Lisa Hurley (YCDC)* – On October 3, 2014 (National Manufacturing Day) we will be taking teachers and counselors through three local manufacturing facilities. The annual job fair/career day has been scheduled for March 17, 2015. Five housing subdivisions in York County are currently underway. In the first part of March YCDC welcomed Power Track Doors who is now

up to 15 employees. The Holiday Inn Express opened in June. The Holthus Convention Center is opening in October. York is excited for Dickey's Barbecue to be opening this fall.

*Laurie Richards (Nebraska Film Office)* – The Nebraska Film Office partners with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED) to interact and provide information for filming on location throughout Nebraska. LOMEDA – now film friendly if community chooses to do so. Project must register with NFO to begin process. Newly formed Fremont N.E. Nebraska Film Commission – TV reality project. The film “Nebraska” had an impact of \$1.4 million in Madison County area and Northeast Nebraska.

*Jeremy Voss (Thayer County Economic Development Alliance)* – Went to the Thayer County Commissioners to make Thayer County livestock friendly. The county is currently in the process of applying. Submitted paperwork to USDA-RD to apply for \$90,000 that would be used toward establishing a revolving loan fund. In Belvidere the women's club was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation for women's clubs, the club was sent to Arizona for a ceremony. A classroom to commerce event was held in the county.

*Jay Brown (USDA-RD)* – Currently on detail/internship with USDA-RD state office from the Department of Homeland Security through Leadership Program. Learning USDA-RD's mission and leadership styles. He lives in Prague, NE which held their 7<sup>th</sup> annual Mud Volleyball Tournament in July. Prague is having Beer Barrel Days August 8-9, 2014. He is impressed with the SERN group and its initiatives and involvement in the communities.

*Dudley Beyer (NIFA)* – Mentioned the Beginning Farmer and Rancher program. This program gives the lender tax exemptions to reduce interest rates to new and beginning farm loans.

*Monica Braun (Rural Enterprise Assistance Project Women's Business Center)* – REAP is having a “So You Want To Start A Business” workshop in Tecumseh on August 12, 2014 from 6:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. and on September 16, 2014 in Beatrice from 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. Imelda Catalan is moving to Texas and leaving her position as the Hispanic Business Specialist for Central and Southeast Nebraska (her last day is today). This is a great loss, REAP will fill her position. Seward County Economic Development (SCED), Seward Chamber of Commerce, UNL Extension and REAP are collaborating with York County Development Corporation and the York Chamber of Commerce on the youth entrepreneurship. Planning ESI camps.

*Jim Ulrich (Plattsmouth Main Street)* – In order to assist our community businesses we are sponsoring a seminar with representatives from the State Fire Marshal and State Department of Insurance to address issues and questions resulting from the January 2014 fire on main street. Business expansions are underway by Woodhouse Ford and Bomgaars. The Highway 75 freeway project should be complete by the fall of this year.

*Craig Eberle (Southeast Nebraska Development District-Lincoln/Bradshaw)* – SEND, Inc. is a recently formed 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation that has been designated as a Non-Profit Development Organization (NDO) by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. The NDO can work with new CDBG Economic Development projects, as well as existing CDBG Economic Development Loan Funds to fund business expansions/startups in the 15 county region. These CDBG funds are paid by the business to the NDO, with the funds being “defederalized” and creating a regional revolving loan fund. Working with local counties and municipalities to find ways to capitalize local lending pools.

*Charles Jones (Plattsmouth Main Street)* - The burned building from the January 2<sup>nd</sup> fire has been destroyed. Taste of Plattsmouth taking place next month with 31 businesses. Façade

improvements continue, with only two buildings left that need façade improvements (out of 66 storefronts). The local jewelry store was remodeled, there is a new ladies store in town, and McDonalds is coming to Plattsmouth.

*Lisa Scheve (Cass County Nebraska EDC)* – Construction on Highway 75 in Plattsmouth will be completed in mid September. Cass County is currently working on their comprehensive plan, as well as the City of Plattsmouth. Louisville had a car show last weekend. Dirt work is taking place on the Woodhouse South facility in Plattsmouth.

*Karen Margheim (Village of Shickley)* – Shickley built a new community center last year. The community center houses a fitness center with a strong membership base. In June Shickley had their annual pork chop feed and croquet tournament. Beside our community center the village is building a playground. The school has completed a couple of remodeling projects in the past year.

*Dave Hahn (Nebraska Information Network)* - Nebraska Information Network (NIN) is a non-profit organization funded by 20 independent Telephone Companies across the state. NIN promotes Broadband Technologies, Ethernet and Economic Development in the state. NIN also works with Distance Learning and Telehealth applications.

*Ray Ringlein (U.S. Senator Mike Johanns Office)* – The state work period starts next week (August 2014). Senator Johanns will be back in the state meeting with constituents and groups. U. S. Postal Service is moving forward with reductions in operating hours at 300+ post offices in Nebraska.

*Cheryl Brandenburgh (Black Hills Energy)* – Helping doing Business Retention and Expansion visits with the south region (Aurora, Crete, Geneva). Black Hills Energy is hosting a prospect from Fab-Tech show. We will be participating with Fab-Tech in Atlanta and if anyone is interested in working the booth or walking the floor please contact her. Black Hills Energy is in the process of reinvesting in infrastructure in Fairbury. She hopes to see everyone at NEDA in Columbus September 3-5, 2014. There are currently scholarships available for economic development in 2015, please see her for more information.

*Brook Aken (Omaha Public Power District)* – She started recently with OPPD. She is in the process of meeting with communities on LOIS efforts, assisting them in posting properties and making updates. Participating in Business Retention and Expansion visits throughout the region. OPPD is launching a new website in September.

*Corrinne Pederson (NMPP Energy)* – Spreading the word on the value of Certified Local Government. Thank you to the SERN speakers at the Beatrice meeting. Every community needs to prepare for emergencies such as fire, flood tornado, along with cyber security.

*Kyle Svec (City of Geneva)* – Indicated that Geneva has a pretty full main street. The City of Geneva recently received a CDBG grant for a downtown revitalization project. This project will include façade work downtown, historical lighting, adding to their previous project. A developer is interested in independent living development (town homes, apartments and housing) for 55+ individuals. The city recently opened up a new community recreation center that is located by city hall. Matt Davison participated in the dedication ceremony, and a cinema group is showing movies there three days a week.

*Jen Olds (Southeast Nebraska Development District-Lincoln)* – SENDD serves a 15 county area in Southeast Nebraska. NADO recently presented an award to SENDD for their EDA siren project at their conference in Denver on August 25, 2014. Nehawka is currently looking for water main water storage, with Avoca also considering a water main/storage project. SENDD assisted 10 communities with applications to the CDBG Owner Occupied Rehabilitation program. CDBG Community Investment Stabilization (CIS) funds were recently awarded in Plattsmouth (streets) and Nebraska City (Nuckolls Square Park). SENDD currently has Nuisance Code Enforcement contracts in Brock, Palmyra, Humboldt and Dorchester. The SENDD 2013-2014 Performance Report will be out next week.

*Keith Carl (Hanna Keelan Associates)* – Working with many SERN communities and counties on housing studies. Working with the City of Crete on a blight/substandard study and general redevelopment plan. The city recently completed a housing study, with a comprehensive plan to be completed later this year. Seward County housing study was recently completed. The Village of Greenwood comprehensive planning program to begin soon.

*Pat Compton (Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED))* – NDED continues to conduct Business Retention and Expansion visits across the state to determine trends in business and industry, gather data on concerns, needs, projections, etc. to ensure legislature, Governor, NDED and Nebraska Department of Labor are informed of director of state for policy and legislation development. The main themes from these BRE's are 1) more jobs available than we have people and 2) housing is needed. Andrea McClintic has accepted a position at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, thus she will be assuming Andrea's LB840 duties.

*Max Kathol (City of Crete ED)* – He has officially been on the job with the City of Crete for the past year. They are ongoing with the comprehensive plan working with Hanna Keelan. The City implemented a redevelopment district and Tax Increment Financing (TIF). They have had two businesses utilize TIF with another pending application. They are in the process of re-writing additions to the city's LB840 program. Completed a NIFA housing study. Performing a historical inventory of Saline County. Conducted 20+ Business Retention and Expansion visits. Currently working on grass roots main street effort to prep for info from survey. The community is pursuing a USDA-RD REDLG application, are currently in the preliminary stages of this process. New building construction projects include Dairy Queen, Runza and Union Bank & Trust.

*Rod Armstrong (AIM)* – The 2014 Broadband Connectivity Conference will be October 1-2, 2014 at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney. Featured speakers include Shane Farritor, UNL Professor of Engineering, Daniel Sieberg, Sr. Marketing Director for Google from New York, and Keith Adams, Deputy Administrator of the USDA-RD Rural Utilities Service in Washington D.C. Details and online registration will be available at [broadband.nebraska.gov](http://broadband.nebraska.gov).

*Bob Doty (Nebraska Department of Economic Development)* – The annual cycle housing awards are in the contract negotiating stages. Disaster funding news will be released soon. The second congressional district application cycle is upcoming.

*Terry Keebler (Johnson County Commissioner)* – Discussed the Niobium mine project, Tecumseh fire hall, and renovation of historic buildings.

*Willow Holoubek (AFAN)* – She is today's speaker and will be discussing how food is important in the state for economic development.

*Patt Lentfer (Fillmore County Development Corporation)* – Sunflower Marketing held a ribbon cutting/open house on Friday, July 18<sup>th</sup>. New owners of the plant that employees 40 people that does screen printing, embroidery and promotional items. Tire recycling collection will be held on August 1, 2014 at the Fillmore County fairgrounds. Heritage Crossing will soon start some renovation in the skilled nursing, adding seven more assisted living units and will add some independent living at their campus in Geneva. Fairmont is on the process of re-doing their main street, and recently held their 138<sup>th</sup> annual Old Settlers Day. Famers Cooperative-Winfield will open their warehouse in Geneva on August 6<sup>th</sup> with an open house and tour. Odego...Leadership for Fillmore County will be starting on September 6<sup>th</sup> with an open house and tour. HOP Program for down payment assistance continues in Fillmore County. 2014 Career Day Industry Tours for Fillmore County high school Juniors will be held in September. Business Retention and Expansion visits with Ag-businesses were conducted in July. A group of people are meeting to take a look at daycare needs in the Fillmore County area. The Geneva Recreation Center opened up with an open house on Monday, July 28. Matt Davison spoke at the open house.

### **Community and Business Spotlights**

#### *Sue Baumann, Grafton Community Volunteer and Author (Laura Landon)*

Sue informed the group that you cannot stand by and hope that someone will fund your community. Look at the resources in your own community. In 2007 the village applied for and received grant to purchase a recycling trailer for the community. This trailer has helped in establishing a successful community recycling program.

Sue then discussed how she went to the Village Board a while back to start a fitness center in the community. The Village Board gave the green light on the project, and offered up a room in the community center. They provided \$20,000 toward exercise equipment with a five year payback. The equipment was purchased and fitness center opened. It is open 24/7 and has been well used by the community. The loan was paid back in a year, and the community now owns the equipment. The Village is not looking to make a profit on the fitness center, but rather to provide a service to the community. The group was informed that Sue is a bestselling author under the name Laura Landon.

#### *Neal Ely, Ely Farms, LLC*

Neal Ely with Ely Farms, LLC gave a presentation on his business. He grew up near Grafton and in 2001 was looking at an FFA project in Sutton. His project consisted of growing asparagus and then producing a pickled asparagus product for re-sale. He started with a ½ acre of ground and now is up to 4 acres of asparagus. His business has grown and he sells his pickled asparagus product throughout Nebraska. Neal is now running this business along with working as a loan officer for a local bank. Neal advised the SERN group that it is difficult for someone in their 30's and 40's to start a business. He is a big advocate of FFA as it helped him tremendously in establishing a business at a young age. Neal stated that there needs to be job opportunities in small communities for young people. These communities need to be proactive in providing opportunities for young people. In Geneva, the LB840 fund has assisted a large number of small businesses use those funds to bring back young people.

### **LUNCH – Gary's Brickhouse Grille**

### **Adjourn SERN Business Meeting**

SERN Business Meeting was adjourned.

## **Feature Presentation: Agricultural Enterprises – An Important Economic Development Opportunity**

Willow Holoubek – Executive Director of A-FAN:

Willow is the Executive Director of the Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska (A-FAN). She joined the organization four year ago. A-FAN has been around for eight years. A-FAN is a non-profit organization formed by leading agricultural membership groups in Nebraska. These groups understand that livestock production is a critical component to Nebraska's future providing vitality and opportunity for rural communities, adding value to Nebraska's agricultural output and energizing the economic in the entire state. A-Fan works with individual producers and communities across Nebraska to encourage the development of environmentally responsible and economically viable livestock production in the state. A-Fan consists of an 11 member Board of Directors.

Willow advised the SERN group that agriculture is food. Agriculture is the #1 industry in the state, with each dollar sold of crops and livestock resulting in a significant financial impact to Nebraska's counties and communities. One in four jobs in Nebraska is tied to agriculture.

A-FAN supports livestock development across the state of Nebraska. She discussed the need for more hog production as most of the hogs processed in the state come from outside the state's borders. Dairy production in the state is up slightly, with broiler production up 33%. Willow informed the SERN group that there is definitely an opportunity in your communities for dairy, poultry and pork production. These types of operations bring in significant economic development dollars. She also touched on Nebraska's Livestock Friendly counties, of which there are currently 26 in the state.