

SouthEast (Nebraska) Resource Network (SERN)

Minutes from SERN Meeting

December 14, 2011

Chances R Restaurant and Lounge – York, NE

Hosted by Cassie Seagren

Facilitated by Jen Olds

Present: Jen Olds (SENDDD); Lynn Franzen (NDED); Pam Dingman (Hanna Keelan Associates – Waverly Planning Commission); Lonnie Dickson (Hanna Keelan Associates); Monica Braun (REAP); Pat Coldiron (Seward Chamber of Commerce); Patt Lentfer (Fillmore County Development Corporation); Sheri Henderson (Saunders County Economic Development & City of Ceresco); Paula Rhian (Excel Development); Dave Hahn (Nebraska Information Network NIN); Rod Armstrong (AIM Institute); Alan Richard (Pawnee City Economic Development); Craig Vincent (NPPD Economic Development); Jim Green (Village of McCool Junction); Cheryl Brandenburgh (Black Hills Energy); Michael Foutch (Small Business Administration); Linda Black (NDED); Cassie Seagren (York County Development Corporation); Jeff Ray (JEO); Amy Vrtiska (JEO); Jim Ulrich (Plattsmouth Main Street Association); Charles Jones (Plattsmouth Main Street Association); Steven Davis (Energy Pro); Brett Garner (Energy Pro); Craig Eberle (SENDDD)

Agenda Items:

Meeting called to order at 10:06 by Jen Olds.

Welcome:

Jen Olds, SERN Chair, opened the meeting. She began with a special thanks to Cassie Seagren for hosting the meeting and organizing event. Members were encouraged to complete Roundtable Summary Sheets (yellow sheet) to ensure correct information about their business/organization in SERN minutes.

Regular Business:

- a. **Treasurer's report** - Jen Olds presented the Treasurer Report, indicating there were no expenses from the last meeting. The current balance = \$1,247.99.
- b. **Minutes of the September 21, 2011** - Minutes from the September 21, 2011 quarterly SERN meeting were emailed to all members and approved with no changes as presented.

Future SERN Hosted Events / Trainings:

- a. **Brainstorm Training/Event Needs** - Jen Olds asked SERN members for input on future SENDDD discussion issues. She expressed her appreciation to everyone for all of the hard work they put in to host SERN meetings and schedule speakers during the past year. Some suggestions for future 2012 SERN meeting topics were to reiterate services available by regional service providers, discuss small business programs, general conversations on broadband and info technology, resources training, training on new state, federal and local programs, etc. Some SERN members expressed interest in having more local representation at the quarterly meetings. There is a need to get the word out locally, such as inviting more local economic development and business people to the regional meetings.
- b. **Develop Committee(s)** - Jen Olds stated that she does not think the group is ready to develop committees. She suggested that SERN should try to do another special event this year. The local officials training held in Auburn (June 2011) was well received.
- c. **Schedule/Hosts for 2012 SERN Meetings** - Jen Olds provided instructions on what SERN meeting hosts need to do. Charles Jones of the Plattsmouth Main Street Association indicated that Plattsmouth (Cass County) could host for the NE quadrant in the third quarter. Jim Green of the Village of McCool Junction volunteered York County to host for the NW quadrant in the fourth quarter. Patt Lentfer of FCDC volunteered Fillmore County as SW quadrant host in the first quarter. Allan Richard of Pawnee City ED and Cheryl Brandenburgh offered to host the SE quadrant in the second quarter. This meeting will likely be hosted in Gage County. Jen thanked everyone who volunteered to host quarterly SERN meetings in 2012.

Round Table Updates:

Paula Rhian (Excel Development Group) – Wilderness Falls City Senior Housing Project is almost complete. The project consists of 16 units for 55+ individuals. Ribbon cutting is scheduled for April 2012. Excel is currently working on an application to NIFA for a 14 family unit project in Lincoln.

Sheri Henderson (City of Ceresco/Saunders Co Economic Development) – SCEDC is still working on a design for their website. The group is preparing for recruitment and dues collection. Ceresco is looking for ideas on recruitment, as well as options for a local grocery store that closed last summer.

Lonnie Dickson (Hanna Keelan Associates) – Hanna Keelan Associates is a private planning consulting firm assisting with housing market studies, comprehensive plans, downtown revitalization plans, blight and substandard studies of use of tax increment financing, housing development consulting and grant writing.

Pam Dingman (Hanna Keelan Associates – Waverly Planning Commission) – Hanna Keelan Associates is currently working with the City of Waverly on a comprehensive plan and new dam project. Pam is currently serving as planning board chair of the Waverly Planning Commission.

Jim Ulrich (Plattsmouth Main Street Association/Economic Restoration Committee) – Serves on the Plattsmouth Main Street Association Board of Directors, as well as Chair of the Economic Restoration Committee. Economic Restoration Committee is working with local businesses to help them improve their bottom line, stay open, and inform them of local and state loan programs. They also help local building owners fill their storefronts. Plattsmouth has 65 storefronts, and very few are vacant at this time.

Charles Jones (Plattsmouth Main Street Association) – Plattsmouth has undergone a \$6 million overhaul of downtown, including new sidewalks and lights. This project included a street scape and façade survey. Plattsmouth lost its wastewater plant during the summer floods, but the downtown was spared. The city has seen positive growth in its downtown, with many storefronts occupied and four new businesses opening on main street in the past three months. Several downtown businesses have also undergone façade improvements, taking advantage of the Plattsmouth Downtown Revitalization Program. The historic Fitzgerald building has undergone major renovations and has been transformed into contemporary downtown hotel suites.

Jim Green (Village of McCool Junction) – McCool Junction is hosting the 2012 Nebraska Cattlemen's ball June 1-2, 2012. The event will be held at the Stone Creek Events Center. Tickets for this event go on sale tomorrow. Tickets may be purchased in person at Cornerstone Bank in McCool Junction, by calling Cornerstone Bank at 402-724-2121, or by logging on to www.cattlemensball.com. They are currently seeking volunteers to help out with the event – many volunteers are needed. Two new houses have been built in the village, and the Farmer's Cooperative is working on a \$2 million expansion. Two Men and an Oven is a new bakery and catering business that has opened in town. The business has been well received locally and regionally. The village is beginning a new TIF project, a new siren has been installed, and the village is currently looking for senior housing.

Craig Vincent (NPPD Economic Development) – NPPD Economic Development is a service organization providing support to customers and communities throughout Southeast Nebraska. NPPD Economic Development helps communities with recruitment, site assessment and marketing initiatives. We are currently reviewing, updating and streamlining the tools that are offered to communities.

Cheryl Brandenburgh (Black Hills Energy) – Black hills Energy (BHE) has a new economic modeling tool to help people see how clusters work and identify potential new clusters. New programs from BHE in 2012 to include proposal review and web site analysis. BHE would like to help local counties/communities with business retention visits. With low natural gas prices, people should be encouraged to contact BHE about Service Guard.

Michael Foutch (SBA) – The amount of small business loans across Nebraska financed through the Small Business Administration (SBA) set a new record in Fiscal Year 2011, which ended September 30, 2011. The SBA approved 530 loans for \$167.5 million in loan guarantees through more than 75 banks and credit unions across the state. This shattered the previous standard of \$153 million set in 2010. The average dollar amount per loan this past year jumped than 20 percent over the previous year. Rural small business got 187 of those loans. As a direct result of SBA-backed financing, 2,000 new jobs are being created in our state and 4,300 jobs are being kept on payrolls. But all of those loans, none went to businesses in York, NE. SBA has programs in mind to help change that. The SBA recently changed its CAPLINES program to allow a small business to borrow against receivables and inventory, contracts and purchase orders to secure an SBA line of credit for up to \$5 million. SBA has also expanded the 504 program to refinance eligible large equipment and real estate assets. And as always, SBA's Rural Lender Advantage loan program is the best avenue for smaller banks to finance projects up to \$350,000. Please call the SBA at 402-221-7211 for details on all of SBA's business programs.

Lynn Franzen (NDED) – Has recently moved positions within the Department – is now the Southeast Field Representative for the Business Development division. She is serving Butler, Saunders, Seward, Lancaster, Gage, Cass, Otoe, Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee and Richardson Counties in the SERN area.

Patt Lentfer (Fillmore County Development Corp.) – Geneva has two new housing divisions, with lots going for \$99.99. CPI-Lansing, LLC is building a new loop track grain facility capable of loading shuttle trains on the BNSF Railroad in Fillmore County. This facility should be up and running in 2012. Geneva is working on a downtown revitalization project, looking at lighting other improvements to the downtown. Progress continues on the new hospital, and the present hospital site (53,000 square feet) will be available for sale in the spring. New

construction is underway/almost complete for three expanding Fillmore County businesses – Gamble's Do It Best hardware (Geneva), Ralph's Geneva Tire and Shickley Lumber. Geneva State Bank is conducting an extensive remodeling project. Future planned programs include QuickBooks training for small businesses (in partnership with REAP), and a Brown Bag Workshop in January 2012 to discuss leadership in workplace organizations.

Pat Coldiron (Seward Chamber of Commerce) – The Seward Chamber of Commerce has been receiving and responding to several business inquiries, resulting in a few site visits. Seward has had a couple of business TIF projects; three new businesses have opened up downtown. Seward hosted their first lighted Christmas parade in December 2011. It was very beneficial to the City and local businesses. The new Seward middle school is opening in the spring of 2012. A business to business dinner is being planned for January or February 2012.

Dave Hahn (Nebraska Information Network) – NIN is a non-profit organization funded by 20 Nebraska telephone companies to work with citizens of Nebraska to promote the use of state of the art telecommunication infrastructure. This promotion is done to enhance economic development, improve access to government, acquire greater educational opportunities and improve access to health care. NIN is working to continue expanding broadband development, telecommunication and distance learning application in rural Nebraska.

Rod Armstrong (AIM Institute) – The Broadband Connecting Nebraska conference held in Lincoln on November 1, 2011 was a success. Over 150 people participated in the conference. The initial Gallup Entrepreneur Acceleration System (EAS) is complete, with over 120 EAS cohort organizations being honored at the recently held Impact Summit. They are now recruiting entrepreneurs/businesses for the 2012 class. Upcoming events include 1. AIM Speaker Series – February 15, 2012: David Graff, CEO of Hudl; March 7, 2012: Dan Roberts, President and CEO of Ouellette & Associates – both presentations to be held at the Nebraska Technology Park in Lincoln (4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.); 2. Infotec to be held April 17-18, 2012 at the CenturyLink Center in Omaha; 3. 2012 Broadband Connecting Nebraska Conference is being planned for next fall – dates and location TBA.

Monica Braun (REAP) – REAP provides training, technical assistance and direct loan funding to small businesses in rural Nebraska. Monica and Janelle Moran out of Tecumseh work with small businesses located in SERN counties. The sixth annual Marketplace conference is scheduled for February 22, 2012 at the Ramada Inn in Kearney. REAP will be implementing a small business needs survey in early 2012. REAP held Quick books training sessions at locations across the SERN area. Overall response to these trainings was favorable.

Linda Black (NDED) – The Governor recently announced Catherine Lang is the new Director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED). She will continue to serve as Commissioner of the Nebraska Department of Labor (DOL), with legislation being introduced to merge the two departments. NDED is now taking applications for the 2012 Microenterprise Tax Credit and Nebraska Rural Advantage programs. NDED has 14-16 new programs that have generated a lot of interest. Of these programs, the research and development program has the lowest number of applications. Communities are encouraged to update information on the LOIS system. Rail site development projects are currently in the planning stages

Jeff Ray (JEO) – Started with JEO in July 2012. JEO works with engineering projects, wastewater, comprehensive plans, housing, zoning, etc.

Amy Vrtiska (JEO) – Biggest projects deal with hazard mitigation plans. Currently working with emergency managers and flood plain managers in communities.

Alan Richard (Pawnee City Economic Development) – Jessica Jones is the new president of 5 Rivers RC&D. Southeast Nebraska Progress for Partners (P4P) is a group consisting of 5 counties in Southeast Nebraska (Nemaha, Richardson, Pawnee, Johnson and Otoe). This group was formed to address some of the needs of these SE Nebraska counties. The new library is now open in Pawnee City. The old library has been sold to Mr. Hunt. He is proposing to use the old library as an art gallery. The Pawnee City wastewater treatment facility improvements are in progress. C.J. Foods recently completed a large expansion of their production facility, adding 36 new employees.

Cassie Seagren (York County Development Corporation) – YCDC office continues to be very busy. They currently have 16 active projects for a staff of two, and have conducted 26 business visits. McCool Junction is working on a leadership community application. York is hosting the fall NEDA conference September 12-14, 2012. She is currently studying for her economic development exam to be certified as an ED Planner.

Jen Olds (SENDD) – SENDD covers all counties also included in SERN, with the exception of Lancaster County and Butler County. SENDD is actively seeking new applications for the York County Down Payment Assistance program for home ownership. Other downpayment assistance programs are active in Nebraska City, and Fillmore County. Tecumseh received preliminary award of \$1 million from the transportation enhancement program to re-do brick streets around the town square. SENDD is currently working on a new website to be live very soon. SENDD plan to include a menu item for SERN on its website. York was highlighted in the SENDD November 2011 newsletter.

Craig Eberle (SENDD) – Has moved to Bradshaw, NE. Is now working out of his home three days a week at the SENDD Western Field Office (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) and in the SENDD-Lincoln office two days a week (Tuesday and Thursday). SENDD is looking to apply for additional regional loan funds in the first quarter of 2012, possibly through the USDA-RD IRP and/or the Nebraska Enterprise Fund (NEF).

Steven Davis (Energy Pro) – Energy Pro is an energy solutions consulting firm located in Lincoln, NE.

Brett Garner (Energy Pro) – Energy Pro has been involved with a few energy savings projects in York. They have been partnering with SENDD on some of the energy efficiency projects SENDD has been administering in SE Nebraska. They are attending the SERN meeting to see how their programs/services combine with other service providers in attendance at this meeting.

York County/Community Spotlight

Cassie Seagren introduced York Mayor Chuck Harris. Chuck Harris welcomed everyone to York. He touched on some of the great things that are going on in the community, such as the new well field and transmission mains project, and the Nebraska Avenue project. The Nebraska Avenue project is complete, and included a new concrete surface, storm sewer, curbs and gutters. He mentioned that York is a great place for businesses to operate, as they have the lowest municipal tax rate in the State of Nebraska.

York County Business Spotlight

Cassie Seagren introduced Tony North, who is the manager of North Office Supply in York. North Office Supply has been in business for 40 years. Tony believes York is a unique location for his business. North Office Supply performs a large variety of functions for their clients. These functions not only include office supplies and printing services, but also screen printing. Through their partnership with YCDC, Tony has learned that his business was doing well on its own, but they are doing much more with Cassie and YCDC.

North Office Supply currently employees 15 people. Tony expressed the importance of creating a business succession plan. A succession plan was developed for this business. This succession plan enabled Tony to relocate from Denver and come back to York to take over management of the company.

SERN Meeting adjourned at 12:14 p.m. – Lunch at Chances R Restaurant in York

Featured Presentation – Jeff Yost, Nebraska Community Foundation Transfer of Wealth Study

Jeff Yost, President and CEO of the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF), provided some information to the group about the organization. He indicated that NCF's mission is to partner with Nebraska community leaders to inspire charitable giving, manage financial resources and make strategic investments for the prosperity of the people and their communities. NCF helps communities help themselves – assisting them in gaining their financial independence through donations and endowments. They work with community leaders to engage young people to increase their desire to stay or return home, assist with the transfer of locally owned businesses, and craft a vision and action plan for the community.

The Nebraska Community Foundation recently completed a Transfer of Wealth Study. This study is an update of the original Transfer of Wealth Study, which NCF published in 2002. Jeff provided some highlights on the updated Transfer of Wealth Study to the group. According to the study, over the next 50 years more than \$600 billion will likely transfer from one generation to the next in Nebraska. In rural Nebraska (excluding Douglas, Sarpy, Washington and Lancaster) about \$230 billion will transfer over from one generation to the next over the next 50 years. In 51 of those Nebraska counties, the peak of wealth transfer will occur within the next ten years. The Transfer of Wealth study proves that capital is available to build and sustain our hometowns. The key is engaging local leaders to visit with their friends and neighbors about what is possible if they give back financially to a local foundation fund through donations and permanent community endowments.

Richard Walter, Vice Chair of the Shickley Community Foundation Fund, also presented to the group. Richard shed some light on what has occurred in Shickley, NE. Shickley is a small community of 340 people located in Fillmore County. With assistance from the Nebraska Community Foundation, they established a local fund that has now exceeded \$1 million, with \$2 million in planned giving for the future. This is quite an accomplishment for a small rural community. Richard stated that the keys to establishing and building a local foundation fund are 1. Strategic leadership 2. Understanding who to get around the table for discussions and 3. Determine how you prioritize. Strong local leadership with a pro-active approach is necessary to establish and grow a local foundation fund.