

SouthEast (Nebraska) Resource Network (SERN)

Minutes from SERN Meeting

March 14, 2012

Evening with Friends – Milligan, NE

Hosted by Patt Lentfer, FCDC

Facilitated by Jen Olds, SENDD

Present: 26 individuals were present for business meeting as follows: James Frager (Genesis Consulting); Ray Ringlein (Senator Johanns Office); Monica Braun (REAP); Pat Coldiron (Seward Chamber of Commerce); Jonathan Jank (Seward County Economic Development); Bob Jones (NDED); Lynn Franzen (NDED); Arlis Hohl (Thayer County Economic Development Alliance); Dennis Kahl (UNL Extension Seward County); Mary Johnson (Fillmore County Economic Development); Kim Slezak (KP Slezak Consulting); Glennis McClure (Nebraska Enterprise Fund); Roberta Pinkerton (OPPD); Paula Rhian (Excel Development); Charles Jones (Plattsmouth Main Street Association); Jim Ulrich (Plattsmouth Main Street Association); Amy Vrtiska (JEO); Doug Watts (Wahoo Economic Development); Keith Ellis (NPPD); Alan Richard (Pawnee City Economic Development); Janice Stopak (USDA- Rural Development) Cassie Seagren (York County Development Corporation); Steve Peregrine (NIFA); Jen Olds (SEND); Emily Bausch (SEND); Patt Lentfer (Fillmore County Development Corporation).

Agenda Items:

Meeting called to order at 10:08am by Jen Olds.

Welcome:

Jen Olds, SERN Chair, opened the meeting. She began with a special thanks to Patt Lentfer and Mary Johnson for hosting the meeting and organizing the event. Members were encouraged to complete Roundtable Summary Sheets (to ensure correct information about their business/organization in SERN minutes. Lunch buffet by Evening with Friends would be available for around \$9.00 with payment to be made directly to Evening With Friends Restaurant.

Regular Business:

- a. Treasurer's report - The Treasurer Report was presented. The report indicated expenses from the last meeting for meals of non-attended RSVPs; however those individuals did reimburse SERN. The current balance remains the same \$1,247.99.
- b. Minutes of the December 14, 2011 Quarterly SERN Meeting - Minutes were emailed to all members. No additions or corrections were offered for the minutes and were approved as presented with no changes.
- c. Governor's Conference on Rural Development is Wednesday April 18, 2012 in North Platte. Jen Olds noted that two scholarships were available through Partnership for Rural Nebraska (PRN). Scholarships will be drawn for at end of meeting; Scholarship will be provided to Jen Olds and Monica Braun.
- d. Jen Olds noted that SENDD had a new website and on that website was a SERN section which includes minutes, agendas, calendar, and partner links. Members were encouraged to view the SERN pages on the SENDD website at: <http://sendd.org/southeast-nebraska-resource-network/>.

Round Table Updates:

Janice Stopak (USDA- Rural Development) – USDA-RD has 11.3 million dollars in loan funds to spend this fiscal year. The grant funds have already been used for this year but they are always looking for next year's projects. April 1, 2012 USDA interest rate will be at 3.475% fixed for the life of the loan. Loans for community projects include Hospitals, Clinics, Assisted Living, Senior Centers, Meals on Wheels, Ambulance-Jaws of Life-Fire equipment, Community Centers, Library, Animal Shelter, Jail, and Streets. USDA-RD had 7 employees take a buyout and retire in October 2011. The Norfolk office was hit the hardest, losing 5 employees. USDA-RD now has a hiring freeze and cannot replace any of those workers. The Lincoln area offices are trying to help out as much as possible. The Business Programs specialist was also one of the positions lost. At this time the Business Programs will be handled out of the State Office. For questions you can contact Robin Templeton Programs Director 402-437-5568.

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. Plattsmouth is interested in looking into a study for Upper story Downtown Housing.

Charles Jones (Plattsmouth Main Street Association) – Plattsmouth has undergone a \$6 million overhaul of downtown, including new sidewalks and lights. The new entertainment area within the downtown has a 40x32 stage will be ready for events this summer. The historic Fitzgerald building has undergone major renovations and has been transformed into contemporary downtown hotel suites and has a restaurant in it. Plattsmouth will be hosting Motorcycles on Main Street and Rhino Run.

Alan Richard (Pawnee City Economic Development) – Pawnee City thanks USDA for funding on various projects, including the new Library. The Library recently opened and has seen an increase in use. USDA is also assisting Pawnee City with a new sewer treatment facility. Pawnee City is currently looking into an Assisted Living Facility. CJ Foods expansion is complete making it the largest meat/pet food plants in the World. CJ Foods is looking at adding a shift and needs to hire employees. The need for affordable rental housing is needed in Pawnee City to supply the needed workforce.

Jim Frager (Genesis Consulting) – Genesis Consulting is working Johnson County Wind Farm project which should be done in 2013/2014. (Map was distributed). Fairbury is working with Cobblestone Hotel on a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) project. Additionally, Fairbury is working on a tourism and historic site project called "Yesterland". The 501 C3 will be a family fun center and feature historic items from Jefferson County.

Keith Ellis (NPPD) – April 2-5 NPPD is partnering with the Lincoln Partnership to attend the National Plastics Expo in Orlando for the recruitment trade show. In Mid-June NPPD, DED and OPPD will be attending a wind show. The American Wind Energy Association for supply chain recruitment. NPPD offers Entrepreneurship/small business support for customer communities.

Ray Ringlein (Senator Johanns Office) – Mike Johanns staff can assist constituents with business concerns by connecting them to the right service providers. Although, Mike Johanns office cannot advocate for a private business they can assist by providing information. Ray is also the event coordinator for Senator Johanns office.

Doug Watts (Wahoo Economic Development) – On Monday Wahoo ED loaned the last of the \$125,000 USDA grant to a new restaurant business in Wahoo. Omaha steel casting has committed to Wahoo and has been working on site development and utilities. Lake Wanhoo will be open in April and will have excellent fishing.

Steve Peregrine (NIFA) – NIFA is looking for partners for First Friday Club a community outreach luncheon focused on housing. NIFA will have new single family products to be announced in April. New "youtube" video on housing challenges in Nebraska will be posted soon on NIFA webpage www.NIFA.org and also NIFA's Facebook pages. NIFA offers 50/50 match for housing studies included in comprehensive plan updates. NIFA offers Modern Asset Grant (MAG) grant programs for manufactures to update equipment, currently over \$1 million available. Items eligible are depreciable, non-mobile machinery or equipment. NIFA offers webinars the 1st Wednesday of the month at 10:00am.

Cassie Seagren (York County Development Corporation) – The Cattleman's Ball will be June 1-2, 2012 in McCool Junction. The same weekend McCool motor speedway will be holding event. McCool Junction is working on a leadership community application. York School bond issue passed and construction will be scheduled soon. York will be hosting Nebraska Economic Developers Association conference in September 2012. YCDC annual banquet will be April 27. YCDC currently has 13 business retention & expansion (BR&E) evaluation visits scheduled. York Chamber is hosting a PEEP show, with creations made from "peeps". A private development of Alzheimer and adult day care is being looked at. York has 2 new projects pending announcement. York is developing a convention center group.

Amy Vrtiska (JEO) – Hazard Mitigation 1st round disaster funds from FEMA will be \$1.5 million for planning and \$3.5 million for mitigation construction. Grants will be statewide.

Paula Rhian (Excel Development) – Wilderness Falls City Senior Housing Project is complete and ribbon cutting will be May 23, 2012. City Impact Homes was funded and will be 14 single family homes in Lincoln. The homes will be rent to own in a partnership w/city impact. The project will include a community facility building.

Pat Coldiron (Seward Chamber of Commerce) – Seward has a new middle school and will need to do something with the old middle school. Seward has implemented Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for two projects. One of the projects is the cobblestone hotel. Tenneco is hiring new positions and a new restaurant opened in town.

Dennis Kahl (UNL Extension Seward County) – Nebraska Broadband Project conference will be October 2, 2012. A team of people is working on regional broadband plan. Broadband is important to economic development and individuals are encouraged to share the broadband assessment information found at www.broad.nebraska.gov. Webinars are offered the third Wednesdays.

Arlis Hohl (Thayer County Economic Development Alliance) - Arlis took the business succession exit class through NRDC in Kearney. Thayer County is still waiting to hear about the Housing Market Study with Strategies

for affordable housing third cycle Planning grant. Reinke's galvanizing plant in Deshler should be opening the new part of the plant soon. Reinke Mfg. has built a 4-plex that is intended to provide housing for Reinke employees. Reinke has been working employees 50 hour a weeks for over a year and needs to add to the work force. Metal Quest in Hebron is expanding companies adding a total of 50 jobs. Manufacturing camp this summer Belvidere has received a \$25,000 grant from the Union Pacific Railroad to build a train watching station. Restaurant Stones Thoreau in Davenport just completed 3 meetings of homegrown, homemade and hometown producers, consumers, commercial kitchen users. Nebraska Housing Builders Association is asking for individuals to contact state senators in support of \$1 million transfer to the Trust Fund.

Jonathan Jank (Seward County Economic Development) – Jonathan is the new Executive Director for Seward County Economic Development (SCED). SCED is a 501(c)(6) and is going through a by-laws overhaul that will create a suitable Seward County-wide public & private partnership. SCED has many exciting project including the City of Seward Economic Development Certified Community application, rail site being developed for future business and there is going to be a primary jobs announcement in the next few weeks.

Lynn Franzen (NDED) – Discussion of Southeast Nebraska Field staff changes as well as the merger between Department of Labor and Department of Economic Development. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is hosting a 2012 "Hiring our Heroes" event in Lincoln on April 24, 2012 from 10:00am to 2:00pm at the Lancaster Event Center. The hiring fair is for veterans seeking employment.

Bob Jones (NDED) – Bob is the new DED southeast housing field representative. DED is looking at the pre-applications for the annual cycle for Nebraska Affordable Housing programs.

Jen Olds (SENDD) – SENDD is in the process of updating the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the 15-County Service area. The CEDS is looking at a regional approach to economic development. During the CEDS process 2-3 meetings with local leaders and economic developers will be held in various areas across the SENDD's 15 county membership. SENDD is looking for recommendations of people to serve on the CEDS committee from each County. SENDD will be assisting with newly awarded owner-occupied housing rehabilitation projects in Nebraska City, York, Geneva, and Fall City. The March 2012 newsletter feature the Village of Bee, newsletters can be found on the websites at www.sendd.org.

Emily Bausch (SENDD) - SENDD is helping communities finish up with Nebraska Energy Office – Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grants (EECBG). EECBG project were one time funding for various Energy Efficiency projects. A Nuisance Abatement/Enforcement program will be piloted in a SENDD community beginning in April.

Roberta Pinkerton (OPPD) – Business expansions are picking up. This is good news for communities and economic recovery. MAEDC – Best Practices conference in Kalamayoo, MI is May 16-18th. American Wind Energy Association Wind conference will be in Atlanta June 3rd – 6th; Nebraska will have a booth with some local partners.

Glennis McClure (Nebraska Enterprise Fund) – NEF has been busy with lending to businesses. NEF does GAP financing deals that work in collaboration with other programs and banks. Currently, there is a good demand and good interest in business development. Glennis is also a board member on the NGage which is the new organization for economic develop in Gage County. Homestead Days in Beatrice will be in June this year.

Monica Braun (REAP) - REAP has been doing training with technical assistance and loan funds. A successful 6th Annual Marketplace was held February 22, 2012. The Small Business needs assessment is completed and the results are being compiled. The information will be available soon to other as well.

Kim Slezak (KP Slezak Consulting) – Kim is looking to facilitate new businesses to assist in tree utilization from farm clearing and tree cave pruning in towns instead of fiber going to waste.

Patt Lentfer & Mary Johnson (Fillmore County Economic Development) – Fillmore County Hospital is now open. The grand opening ceremony was held February 26, 2012. Fillmore County has a county wide home buyer Down payment Assistance program. The school bond vote for Fillmore Central did not pass. Two housing developments in Geneva are Park Place and Northeast Additions – Legend Lane. The Geneva Downtown Revitalization project includes downtown lighting and awnings for downtown buildings; construction is anticipated for April. Geneva Home Center opened in January. Geneva Tire Pros (formerly Ralph's Geneva Tire & Service) expanded the shop/service area. A new larger location for Walter Insurance and Real estate, additionally a New invest firm (Waddell & Reed) has opened. Progressive Chiropractic and Healing Elements has opened. Grain Elevator storage expansion is taking place in Exeter, Fairmont, Geneva, and Milligan.

Fillmore County/Community Spotlight

Patt Lentfer noted that Shickley and Strang are fund raising and planning for community centers. Ohiowa and Grafton are up grading wastewater treatment infrastructure. Geneva will be continuing the home owner occupied rehabilitation program thanks to a CDBG grant. Ohiowa is planning a 125 year celebration this summer.

Fillmore County Business Spotlights

Patt Lentfer introduced Evening with Friends owner Stephanie Nikols. Stephanie discussed purchasing the facility in 2006. She explained the business transfer and how the menu was revised. She discussed daily specials and theme buffet specials that are offer from time to time. She noted that there has been good years and bad years as the economy has gotten tighter. She noted that they started catering for larger events such as proms and alumni banquets. Stephanie noted that they do have a presence on Facebook but do not have a website yet.

Patt Lentfer also introduced Kim Slezak. Kim was from the New Mexico area and relocated to the rural area of Nebraska. She noted that an important part of the relocation was availability to have Internet Based Businesses. Kim works as a consultant for the Forestry service enjoys that she can live in a rural area and still conduct business remotely.

SERN Meeting adjourned at 12:17 p.m. – Lunch at Evening with Friends

Featured Presentation – Erin Malzer Grow Nebraska “Helping to Grow Entrepreneurship Statewide: The Story of Grow Nebraska”. Grow Nebraska is a 501C3 a Non-Profit marketing and training organization developed in 1998. GROW Nebraska uses Social Media to help market Nebraska Products. Grow is membership based and fees depend on the member’s needs. Their membership is 327 members: Of those memberships 73% are members of “rural” Nebraska and 27% are from “urban” Nebraska. Members are 22% Service and Tourism, 21% Food & Beverage, 14% Home Décor, 14% Resources Providers, 7% Fine Art, 7% Jewelry & Clothing, 6% Music and Books, 5% Bath & Candle, and 4% Retail Stores.

Grow maintains three websites: www.grownebraska.org , www.shopgrownebraska.org and www.grownebraska.com . They offer 20 different services to help entrepreneurs become sustainable businesses. Grow has website and product critiquing to assist members with marketing as will a retail store for members to consign their products. Grow also can assist members with packaging by offering UPS scans for small lots of products. Lots of assistance is offered for on-lines sales.

Grow also offers training and workshops. The **MarkeTECH 2012 conference will be** April 19th in North Platte. The MarkeTECH 2012 conference will feature Keynote speaker is Paige Cahill with Constant Contact, a leader in the electronic marketing industry as well as specialists on how to package products.