

SouthEast (Nebraska) Resource Network (SERN)
Minutes from SERN Meeting
November 19, 2015
Weeping Water, NE

Hosted by Amanda Heistand, Cass County Economic Development Council
Facilitated by Craig Eberle, SENDD

27 individuals were present for the business meeting including the following: Deborah Drbal (USDA-RD), Rebecca Adams (USDA-RD), Patt Lentfer (Fillmore County Development Corp.), Craig Eberle (Southeast Nebraska Development District – Lincoln/Bradshaw), Lisa Beethe (Southeast Nebraska Development District – Humboldt), David Taladay (Southeast Nebraska Development District – Lincoln), Jim Ulrich (Plattsmouth Main Street Association), Charles Jones (Plattsmouth Main Street Association), Sarah Skinner (Senator Deb Fischer's Office), Bob Jones (Nebraska Department of Economic Development), Marti Lee (NeighborWorks – Lincoln), Roger McCollough (Nebraska Business Development Center), Dee Arias (City of Louisville), Jason Esser (Omaha Public Power District), Cindy Cruse (Plattsmouth Chamber of Commerce), Carmen Chandler (Village of Cedar Creek), Monica Braun (Rural Enterprise Assistance Project), Kay Gerdes (Weeping Water – CCNEDC), Craig Vincent (Nebraska Public Power District), Deb Eggleston (Nebraska Department of Economic Development), Robin Newland (Robin's Pantry – Louisville), Trista Farrens (Cass County Economic Development Council), Amanda Heistand (Cass County Economic Development Council), Michael Barrett (Mayor – Weeping Water), Erv Portis (Plattsmouth City Administrator), John Miller (Oxbow Animal Health – Murdock).

Welcome/Regular Business

Called to order at 10:05 A.M. by Craig Eberle, SERN Chair. Craig Eberle welcomed attendees to the Weeping Water City Hall. 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 \$1,179.10. The treasurer's report was accepted as presented.

B. Acceptance of Minutes

Minutes from the previous SERN meeting (September 24, 2015) were distributed with the meeting packet and posted on the SENDD website www.sendd.org. No corrections were suggested from the attendees. The previous meeting minutes were accepted as written.

C. Other Items

Chair Eberle brought up the possibilities of training opportunities for next year. He had a sign-up sheet for anyone interested in serving on the SERN Education Committee. He plans to reach out to the SERN Education Committee after the first of the year to discuss training possibilities for next year. The last SERN training session was the Local Officials Training held in Beatrice last October.

Welcome by Trista Farrens – Cass County Economic Development Council

Trista Farrens welcomed everyone to the City of Weeping Water. She was recently hired as the new Executive Director of the Cass County Economic Development Council. She is just starting her first week in her new position and looks forward to getting out and meeting people in the communities of Cass County.

Round Table Updates – Resource Providers & Community Updates

Roger McCullough (Nebraska Business Development Center) – NBDC provides business consulting to Nebraska small businesses. We aid businesses in SAM registration and all aspects of contracting with government agencies, city, state and federal. There is no charge for these services.

Dee Arias (City of Louisville) – Louisville has building incentives for both residential and commercial. Waiving building permit fees and water/sewer tap fees, saving the average builder about \$2,000 per home. In the last three years, residential valuation increased by over \$1 million. New industrial park is totally sold out.

Kay Gerdes (City of Weeping Water) – Currently working on construction of new water well north of Weeping Water. A local business recently donated property adjoining our existing campground and plans are being made to enhance the camping facilities. Currently in need of additional businesses and housing. Extensive school addition recently completed which is a great asset to the community.

Carmen Chandler (Village of Cedar Creek) – Village Clerk/Treasurer in Cedar Creek. Riverbank stabilization project will be completed in spring 2016. Ballpark upgrades will bring the facilities into compliance for little league games.

Marti Lee (NeighborWorks Lincoln) – New to Northwest Lincoln. Working with businesses along 27th Street corridor. Assisting in community building throughout Lincoln, and promoting home ownership and training.

Bob Jones (Nebraska Department of Economic Development) – Does a lot of work for DED in Southeast Nebraska. Works with low-to-moderate income housing programs – CDBG, Trust Funds, HOME. Focus meetings held at end of housing cycle for program feedback. Action plan being worked on now – please comment on this as changes can be made to the plan. It is very competitive for funds. Applicants need to show the needs of your communities. Participating in P4P and the SET process.

Monica Braun (Rural Enterprise Assistance Project) – REAP and the REAP Women's Business Center provide training, technical assistance and loan funds up to \$50,000 to startup and existing businesses. We also collaborate with banks and other alternative lenders on projects requiring more than \$50,000. The Alice Integrity Loan is available in counties adjacent to Lancaster, as well as Colfax and Jefferson. Loans up to \$5,000 provided without collateral. Collaborating with the Nebraska Tourism Commission to hold Agri/Eco Tourism and Nebraska Marketplace in Grand Island (February 22-24, 2016).

Sarah Skinner (Senator Deb Fischer's Office) – Senator Deb Fischer and the American Red Cross have partnered again for the Holiday Mail for Heroes program to send holiday wishes and appreciation cards to our military. Senator Fischer is among the conference committee

members for the highway bill to iron out differences between the House and Senate versions for a long-term transportation bill. Senator Fischer issued a statement on the Paris attacks, called for a pause to the Syrian refugees entering the United States. She will speak more to this on today's media call after recent congressional briefings.

Jason Esser (Omaha Public Power District) – Worked with Midwest Farmers Cooperative to locate shuttle loading facility. OPPF is proposing a 4% rate increase and a restructuring of rate cost allocation.

Trista Farrens (Cass County Economic Development Council) – Continues to serve Cass County with the resources of Greater Omaha Partnership in conjunction with Dodge County, Washington County, Sarpy County, Douglas County and Advance SW IA.

Amanda Heistand (Cass County Economic Development Council) – She is the Project Manager with Cass County EDC, working with Trista Farrens.

Patt Lentfer (Fillmore County Development Corporation) – Geneva voters approved an additional ½ % sales tax to be used for a new pool facility. Geneva became recertified as an Economic Development Certified Community. All Things Consignment Shop and Libby's and Lollies Café opened in downtown Geneva. Six businesses made substantial capital investments and added jobs during 2015. Finishing up HOP down payment assistance program.

Cindy Cruse (Plattsmouth Chamber of Commerce) – She is the Director of the Plattsmouth Chamber of Commerce. She has worked at the chamber for about three months. They need to spread the word about Plattsmouth, which has a great opportunity to bring more people and dollars into the community.

Erv Portis (City of Plattsmouth) – Brought up the following items: 1. CDBG CIS – Water, storm drainage, street improvements (\$210,000 NDED & \$250,000 local). 2. CDBG DTR – up to \$350,000. Three year program, doing live safety and code compliance. 3. Southeast Community College Learning Center being located in Plattsmouth. 4. Platted Meadow Heights Estates – 55 square feet of lots and at least \$210,000 assessed value. 5. Highway 75 from Plattsmouth to Murray – improvements to start in 2017, with project scheduled to run through 2019. 6. DJ's Dugout is coming to Plattsmouth – December 1.

Craig Vincent (Nebraska Public Power District) – NPPD partners with our customers and communities in the area of economic development or marketing materials, strategic planning and positioning, and industrial recruitment. We also partner with communities and other agencies to market Nebraska at industry trade shows. Lastly, we work with individual customers on energy use issues. We are excited to announce that 2016 will be the third year in a row that we will not have a retail rate increase. We also continue to work on the recently announced Monolith project. This is a public/private partnership which will allow our Sheldon station to burn hydrogen produced as a byproduct from a new industry coming to the state.

Charles Jones (Plattsmouth Main Street Association) – Big event coming up is the Christmas on Main. This is scheduled for the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Includes activities downtown for kids, ties into Small Business Saturday. WOWT out of Omaha producing TV commercials for 8 businesses in Plattsmouth. These TV ads will run on their station through Christmas weekend.

Jim Ulrich (Plattsmouth Main Street Association) – Southeast Community College is currently looking for a site for their planned regional learning center. They will be establishing an advisory committee and curriculum in hopes of having the center open by July of 2016.

Rebecca Adams (USDA-Rural Development) – USDA-Rural Development has funds for Single Family Home Purchase loans, with 100% financing. Direct loans for homes (between \$145,000 & \$170,000) for low and very low income applicants. Guaranteed loans for moderate income people buying homes. Also have funds for 1% interest home repair loans and grants. Please call (402) 437-5551 (ext. 5748) or go to our website (www.rd.usda.gov) or flyers provided for more information.

Deborah Drbal (USDA-Rural Development) – USDA-Rural Development Business Program – Direct and Guarantee loans and grants for small business development and large industrial opportunities. Numerous programs available contact RD to discuss. Other programs include community programs and multi-family housing.

Lisa Beethe (Southeast Nebraska Development District – Humboldt) – SET (Stronger Economies Together) process is taking place to develop an economic development plan for the five county region of Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson, Johnson and Nemaha. The next SET meeting is scheduled for 2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. on December 2, 2015 at the Syracuse Library. They are looking for a broad spectrum of people to participate. Discussed SENDD programs and services, such as community needs surveys used to prepare communities to apply for grants, grant writing and administration, nuisance abatement, and assistance with certified community applications.

Craig Eberle (Southeast Nebraska Development District – Lincoln/Bradshaw) – SENDD has loan funds that are available to new and existing small businesses in the fifteen county area. They also provide one-on-one technical assistance to businesses. SENDD provides direct administration of LB840, CDBG Reuse, and USDA-RD REDLG loan funds to communities in the district. Southeast Nebraska Development, Inc. (SEND, Inc.) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that is certified as a Non-Profit Development Organization (NDO). The NDO works with new CDBG ED funds, as well as existing CDBG Reuse Loan funds to de-federalize CDBG funds through eligible projects.

Dave Taladay (Southeast Nebraska Development District – Lincoln) – Director of the Southeast Nebraska Development District. SENDD is a voluntary association of counties and municipalities providing a wide variety of programs and services. Has been with the District since 1980. Provided the attendees with a brief history of SERN. SERN was established in 1990 as an ad-hoc group of service providers who got together for networking meetings. In 1992 the Nebraska Development Network was formed to support rural development. This organization had its own entitlement programs and budget, with 8 different regions. In 2002 the Nebraska Development Network faded out as the funding dried up. Five years ago the current SERN group was reorganized into the format you see now. SENDD is currently administrating Downtown Revitalization and Community Investment Strategy (CIS) CDBG projects in Plattsmouth. SENDD is also assisting the Village of Union with a CDBG planning grant for a comprehensive plan project.

Deb Eggleston (Nebraska Department of Economic Development) – She is the Southeast Nebraska Field Service Representative with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. She can help with business retention and reviews.

Upon conclusion of the roundtable discussions, Chair Eberle brought up the need to schedule hosts for the 2016 SERN quarterly meetings. These hosts are responsible for securing a facility, developing a meeting agenda and speakers, making lunch arrangements, handling RSVP's, among other duties. SENDD will help coordinate and facilitate these meetings, as well as send out any notices. These meetings rotate quarterly among the four quadrants. The following organizations volunteered to host SERN meetings in 2016:

Quarter #1 (January-March 2016): Cindy Cruse – Plattsmouth Chamber of Commerce

Quarter #2 (April-June 2016): Pat Lentfer – Fillmore County Development Corporation

Quarter #3 (July-September 2016): Lisa Hurley – York County Development Corporation

Quarter #4 (October-December 2016): TBD

Chair Eberle thanked all those who volunteered to host SERN meetings in 2016. He will coordinate with all of the hosts prior to their scheduled quarterly meeting.

Community and Business Spotlights

Erv Portis, City of Plattsmouth – Riverfront Development

Erv Portis is the Plattsmouth City Administrator. There is a lot going on in Plattsmouth. The Riverfront Development project actually began in 2006, with a big announcement and conceptual designs prepared. However this project never happened. There were issues with contractors and funding, with no capacity to facilitate the project.

In 2011 Plattsmouth suffered a devastating flood. This flood did a lot of damage to the area. There was public concern about the proposed riverfront area. The City stepped up to acquire the land at a cost of \$1.5 million. The Riverfront Development project is now going forward. The City has contracted with a new developer. A feasibility study was conducted, with very favorable results. The study estimated that there are over 60,000 RV's within a 120 mile radius of Plattsmouth.

The Riverfront Development project will provide room for 192 camper pads, boat docks, and a marina. The next step is to send out for proposals. They have identified 60+ developers to distribute proposals. The City bonded \$2.2 million for the next phase of the project. They will designate the area as Blight and Substandard – which will make TIF available for the project. The LPS NRD will also assist with development.

Robin Newland, Robin's Pantry (Louisville)

Robin is from Louisville. She is the caterer providing today's meal for the SERN group. Robin is currently renting a commercial kitchen space in Omaha. Her focus is on canning and catering. She has developed a sweet jalapeno mustard as well as other canned products, including a Zapple Butter made with zucchini. She is a member of Grow Nebraska where her products are available online. She would like to do menu planning for families.

LUNCH – Weeping Water City Hall – Catered by Robin's Pantry of Louisville

Adjourn SERN Business Meeting

SERN Business Meeting was adjourned.

At this time Kay Gerdes provided a walking tour of the Weeping Water City Hall and Library. This was a large rehabilitation project from a few years ago that created a community meeting space and new library, in addition to new city offices and council chambers.

Feature Presentation: John Miller – Oxbow Animal Health

John Miller is the Founder and President of Oxbow Animal Health near Murdock. The name comes from the Oxbow Trail, whose ruts run through the property. John stressed the importance of building economic development in Nebraska. He delivered a power point presentation to the SERN group about his business. Oxbow Animal Health is located on a farm near Murdock. In 1973 when his uncle passed he took over the farm. Early on it was a typical Eastern Nebraska farm operation – corn, soybeans, hogs and cattle. He converted a barn basement into a hog farrowing facility.

In 1980 John started an alfalfa/hay business. Started looking at pet stores to sell his alfalfa. In 1992 he launched Oxbow Pet Products. Started by producing a 15 pound bag of alfalfa. Began working with veterinarians who saw the benefits of his products. Implemented Timothy Grass and other supplements. By the year 2000 John felt that his business was for real. At that time he began putting together a mission and paradigm of rights. In 2002 they constructed a new warehouse building. In 2011 a new shed for storage was constructed.

In 2015 Oxbow Animal Health is projecting \$25 million in sales. They are the #1 seller in Pet Smart for their type of products. They started exporting in 1998, and now have sales in 35 countries. Oxbow Animal Health is currently at 144 employees. They could use another 20 employees. They run three shifts – 80 people working at the facility at any one time. This is causing some capacity and logistics issues with their location along a country road near Murdock. They moved their warehousing facility to a site in Omaha. This move is not working out very well. John informed the group that Oxbow Animal Health has purchase some property at 150th and Schramm near Omaha. They have plans to begin construction of a new facility starting in the spring of 2016.

John advised the group that it is hard to sustain a growing business. His company does a lot of outreach through programs, awards, camps, grants and donation programs. He concluded his presentation by showing a short video about the company.