



**VOYAGE FORWARD COALITION
OCTOBER 12, 2016 9:00 RAINY RIVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MEETING MINUTES**

STEWARDS PRESENT: Mike Wellcome, Sheila Demenge, Myrna Meadows, Tammy Riley, Ward Merrill, Doug Skrief, Travis Glowasky, Sherril Gautreaux, Alyssa Hackenmueller

Absent: Paul Nevanen

Guests: Koochiching County Commissioners Brian McBride and Wayne Skoe

I. WELCOME

Stewards were welcomed along with Koochiching County Commissioners McBride and Skoe.

- a. To approve the agenda switching items IV and III so that McBride and Skoe can participate in the budget discussion.

A motion was made by Meadows; seconded by Glowasky and carried unanimously to approve the agenda as modified.

- b. To approve the minutes of the previous Coalition Driver meeting.

A motion was made by Merrill; seconded by Demenge and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the 9/15/16 meeting.

II. CHAMPION UPDATES

Creating an Attractive Koochiching County – the stewards of this driver were not able to meet over the summer but have an upcoming meeting scheduled.

Cross Border Initiative - CBC Radio out of Thunder Bay interviewed Glowasky and Meadows in September about the Cross Border Initiative. Travis will let us know when the show will air. The chambers of commerce collaborated with the stewards this summer and hosted workshops regarding the Nexus program and customs regulations. The stewards are beginning to work with regional partners on different options for checking into the country while boating or snowmobiling. The current entry point at Bohman’s Landing is not ideal.

Workforce Development – The immediate goal is to complete the workforce survey and roll it out to businesses before the holidays. Survey Monkey will be purchased as soon as possible. The results of the survey will be shared with the economic development organizations and the high school and colleges to determine if different classes or programs could be offered to better prepare students for jobs in the area.

Quality of Life – The summer’s achievement was the development of the Koochiching County Mom’s Facebook page where information can be exchanged regarding daycare. Shortage of daycare facilities is an ongoing issue in the region. There are over 525 members currently registered on the site. There are ongoing coordinated efforts to provide more activities for youth and a possible facility such as a Boys/Girls Club.

Tourism – The local chapter of the Voyageurs Country ATV Club have been very fruitful. The local chapter will work with the Club on opening existing forestry roads to connect throughout the region. There was a recent ribbon cutting ceremony opening new routes in western St. Louis County at Elephant Lake. US Congressman Nolan and Legislator Ecklund both attended and spoke to the economic contributions of the ATV industry. ATV recreationists spend money at the local restaurants and hotels and patronize local businesses while riding. At the last Tourism Driver meeting, Myra and Allan Meadows presented information regarding birding opportunities in the area. MNDNR has developed a draft Boreal Wilderness Birding Trail with specific birding trail loops. Development of these birding trail loops will require collaboration with MNDNR and local and county officials. Myrna also spoke of cross border planning and communication on birding events. On the internet site presentation project, a Google Maps/Google Apps workshop is being held today in collaboration with RRCC/SBDP/I’Falls Chamber of Commerce.

Economic Development/Marketing Partnership – The purpose of this Driver is to create a brand, a single message and a long range development plan. Christa Heibel of CH Consulting made a presentation on branding. The partnership agreed to implement her recommendations. As part of the branding message, Northome, Big Falls and Ranier agreed to include the VF logo on their letterhead and websites. We are awaiting word from Littlefork and International Falls.

Business and Job Retention – This Driver is working with businesses on their retention needs.

III. BUDGET

Coalition stewards and the commissioners had an excellent discussion concerning Voyage Forward (VF) progress thus far and administrative funding requirements though calendar year 2017. The discussion included an overview of the grant that funded Voyage Forward effort. Each Champion had submitted a budget through 2017 which totaled \$6,000. This is the bare essentials required to keep VF afloat. The immediate (through calendar year 2017) funding requirements are threefold;

Purchase one-year subscription to Survey Monkey	\$300
Maintain the Voyage Forward Website	\$3,000
Communications and Marketing	\$2,700
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$6,000</i>

Commissioners McBride and Skoe suggested that the appropriate place for VF ownership would be KEDA since Koochiching County cannot fund private groups or individuals. *VF is on KEDA’s agenda for the 10/19 meeting to be held in the International Falls City Chambers @ 1:00. Champions should plan on attending.*

Commissioner McBride indicated the next Koochiching County Committee of the Whole meeting is on October 25. He suggested that this meeting would be more appropriate for VF discussions and recommended we keep publicizing our successes in order to gain the confidence of county leaders and citizens.

The Northeast Higher Education District (NHED) has donated \$1,000 to the VF effort. Once the funding is received, we will purchase a subscription to Survey Monkey. Backus will serve as the fiscal agent for the grant.

IV. WEBSITE

The website (which was funded by the original grant) is being moved over to Host Gator and the redevelopment process is taking place. Host Gator will cost around \$100 annually. An additional \$780 will be needed for annual technical support and maintenance. This is about \$2,000 less than BigFishDigital. The next step in the process is to agree on one of 2 templates which will be forwarded to stewards.

A motion was made by Hackenmueller; seconded by Riley and carried unanimously to use some of the NHED funds to cover initial cost incurred in redeveloping the website.

V. COORDINATOR ROLE AND SELECTION

A job description for the Coalition Coordinator was distributed prior to the meeting for review and editing.

A motion was made by Merrill; seconded by Hackenmueller and carried unanimously to accept the Coalition Coordinator job description.

A motion was made by Merrill' seconded by Skrief and carried unanimously to select Mike Wellcome as the Coalition Coordinator.

VI. OPEN DISCUSSION

At the next meeting we will need to work on a job description for Coalition Secretary/Treasurer and to review the Driver Framework.

VII. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next Coalition meeting will be November 15 at 9:00 am @ RRCC or Backus/AB.

VIII. ADJOURN.

The group adjourned at 11:00.