

VOYAGE FORWARD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MARKETING PARTNERSHIP
JANUARY 26, 2017 MEETING MINUTES

The Voyage Forward Economic Development Marketing Partnership met at 10:00 A.M. on Thursday, January 26, 2017 in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 600 4th Street, International Falls, MN.

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS.

KEDA Executive Director Paul Nevanen called the meeting to order at 10:04 A.M.

Members Present: Paul Nevanen, Alysa Hackenmueller, Sherril Gautreaux, Sue Natysin, Mike Hansen, Pete Schultz, Mike Wellcome and Ken Anderson.

Members Not Present: Sonja Pelland, Marta Lindemanis, Shawn Mason, Bob Anderson, Eric Johnson, Jerry Struss, Tammy Riley, Carol Helland, Dale Johnson, Soren Olesen, and Leif Larson.

- a. Team Guidelines: A copy of the Team Guidelines was included in the written packet of meeting materials.
- b. Note Taker: Ken Anderson was directed/volunteered to prepare the minutes for this meeting.
- c. October 27, 2016 Marketing Partnership meeting minutes: Chairman Nevanen allowed time for members to review the past meeting minutes. MOTION by Pete Schultz to approve as presented the October 27, 2016 meeting minutes of the Voyage Forward Economic Development Marketing Partnership. Motion seconded by Mike Wellcome and carried unanimously.

II. MARKETING MESSAGE.

Chairman Nevanen opened the discussion regarding the marketing message. Mike Wellcome was seeking information “about the first thing the Mayor says about the community.” Everyone contributed to the conversation with a summary of the points as follows. The points will be used to create a short Marketing Message to promote Koochiching County, its communities, and all that we have to offer.

- a. We have the only water-based National Park in the U.S. Others know us for warm hearts and cold weather.
- b. The message depends on who we are talking to and the purpose of the conversation. Generally talk about the work force, utility costs, rail traffic, development sites, good schools, good health care, local community college,

affordable living, safe area to live, VNP is a great playground, Foreign Trade Zone, Multi-modal site, etc.

- c. There was a comment that a company's engineers toured the high school and they did not provide good feedback.
- d. There is a need or movement to live more simply, i.e., the "Tiny House" movement.
- e. We should explain more about what VNP means such as camping, canoeing, hiking to remote areas, etc.
- f. Packages used by PCA to recruit employees highlight scenic by-ways, hunting, snowmobiling, ATV use, horseback riding, and other benefits offered throughout the Arrowhead Region.
- g. The airport, hospital, broadband services, and good roads were seen as important.
- h. Lack of traffic was seen as a big benefit - "the longest wait for traffic I have had is at the boat landing," lol.
- i. The "corner office window" views of the beauty of VNP. The Park is a powerful message.
- j. Affordable housing, but some poor quality housing also.
- k. People should not care about good infrastructure - they expect it.
- l. People do not live to work; they work to live.
- m. Most who visit this area are from the Twin Cities metro area, followed in order by Wisconsin and Illinois. This area is a destination for people from all over. For instance, a DNR Conservation Officer met people from all 50 states in the last 12 months while they were ice fishing on Lake of the Woods.
- n. The negative for this area is its remote distance. If people value living in the "country," then they move to "Forest Lake."
- o. People look to the rural areas for what they don't have – crime, traffic, overpriced housing. It is important to not oversell yourself and be truthful. Be the rural area that thinks big.
- p. The pace here is slower. People value time. Part of the reason we are seeing autonomous cars being developed and tested is that it will offer more time for people to work.

III. USE OF VOYAGE FORWARD LOGO/TAGLINE

In a brief discussion about the use of the Voyage Forward Logo, Pete Schultz explained the Polar Polers have asked to use the VF logo as they think it adds legitimacy to the organization and they recognize the value. The Big Falls campground will also be using the logo. The article in the *Lake Times* was highlighted as a great article on the area. There has also been some less than positive feedback on Facebook. There was some discussion

acknowledging that some people leave the area and go to college, start families, etc., but also try to return to the area.

In summary, the group consensus was to simplify the comments down to some key, essential things that can be ranked, prioritized, and used to develop various “elevator speeches.” The message will also be tailored to the groups we want to target with our message, that is, recipe card size, short tag lines with a positive spin focused on specific markets. A visual will be helpful. Mike Wellcome has asked the City Administrators/Clerks to provide a two or three sentence statement about each of the communities to post to the web site.

IV. NEXT MEETING

In other comments, Mike Wellcome said the VF ‘window clings’ were paid with contributions from local financial institutions. Alysa said the Borderland Young Professionals would be meeting later tonight. She is also leading the effort to have a community meeting for the Coalition. The meetings will be held quarterly in different communities and could be held in International Falls or Ranier for the local meeting. They hope to give regional updates from the outlying communities and find out what they need from Voyage Forward. The Cross Border Team is looking at how to work with local representatives and the County Board to ask how they can work with Customs and Border Patrol to streamline check-in for border crossings by use of smart phone photos, for example. For another project, 250 surveys were sent out, 90 responses received, and much analysis of the responses will be needed for the open-ended questions. The analysis of the results will be released in June. Sherril Gautreaux said she has asked the outlying communities to submit a tourism report to see what they are focusing on in those communities. Mike Hansen reported that the National Association of Superhero’s would be at the Birchdale Community Park on July 4, 2017 to participate in the parade. Paul Nevanen said Minnesota moved from third to number one in the Midwest region for state workforce development. Minnesota ranks very strong. He said assessing the work force is critical, and hopes that DEED can make funding available. Alysa confirmed that businesses are struggling to find workers to fill available jobs.

The next meeting is set at **2:00 p.m., Thursday, February 23, 2017, Border State Bank, Lower Level Meeting Room, 1414 Highway 71, International Falls.**

V. ADJOURN

Chairman Paul Nevanen adjourned the meeting at 10:52 A.M.

Respectfully submitted by Ken Anderson