

June 8, 2015

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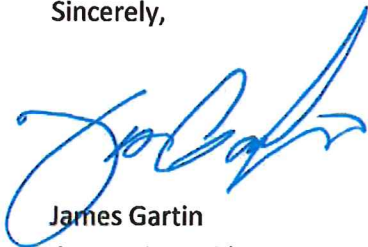
Heather Worden
Administrative Assistant Cass County
211 9th Street S.
Fargo, ND 58103

CASS COUNTY COMMISSION

Dear Ms. Worden;

Please accept my formal request to be placed on the agenda for the June 15th, 2015 Cass County Commission meeting. It would be my pleasure to provide the Commission with a semi-annual update in order for funds to be released to the Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation.

Sincerely,



James Gartin
GFMEDC President

SUGGESTED MOTION:

Move to approve the release of funds to the Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation for the period of June 30, 2015, to December 31, 2015.



Executive Summary January through May 2015

The first five months of 2015 included progress on numerous GFMEDC initiatives to grow and diversify the economy of the Fargo Moorhead MSA. In January the GFMEDC launched the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan which was approved by its board of directors as well as both the Cass County Commission and the Clay County Commission. The following is a summary of activities for the first five months of 2015.

Already this year, GFMEDC staff has conducted 65 business retentions visits and assisted in 14 business projects related to expansion and retention opportunities. Staff attended numerous county and city economic development meetings.

Business development activities for the year-to-date included 12 new business projects and the management of 3 existing projects. Combined, these projects have potential to create more than 1,250 new jobs.

Regarding its workforce initiatives, GFMEDC along with TIP Strategies conducted an extensive workforce study the results of which will be presented on June 18th, 2015. The Staff continues to follow a marketing strategy to recruit people to the area and continues its partnership with area higher education institutions. GFMEDC coordinated the third manufacturing tour event for area high school students and a job shadowing program for the college students. Staff continues to promote CareerFM website as a resource for area employers and to job seekers from other markets. The Teachers in Industry program is in its fifth year, with 7 teachers and 7 companies committed to the program starting in June 2015. The program has also expanded to include 2 Professors in Industry.

GFMEDC continues to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the area through active engagement with entrepreneurs and other key community members. We helped 18 start-ups with programs and assistance. This year, focus areas include a collaborative workspace, angel fund development, and the enhancement of financing programs and grants. GFMEDC assisted numerous startup companies with resources, connections and guidance, as well as involvement in the planning, promoting and sponsoring of Startup Weekend, 1 Million Cups, eCommerce breakfasts, CULTIVATE.you, Midwest Mobile Summit, Health Pitch and Startup Drinks. Events like these highlight the smart people and smart things our community is doing. The GFMEDC supports and continues to build on the EDC's initiative to expand air service.

The GFMEDC continues to participate in legislative issues in Bismarck for Automation Tax Credit, Education, and the Dakota Fiber Initiative as well as others as outlined in detail in the following activity report.

In addition, staff participated in over 58 investor and EDC partner meetings and events. To connect with investors, businesses and the public, the GFMEDC publishes a monthly electronic newsletter, contributes to a blog that is highlighted on InForum and manages social media content.

A more detailed report of the GFMEDC staff activities follows. Thank you for your continued support of the GFMEDC and our region's economic development.



Activity Report January – May 2015

Objective 1: Retain and Expand existing major employers

- Conducted 65 business retentions visits
- Assisted in 14 business projects relating to expansion and retention opportunities
- Assisted companies with primary sector certification process – 4
- Assisted companies with property tax exemption process – 2
- Assisted companies with corporate income tax exemption process – 6
- Assisted companies with sales tax exemption process – 11
- Assisted companies with automation tax credit process – 11
- Assisted companies with ND New Jobs Training Program – 11
- Assisted companies with Workforce 20/20 – 3
- Assisted companies with PACE Loans – 7
- Assisted companies with Career FM Information – 5
- Assisted companies with BND Development Fund – 2
- Casselton JDA
- Moorhead EDA
- Moorhead Business Association
- West Fargo EDA
- Clay County EDA
- Co-Hosted the State of Manufacturing event with Enterprise Minnesota. 24 people from area manufacturing companies attended.
- Attended Emerging Prairie #DroneFocus Event; Collaborate with ND Dept. of Commerce on UAS/UAV leads and continue to enrich and research Drone-focused recruitment and incentives.

Objective 2: Attraction of new businesses and development to Fargo Moorhead

- The GFMEDC has assisted in 12 new business development projects. The new 2015 projects were in the following industries:
 - Corporate Headquarters – 2
 - Distribution - 1
 - Manufacturing – 2
 - Physical Sciences - 1
 - Unmanned Systems - 5
 - Value Added Ag – 1
- GFMEDC serves as the City of Fargo representative for the 38 city State Small Business Credit Initiative consortium, as well as serving as a member of the Loan Committee.

Objective 3 Workforce Retention, Attraction and Development

- GFMEDC led 13 separate community tours.
- Continuing to find and deliver new activities for recruitment, retention and development.
- Continue to attend monthly FMHRA meetings.
- Continued participation in the ND STEM Network as part of the executive committee.
- Continued attendance of MSUM sector breakfasts.
- Continuing to work with Concordia, MSUM, and NDSU to find ways we can connect with their alumni. Also exploring homecoming activities as a way to reach alumni.
- Continued participation in IT Recruiting Committee; a direct result of the 2014 IT Summit.
- Met with Human Resource professionals to discuss ideas for recruiting and retention of workers.
- The GFMEDC's manufacturing committee continues to promote the Minn-Dak meetings to counselors to gain awareness of manufacturing occupations. A total of 9 teachers and counselors attended from January 2015 – May 2015.
- The GFMEDC is in the process of facilitating the fifth year of the Teachers in Industry program, growing to seven participating companies and seven teachers. The program also expanded to include two Professors in Industry.

- The GFMEDC continues to coordinate and co-sponsor the manufacturing touring events. In 2014, local companies, along with NDSCS and MState hosted a total of 257 students.
- Continued participation in the Education that Works committee. The committee includes leadership at the public schools in Moorhead, Fargo and West Fargo as well as the United Way. Assisted with various projects that are a part of this initiative.
- Presented workforce information at three conferences and one small group meeting.
- Met with three individuals who are seeking employment in Fargo Moorhead.
- Coordinated Job Shadowing Program. Five companies hosted approximately 105 tri-college students who were able to view the workplace environment and participate in a Q & A.
- Worked with TIP Strategies Group on the workforce study by putting together group meetings so that TIP could gather needed data for the study and acting as a contact for TIP Strategies during the process.
- Attended The Barry Foundation Philanthropy and Youth Summer Internship event
- Connected with new Career Development Director with Globe University.

Objective 4: Entrepreneurial Support and Development

- After helping launch in 2014, GFMEDC continues to assist in organizing, marketing and attending the 1 Million Cups events. These weekly events promote and engage the entire community and have been averaging approximately 125 attendees at each event, with some events occasionally exceeding 250-300.
- Acted as the host for the NDSU Invention Fair for West Fargo 7th graders.
- Acted as judges for NDSU Research & Tech Park's Innovation Challenge as well as NDSU's 3 Minute Thesis competition.
- Have teamed up with Emerging Prairie on welcoming and guiding communities visiting the area to learn about entrepreneurial ecosystem best practices. Included this year to date are Bemidji (2 visits), Chicago, Valley City and Willmar. A contingent from Willmar as well as Texas State Univ. entrepreneurial students are planning summer 2015 visits.
- Collaborative participation in organizing and sponsorship for Start-Up Weekend 2015, a 54 hour exercise for entrepreneurs. 75 participants, 46 pitches, 14 teams. GFMEDC

sponsored ND Women's Startup Weekend 2015. 40+ participants, 30 pitches, 6 teams.
James Gartin served as a judge for both events.

- Growth Initiative Fund provided \$55,000 to Lake Agassiz Regional Development Corporation (LARDC) to leverage \$366,667 in federal funds available to LARDC for SBA Microloans.
- Assisted 18 Start-ups with programs and business assistance.
- Attended Startup Drinks, eCommerce Breakfast and Drone Focus events which routinely occur on a monthly basis.
- Assisted Fargo Game Makers, a growing network of local video game developers, with their monthly meetups.
- Attended Midwest Chat, a weekend gathering of community entrepreneurship supporters, representing communities from 6 states.
- GFMEDC sponsored the Midwest Mobile Summit.
- Sponsored NDSU Entrepreneurs Club, local DECA Be Bold entrepreneurship conference, CULTIVATE.you, and Midwest Mobile Summit.
- Assisted the DakotaNext (angel) Fund in the advisory group as they continue the fundraising stage.
- Assisted MBAs Across America (MBAx) by connecting local startups to their touring MBA in residence program. MBox has indicated that at least one Fargo area company will be on the route again this summer.
- Participated in planning group for a proposed Fargo Culinary Institute.
- With primary collaboration with the City of Fargo and Emerging Prairie, GFMEDC led the writing of an entrepreneurial grant from the Kauffman Foundation after being 1 of 20 invited MSAs. While Fargo Moorhead was not selected as the 1 of 2 pilot MSAs, indications are this may lead to future collaboration with Kauffman.
- Organized a collection of supporters to assist Beach Interactive in their launch event.
- Hosted a "Tech Problem Solvers" lunch for attendees to learn and meet each other for future collaboration and referrals.

Objective 5: Monitor and research local, national and global economic conditions for purposes of reporting, forecasting and developing regional economic strategy

- Distribute monthly economic indicators.
- Collected and submitted first quarter 2015 cost of living data.
- Continue to participate in meetings and phone calls regarding the Valley Prosperity Partnership (VPP).
- Responded to inquiries from organizations/individuals regarding demographic, employment, wage, local market and real estate information.
- Conducted annual primary sector employment and capital expenditures survey. With a 70% response rate, the companies reported a total net full time employment growth of 584 jobs (4%) in 2013. Projected 2015 full time growth was reported at 1290 jobs (8%).
- Met with the Turkish American Chamber of Commerce regarding recruitment and funding ideas for businesses.

Objective 6: Development campaign

- Held GFMEDC Annual Meeting for Investors on April 29th at the Hilton Garden Inn.
- Prepared and initiated the 2015-2020 GFMEDC Strategic Plan
- Prepared and submitted application for Kauffman Foundation's Metro Entrepreneurship Demonstration Project.
- Shared SmartBook information with six different lending institutions.
- Collaborated with TIP Strategies Group, United Way of Cass Clay, FM Area Foundation, The Chamber, and the FM Convention and Visitor's Bureau on a workforce study to be released in June 2015.

Objective 7: Marketing and Communications

- Participated in more than 50 investor and EDC partner meetings and events.
- GFMEDC integrated the CareerFM website into the SmartMove branding, emphasizing the smart people and smart things happening in the Fargo Moorhead MSA.
- The GFMEDC distributes a monthly electronic newsletter and manages a blog that is featured on the Forum's online newspaper, InForum.

- Continue to build social media platforms, using Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and LinkedIn to reach influencers and promote the region and drive people back to the EDC website.
- Developed GFMEDC 2014 annual report, distributed at annual meeting and to investors. The report is also available electronically on our website.
- The GFMEDC released the 2015 Images Fargo Moorhead Magazine which highlights the quality of life and smart things happening in the Fargo Moorhead MSA.
- Presented an overview of the GFMEDC to the Chamber Leadership Class, Lake Agassiz Exchange Club, West Fargo High Key Club, Cass County Electric Cooperative Board, Choice Financial Board, and the Fargo Moorhead Area Association of Realtors
- Met with Forum Editorial board to discuss GFMEDC activities.
- Attended Clay County Intergovernmental Retreat.
- Attended the FM Convention and Visitors Bureau Community Brand Reveal event.
- Participated in interviews for local, regional and national media. Met with area news professionals to provide updates on our overall activities and to strengthen relationships with the various outlets.
- Provide marketing support for the Education that Works initiative including a video, website and press conferences.
- Created several videos that highlight specific unique things about Fargo Moorhead. The first video is titled "Unexpected".
- Continue to work with the GFMEDC Marketing Committee.

Objective 8: Use the Growth Initiative Fund to further the region's economic development strategy

- Approved one Flex PACE loan for \$3,000; part of a \$70,000 equipment project.
- Funded one PACE and four Flex PACE loans totaling \$221,014. Four of these loans were approved in 2014.
- Funded \$55,000 to Lake Agassiz Regional Development Corporation (LARDC) to leverage \$366,667 in federal funds available to LARDC for SBA Microloans.

Objective 9: Influence state economic development policy

- Continued active participation in the Valley Prosperity Partnership including the Legislative Social event in Bismarck. Testified or provided written support to the State Legislative sessions on:
 - State Water Commission Budget (2020)
 - Department of Commerce Budget (HB 1018)
 - Operation Intern
 - State Board of Higher Education Budget (1003)
 - Automation Take Credit (SB 2340)
 - Apportionment Bill (SB 2292)
 - Sales Tax Exemption for Data Centers (HB 1089)
 - UAV Surveillance Limit Bill (HB 1328)
 - S.T.E.M. Bill (HB 1393)
 - Dakota Fiber Initiative (HB 1443)
- Continued participation in the Flood Diversion Board of Authority
- Continued participation in EDND and EDAM events and meetings.
- Preparing economic development legislative agenda in conjunction with EDND for Future legislative sessions.