

Government Affairs
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
April 1, 2011

Chamber Members Present: Susan Harper, Irene Koski, Mary Ives, Mike Ives, Frank Allen, Terry Snyder, Lilah Crowe, Bill Eckblad, Kyle Erickson, Derek Stanley, Margie Ritter, Tammy Jensen

Advisory Members Present:

Chamber Staff Present: Bud Stone, Renee Thompson

Tammy called the meeting to order.

MINNESOTA CHAMBER CONFERENCE CALL

The committee participated in a legislative conference call with the Minnesota Chamber.

Updates were heard regarding Environmental Bills, Education Bills, and Health and Human Services Bills.

ACTION: The next MN Chamber conference call will be on Friday, April 15, 2011.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tammy asked for a motion to approve the March 18, 2011 meeting minutes.

Mike made a motion to approve the March 18, 2011 Government Affairs Committee minutes. Mary seconded the motion. Motion passed.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

CONFERENCE CALL WITH REPRESENTATIVE MCELFRICK

State Representative Carolyn McElfrick called in for a legislative conference call with the committee.

Carolyn reported that they are slowly working through budget bills. On Thursday, they worked on Judiciary and Public Safety Bills.

Bud asked about the Insurance Exchange. Carolyn responded that not much is moving with that at this point.

Mike asked about sales tax. Carolyn responded that she has been corresponding with Shawn, Dale and Gary regarding this issue.

Mary asked about the talk about closing State Parks. Carolyn answered that the proposed number has been lowered to 20. Carolyn added that she is hoping that none of them have to close.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

CONFERENCE CALL WITH SENATOR SAXHAUG

The committee had a conference call with State Senator Tom Saxhaug where they heard updates on the status of the Senate bills.

Bud asked about the Doug Johnson Fund. Tom informed the committee that taking money out of the Doug Johnson fund is included in the Jobs and Economic Bill.

ACTION: Bud has contacted legislators and the Governor's Office regarding keeping the Doug Johnson Fund intact.

MEMBER UPDATES

Irene reported that the County had a meeting with ESSAR Steel. ESSAR has decided to go with Northern Natural Gas. They are expecting steel to start arriving in May. Some of the staff recently moved from Hibbing to the site.

Irene informed the committee that the County prevailed in the Living Bible Camp lawsuit.

Mary spoke about the Housing Coalition meeting that took place with IRR. IRR is not interested in helping with current housing issues at this time.

Frank reminded the committee that Mike Youso from Grand Itasca will be presenting at the April 4, 2011 luncheon and encouraged everyone to attend.

Bud invited everyone to attend the Annual Dinner on April 16th.

Bud informed the committee that he sent letter supporting a RAC funding request for Highway 38 boring and planning, and that Depot Commons was awarded another two-year workforce development grant from Blandin Foundation.

Margie reported that SMR Software just completed another successful show.

Margie also spoke about a Chamber Membership survey she conducted with an apartment manager where the manager stressed the lack of market rate apartments available in our area.

Kyle spoke about the budget cuts they are preparing for at AEOA.

Lilah informed the committee that the Central School is working on an initiative to draw businesses to the Central School by offering them the first year of rent free if they sign a three year lease.

Lilah also spoke about promoting the "Cents Up" program, working on a PUC exhibit and a picture of Grace program with the MN Discovery Center.

Mike spoke about a proposal for market rate apartments east of the clinic.

Terry spoke about issues with 60 day prison stays.

Tammy spoke about planning a regional Women's Expo and a Car Show at the Discovery Center in Chisholm.

ACTION: No further action necessary.

NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting is on April 15, 2011 at 7:30 a.m.

There will be a MN Chamber conference call.

Mike made a motion to adjourn. Irene seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by Renee Thompson, Administrative Assistant and Finance Coordinator.