

**CENTRAL WISCONSIN CONTRACTOR'S ASSOCIATION
MEETING MINUTES**

DECEMBER 2ND, 2011

President Georgine Pagel brought the meeting to order at 7:00 a.m.
Introductions were made.

**Speakers – Jeff Zriny, Executive Director of the Wausau Chamber of Commerce,
and Dave Eckmann, Economic Development Director for McDevco.**

Jeff Zriny – was Interim Executive Director and is now the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce. Over the past year we have been transitioning the Chamber and trying to see where we want it to go. In the past, the Chamber has been deficient on advocacy for members. We have not gotten members involved in political issues that affect them. This year we are putting together an advocacy committee with Tom Schuette as the chair and they will explore advocacy issues. They want to educate and inform our members about political issues so they can make informed decisions. Also in 2012 we want to do sector type programming. We have a broad audience that we need to address so we want to focus on specific needs by Sector. We want members to feel a return on their investment in Member Dues. There are about 1,050 members right now. There was a small decrease this past year and now it's coming back up.

Dave Eckmann – Economic Development Director for McDevco. McDevco is a subsidiary of the Chamber of Commerce and is a non-profit group. It does have annual membership dues of \$75.00 which are tax deductible. McDevco has done a lot of work around the city in terms of blight elimination through revolving loan funds. We have been working with the private sector in redeveloping properties. Because of the new economic climate we had to set up a new plan for the next 5-6 years. We are transitioning from a blight redevelopment economic model to a general economic growth model. This includes airport, road, rail, e-commerce, and other initiatives. Communities around the country are starting to market themselves to companies and skilled workers but you have to have a marketing program. We now have that in place and are starting to implement those programs. You will see a lot of that in 2012. We are making sure we develop the next generation of workers and also keeping and growing what we have here.

Right now we are focusing on metal fabrication. There is a wide belief that we should allow manufacturing to go away in Marathon County but 39.5% of revenue in Marathon County comes from manufacturing jobs. It is our core. Our window and door companies are down and it will be a long time before they come back and employ the number of people that they once had. They are now investing in technology to streamline processes. Paper is down and at risk. Mosinee and Rhinelander mills are into soft products and tissues so they are remaining competitive. Our one bright spot is metal fabrication. This is expected to grow 1,000 jobs in the next 5 years. We have 72 companies from small to

large (Greenheck) that do metal fabrication. This is where we are focusing on business retention. These businesses have strong opportunity for growth.

There are some new funding opportunities for businesses out there:

- 1) There is a new ACT development program from the State of Wisconsin. If you are working with businesses this is something to consider.
- 2) Central Wisconsin Economic Development Fund – 12.2 million in assets available to business in Marathon and a few surrounding counties. The State has been pushing for regionalized revolving loan funds and this is one.
- 3) CWAY Fund – you can help the partners that you're working with tap into monies in this revolving loan fund. 2.5 million Liquid funds available right now.
- 4) We are also developing a new micro-loan program on this. CDBG funds have restrictions (Davis-Bacon), etc. These are all being removed. The state wants to have one central fund for businesses to work from.

What is the hold-up at CWA? FAA Reauthorization is going on in Washington. Monies are drastically being cut to projects like that. We are slated to get the money to finish the terminal project in the next 6 months. That airport is at risk of not being there in the next 5-7 years. Flight availability is a big issue. Everyone wanted jets but they are more expensive to run so they cut flights, which is inconvenient for business travelers. If they have to stay overnight it becomes more expensive. Rhinelander's airport is challenged. Frontier is pulling all of their flights out of the State of Wisconsin. If Rhinelander doesn't get another carrier they will be done. If American Airlines gets it, who knows what the business model will be. Collaborative Consulting – they rely on that airport. The Osteopathic Medical School will rely on that airport. We are the 5th largest in the State. Some of the smaller airports will go away so hopefully that will drive up business.

Doesn't the FAA give a firm commitment of money? No, they have budget repair bills because their revenue fluctuates so much.

- 1) Collaborative Consulting – looking at Ghidorzi's spaces, Sid Samuels space, and space in the Dudley building.
- 2) Medical School – this is a 4-year program and then 3 years of residency after that. They had to speak to medical schools about taking on residents. Good chance that this will happen. So many high-end homes on the market that these people will probably look to purchase. Medical will replace Wausau Insurance as the primary purchasers of these high end homes. They are looking at existing and

new construction. They are looking for 100,000 SF and it will need a lot of technology.

Go to the McDevco website. We are out marketing. We went to the ICSC marketing to big box retailers. There is a lot of room for optimism.

General Business

- 1) Meeting Minutes – posted on website for your review.
- 2) 2012 Donations will be paid out this month. CMN - \$3,500. Bootstrap - \$1,000 worth of food over to them. Thank you to Ellis Stone for working with them. Salvation Army – Thursday December 8th we will be picking up food from Trig's at 5:00. Captain Brian has asked for Turkey, Stuffing, Cranberries, - all things for a Christmas meal. We will meet at Limericks Irish Pub on Scott Street afterwards.
- 3) Membership Renewals – we would like to have this paid by the end of January.
- 4) Would there be any money in the fund for a scholarship for NTC? Maybe \$500 (two \$250 scholarships)? The board needs to get together to discuss. Frank Opatik and Jeff Musson with present to the group on this.

Motion to adjourn by Charlie Misslin. Seconded by Steve Peter. Meeting adjourned by President Georgine Pagel at 7:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Holster, Secretary.