

NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Minutes of the

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday and Wednesday, February 7-8, 2006
International Inn of Minot, Minot, North Dakota
Best Western Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck, North Dakota

Representative Rick Berg, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

Members present: Representatives Rick Berg, Dawn Marie Charging, Donald L. Clark, Donald D. Dietrich, Mark A. Dosch, Pam Gulleon, Jim Kasper, Bob Martinson, Lisa Meier, Kenton Onstad, Dan J. Ruby, Elwood Thorpe, Clark Williams; Senators Nicholas P. Hacker, Duane Mutch, John O. Syverson, Ryan M. Taylor, John M. Warner

Members absent: Representatives Eliot Glassheim, Eugene Nicholas; Senators April Fairfield, Randy A. Schobinger

Others present: See Appendix A

It was moved by Senator Mutch, seconded by Representative Meier, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the January 10-11, 2006, committee meeting be approved as distributed.

BUSINESS CLIMATE STUDY - FOCUS GROUPS

This committee meeting was made up of three half-day focus groups. The focus group for business leaders in the northwest quadrant of the state began at 1:05 p.m., Tuesday, February 7, 2006, in the Lower Banquet Center, International Inn of Minot, Minot. The focus group for business leaders in the southwest quadrant of the state began at 9:05 a.m., Wednesday, February 8, 2006, in the Cannonball Room, Best Western Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck. The focus group for local economic developers in the western portion of the state began at 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, February 8, 2006, in the Cannonball Room, Best Western Ramkota Hotel.

The committee followed the same format for the two business leader focus groups and a slightly modified format for the local economic developer focus group. The basic format of the three focus groups was:

- Welcome and introductions;
- Review of 2005 legislative package resulting from 2003-04 business climate study;
- Visioning exercise;
- Group interview;
- Review results of visioning exercise; and
- Closing remarks.

At each of the three focus group discussions, committee members sat at tables with business leaders or local economic developers while the

consultant, Mr. Rod Backman of Covenant Consulting Group of Bismarck, and his assistant, Ms. Rachel Kusler, worked together to facilitate and record the results of each of the focus groups.

Welcome and Introductions

At each of the focus group discussions, Chairman Berg welcomed participants and briefly reviewed the history of the business climate study and explained how the Economic Development Committee, with the assistance of the Department of Commerce, will be conducting the business climate study during the 2005-06 interim, pursuant to Section 17 of Senate Bill No. 2032 (2005). He said the business climate study is a continuation of the activities of the business climate study conducted by the Economic Development Committee during the 2003-04 interim. During the 2005 legislative session, he said, the committee's comprehensive legislative package was very successful. He said he looks forward to continuing this successful initiative. Following these final three focus groups, he said, the committee will hold a Business Congress in Bismarck on April 19, 2006. Following the 2007 legislative session, he said, the third business climate study will be conducted during the 2007-08 interim.

Chairman Berg said the issues raised and information gathered at these focus groups will be summarized and prioritized. He said the Economic Development Committee will use the information attained during this business climate study in making legislative recommendations to the Legislative Council and legislators will also be able to use the information to guide policymaking during the 2007 legislative session.

At each of the three focus groups, Chairman Berg introduced Mr. Shane C. Goettle, Commissioner of Commerce. Mr. Goettle briefly reviewed the Department of Commerce's ongoing activities in the following five targeted industries:

1. Value-added agriculture;
2. Advanced manufacturing;
3. Information technology;
4. Tourism; and
5. Energy.

2005 Legislative Package

Following the welcome by the chairman and introductions, Mr. Backman presented information

regarding the legislative recommendations of the 2003-04 Economic Development Committee which were enacted by the 2005 Legislative Assembly. A copy of the handout used to present this information is attached as Appendix B. Mr. Backman said the legislative initiatives resulting from the work of the 2003-04 Economic Development Committee's business climate study were included in Senate Bill Nos. 2018 and 2032, copies of which are available online at www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/59-2005/bill-text/FQMK0500.pdf and www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/59-2005/bill-text/FAIE0800.pdf. During the 2005-06 interim, the Economic Development Committee will be receiving status reports on the implementation of these programs.

Visioning Exercise

Following the review of the 2005 legislation, Mr. Backman conducted a visioning exercise. For this portion of each focus group, the participants received a list of 20 written statements in a survey format, for which participants were asked to note whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement or whether they had no opinion regarding the statement. The completed surveys were collected and after the group interview, Mr. Backman reviewed the participants' responses to the statements.

Following the focus groups, the written responses to the 20 statements were collected and tabulated. The document Mr. Backman prepared to reflect the responses to the visioning exercise statements for the three focus groups is attached as [Appendix C](#).

Group Interview

After the visioning exercise, Mr. Backman facilitated a group interview, which included soliciting

participants' responses to questions that were shown as part of a computer presentation. A printed copy of the computer presentation made at the two business leader focus groups and a printed copy of the computer presentation made at the local economic developer focus group are on file in the Legislative Council office. Ms. Kusler recorded participant responses to each of the group interview questions. The summaries of the participant responses prepared by the consultants are attached as [Appendix D](#).

Closing Remarks

At the end of each of the three focus group discussions, Chairman Berg thanked the participants for attending and reminded the participants that the business climate study is an ongoing process. He said that on January 10-11, 2006, the Economic Development Committee held three focus groups in Grand Forks and Fargo; will hold the Business Congress in Bismarck on April 19, 2006; will work to recommend a comprehensive legislative package for introduction in the 2007 legislative session; and will be repeating the process again during the 2007-08 interim. At the completion of the focus group for the local economic developers in the western portion of the state, Chairman Berg adjourned the meeting at 3:35 p.m.

Jennifer S. N. Clark
Committee Counsel

[ATTACH:4](#)