



## NETForce Meeting

Friday, April 12, 2019

Informal Networking – 9:00-9:30 a.m. (CST)

Meeting – 9:30 a.m. (CST) – 2:30 p.m. (CST)

Motorsports Park Hastings (MPH)

Hastings, NE

**Special Note:** *The meeting agenda, handouts and meeting minutes are all available online at the NDE Entrepreneurship Education website at <https://www.education.ne.gov/entreped/net-force/>.*

RSVPs Received/Participants: Janelle Anderson Ehrke, Steve Bors, Megan Burda, Gregg Christensen, Craig Eberle, Nancy Eberle, Aliese Hoffman, Roxann Holliday, Don Hulme, Sydney Kobza, Doris Lux, April Myers, Jim Reiff, Elizabeth Roetman, Marilyn Schlake, Lisa Tschauer, Jason Weigle, Michelle Konen, Michael Tobias, Maggie Vaughn, Michael Krings.

Zoom Participants RSVPs: Kathy Eitzmann, Jim Jenkins

Steve Bors called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m.

Our host, George Anderson, brought greetings and thanked the group for coming to MPH.

### Michael Krings – Hastings ECDC

- Gave credit to George Anderson and MPH
- He is not an economic developer by trade. He was elected to the City Council and served on the ECDC during that time.
- He expressed his pride in the CRA efforts and the redevelopment of the downtown area. It was driven by a couple of people who got behind the idea and started the ball rolling.
- What they do on day to day basis:
  - They normally are thought of as bringing in big companies.
  - They do work on a lot of different companies and “fail” a lot. But, it’s not really failure, it’s just a very competitive market.
  - They bat about 100, with 9 out of 10 efforts “failing.”
  - Thoughts he shared about economic development and their work:
    - The base of any economy is NOT the white collar, service area.
    - It is the people who “make stuff.”
    - The economy has shifted to focus on workforce development.
    - National, local and regional economies are very strong.
    - In Nebraska, our economy has typically followed the Ag economy. That is not true for Hastings, still Ag is still very strong.
    - The demand for products being built in the Midwest is incredibly strong.
    - They are also focusing on assistance to entrepreneurs.
    - #1 issue is housing
    - Industrial property development doesn’t “pencil out.”
    - The community is being very aggressive and working on building residential properties much faster.

- They are currently working on a project for 77 family homes starting next summer
  - 84 unit apartment complex being closed on that day.
  - 30 multi-family housing being built as well.
- This next generation is very creative and the focus is on retaining them but there must be affordable housing for them.
- They applied to the Rural Workforce Housing Fund and received \$850,000, matched by the local utility department. ECDC added \$100,000. All the money has been awarded.
- They will pay for all the streets and infrastructure.
- The apartment complex will be owned and operated by a private developer.

### **Hastings Talent Initiative – Maggie Vaughan, Director of Talent Solutions**

- The Talent Initiative started in 2016.
- Workforce talent is a huge challenge.
- The idea is growing our own talent.
- Basically, it's a problem everywhere.
- As a result, the focus is on retention and development.
- Hastings has three great high schools, Central Community College and Hastings College that provide a great talent pool.
- Her work focuses on:
  - Talent pipeline (start talking about retention as early as middle school)
  - Hastings Young Professionals (started with 25 members, now well over a 100, 30 of those are college students)
  - Hip Hop event
  - Focus on entrepreneurship side as well
    - Example is Pacha Soap
    - Over 50 full time employees as of this year
- They have a talent website to connect to young talent that resonates with them.
- Inspirebyhastings.com is their marketing platform.
- Maggie's story...
  - Proud "townie" of Hastings
  - Chose Hastings College for her postsecondary education.
  - During her junior year she went through a talent pool program (it connects students with internships)
  - She had two internships during college. In one she used her graphic design education to develop a "look book" for Hastings. Her second internship was with HEDC.
  - She decided to stay after graduation because of the experiences she had and her passion for the community
  - She is also working on Build Hastings which focuses on entrepreneurship and investing in people of ANY age
    - They are talking about how they can leverage resources to create a pipeline for entrepreneurship
    - It has a lot of events, but at the end of the day, would like to see more jobs as a result
  - They have existing activities that have been going on for the last three years.
  - Up and coming businesses:
    - Eronia berries started a company called Truonia (health benefits are amazing)
    - Great Tool and Design
    - Kombucha product brewed by First Street Brewery (right next to where KoolAid was invited); just started their own canning line; can find their product in Lincoln and Omaha

- Journal Star just did an article about Kambucha in the Midwest
- Working on canning their kambucha line
- The collaboration in the Hastings community is a major factor in the success of these new businesses
- Jord Producers – growing meal worms for pet food industry (produced in Hastings and Lindsey)

### **Shawn Kaskie**

- Shawn described that he now has three roles at the University.
- Rural Futures Institute has a thriving index that he mentioned.

### **Connie Hancock**

- Connie described that she is working on a Nebraska entrepreneurship project with Shawn.

### **Roxann Holliday (CCC)**

- CCC-Hastings is moving their small business incubator to a new space.
- The move is planned for some time in May and opening again in June.

### **Don Hulme (CCC-Hastings)**

- They just had Big Idea Hastings (9 people presented)
- One of was a meal worm business
- The beekeeper is slowly getting his business started
- Don is involved in the Build Hastings program (long-term program)
- Hastings community support has been strong.
- The challenge is that the Incubator is down to one spot.
- The Auction House is going strong however.
- The Intro to Entrepreneurship course has 32 enrollees, so they are splitting into two sections.

### **Nancy Eberle**

- Nancy described her work with the LEAD Program (Agricultural leadership program).
- She has worked for 26 years with the LEAD alumni.
- They do tours and bring Ag's voice out across the state
- They are also working with Omaha Bryan's Ag Academy (50-60 students every year). And, all of them want to be entrepreneurs.
- Bryan High has asked LEAD alumni to work to teach and mentor the academy students about what they are doing entrepreneurially. The mentors go in about every other month.
- She is still working with Doris on the STEM Camp for girls.

### **Doris Lux – CCC Entrepreneurship in Columbus**

- The Verizon STEM program is available for 100 girls.
- Nebraska's is one of only 14 programs in the Midwest.
- It is a year-long program to introduce girls to STEM careers.
- Their curriculum includes Design, Coding, 3 D Printing, AR/VR, and Entrepreneurship.
- CCC has done some Chamber workshops with Econic group out of Lincoln.
- Doris has also stepped up in SCORE and is chair of the group.
- She co-teaches workshops with REAP (13 participants).
- They are offering networking opportunities for the Hispanic population; working with about 80 individuals (See her Activities report)
- The new name of the CCC-Hastings Entrepreneurship Center is Opportunity Central
- The new facility is about 2/3 size of the current facility.

### **Megan Burda – Youth Entrepreneurship and Business Opportunities Team**

- Megan is co-lead of YEBO, which has been functioning for 3 or 4 years now.
- Adventure Day is one of their products for middle school youth (one day field day experience)
- The students compete for a trip to Innovation Campus in Lincoln.
- She invited NETForce members to help as mentors.
- Loup City, York, and Falls City are lined up for this fall.
- Tec Box is another product (two facilitator trainings-5/14 in Columbus 5/16 in Alliance).

### **Jim Reiff – NEF**

- NEF is doing lots of educational trainings across the state.
- They will be rolling out QuickBooks training in July.
- The Annual Startup to Success will be October 18<sup>th</sup> in Omaha.
- They will also be in four cities (North Platte, Kearney, Norfolk, and Lincoln)
- The Business Transition class will be done May 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- They have also initiated a new micro-loans program for students!

### **Jason Weigle – Community Vitality Educator in Hebron (Extension)**

- See the brochure for Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference
- There are 6 tracks.
- It will be held in Beatrice, April 24 & 25, 2019.
- It is a great networking opportunity.
- Next year's conference will be in Columbus.
- The breakout sessions are not the traditional "sit and get", they are held in existing businesses.
- There will be an activity at Homestead National Park.

### **Janell Anderson-Ehrke – GROW Nebraska**

- Janell proudly announced the grand opening of their new facility which is north of the Younes Convention Center in Kearney.
- They will be able to do more small group training now.
- The facility will also make it possible to be more hands-on.
- The Foundation has been moved to the Campus.
- GROW Nebraska is still offering their 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday free training (the next one is on email marketing).

- You can also sign up for the podcasts.
- The Digital Promise group will offer Facebook training (another one on April 18).
- GROW Nebraska is a Premier Google Partner.
- They will be in Kearney for the next 10 years.

### **Craig Eberle**

- Craig is a Loan Specialist with REAP and covers 8 counties.
- He provides lending, training, and technical assistance statewide
- He will be doing a Start Your Business in South Sioux City.
- REAP is currently seeking a person to replace Monica who has retired.

### **Elizabeth Roetman– Buffalo County Economic Development**

- She mentioned that this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the summer middle school camp.
- They just had a company out of Atlanta put up \$8 million for a new cyber-security program.
- They are wrapping up funding for a STEM Lab that will go out to rural communities.

### **George Anderson – Motorsports Park Hastings (MPH)**

- George gave a history of MPH for the group:
  - 14 years ago this was a corn field
  - They decided to build a paved track, all other tracks are dirt tracks in Nebraska.
  - George lived in Germany while in the Army for a while and was lucky enough to be able to race on one of their tracks.
  - In the 1930's when he was 30 he had a Texas Instrument calculator
  - When he was in his 40's he was on the Internet
  - When he was in his 50's he was doing his own web pages
  - In 1999 he was selling online
  - In his 60s he was still doing a lot of pictures
- At this point, the idea for MPH came along.
- We are the only state that has guidelines for building tire walls for race tracks.
- All 13,000 tires are recycled tires.
- He and his partners had 3 long pages of what they wanted to do with MPH and the city and county have been great to work with.
- He has all the company records backed up on flash drive AND Google drive!
- He does most of his work using his phone.
- In 2008 they built condos on the facility.
- Motorcycle groups are their largest clients.
- On site, the Ford Racing garage will have brand new Mustangs and contains millions of \$ worth of cars in the garage.
- Terry Klatt, owner of Modern Methods, has a wonderful car collection.
- The facility also hosts a lot of go karting.
- MPH has a 2.15 mile long track, 13 or 14 corners.
- It's a club track, not a spectator track.
- The economic impact is felt through lodging, condo rentals, and restaurant business.
- Every state patrol officer in Nebraska trains on this track
- Charlie Bosselman has one pump that will be for racing fuels (blue pump) BP 100 racing fuel

## Jim Jenkins – Industry Chair, Entrepreneurship Industry Council (Blueprint Nebraska)

- Blueprint Nebraska has 16 industry councils.
- The mission is to try to focus on the best ideas for moving Nebraska's economy forward.
- The Innovation Council was somewhat tied to the Entrepreneurship Council.
- Each council had 9-12 members.
- They are to have 3 ideas at most as their final goal for each council.
- His council debated 30 ideas before narrowing it down to the most important three.
- The conclusion was to write a 5-6 page white paper submitted in early 2019.
- A Summit was held in March in Kearney.
- They did electronic voting on which ideas had the most merit.
- A final report will be released in early summer.
  - Three recommendations
    - Develop an entrepreneurial index (will signal on a quarterly basis) help track how we are doing in Nebraska on an entrepreneurial basis
      - We currently in lower third of most entrepreneurial indices
      - How we can nurture entrepreneurial ecosystem in Nebraska
    - Develop a one-stop resource website for startups (SourceLink)
    - Develop E-Zones (bundle together 4 or 5 companies in a regional approach)
    - Zones will come together on a voluntary basis, not a government-led initiative
- Need to move beyond silo thinking
- Mr. Jenkins will send the white paper to Marilyn (but it is not for public dissemination yet)
- How can NETForce be involved?
  - Entrepreneurial index
  - Support for SourceLink funding
  - **Biggest impact could be on E-zones**
- Time frame for implementation (June will be the E-zone launch)

## Michael Tobias – What If NET Project

- Michael gave an overview of the What If... Project undertaken by NET.
- What If...tells the stories of Nebraska people, companies and programs that asked that question, then did it.
- It features innovators with different ideas, approaches, inventions and discoveries.
- Each 30 minute show includes four segments taking audiences inside these "What if" creations and creators from the worlds of science, business, education, economic development, social services, health care, and more.
- Innovator Insights will be short segments.
- Michael shared an example of one of the segments and asked for feedback from the group.
- It was noted that there needed to be less "talking head" and the need to incorporate B roll footage of their business/organization. Needs more action to keep the attention of today's youth.

## Sydney Kobza

- Sydney mentioned how much she has gained by participating in the Best Practices Summit the past two years.
- She mentioned her work with Business, Marketing and Management programs across the state as well as serving as the State Adviser for Nebraska FBLA.
- They will be moving their state conference to Kearney after 40 years in Omaha.
- She encouraged NETForce members to consider judging at the future State Leadership Conferences.

## **Aliese Hoffman & Lisa Tschauner**

- Aliese and Lisa gave an overview of the programs they offer:
  - Bizkids on the Road
  - Biz Kids
  - Go for Launch for high school students
  - Light it Up Event – Awards celebration, 6-8:00 p.m.
  - Enactus students will be presenting at the event
  - Big Idea will be November 6, 2019
  - Central Nebraska Startup Week (may be branded differently)
  - Will do a livestreamed Big Idea Competition
  - Tri-City Economic Forum
  - EDA Grant

## **SCC Entrepreneurship Center**

- The Center has a new logo
- They have 17 Focus Suites, all of which are now filled.
- Their Thursday Coffees have been highly successful and are now recorded and offered on a Youtube channel.

## **George Anderson-MPH – Working Lunch**

### **New Business**

- We need to elect two new members at large as soon as possible for the start of the new terms of office (July-June).

Steve thanked everyone who came. Everyone was urged to attend the next meeting and recruit new participants

Participants were given the opportunity to tour the Klatt Garage and the Museum.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.

**Respectfully submitted**

Gregg Christensen, Secretary