

NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Minutes of the

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday and Wednesday, January 10-11, 2006
Holiday Inn Grand Forks, Grand Forks, North Dakota
Holiday Inn of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota

Representative Rick Berg, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m.

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

Members absent: Representatives Eugene Nicholas, Clark Williams; Senator 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 October 26, 2005, 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 northeast quadrant of the state began at 1:15 p.m., Tuesday, January 10, 2006, in the Griggs II Room, Holiday Inn Grand Forks. The focus group for business leaders in the southeast quadrant of the state began at 9:15 a.m., Wednesday, January 11, 2006, in the Embassy Room, Holiday Inn of Fargo. The focus group for local economic developers in the eastern portion of the state began at 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, January 11, 2006, in the Embassy Room, Holiday Inn of Fargo.

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;
- Group interview;
- Visioning exercise; and
- Closing remarks.

At each of the three focus group discussions, committee members sat at tables with business leaders and local economic developers while the two consultants, Mr. Miles Friedman of Miles Friedman

and Partners of Manassas, Virginia, and Mr. Rod Backman of Covenant Consulting Group of Bismarck, worked together to facilitate 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, the committee's comprehensive legislative package was very successful. He said he looks forward to continuing this successful initiative. Following the six focus groups that will be held across the state this winter, he said, the committee will hold a Business Congress in Bismarck on April 19, 2006. Following the 2007 legislative session, 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 explained that Mr. Friedman and Mr. Backman will be working together to facilitate these three focus groups as well as the Business Congress. 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--the new 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, the consultants 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 slide used to present this information is attached as [Appendix B](#). The consultants 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. They said that during the 2005-06 interim, the Economic Development Committee will be receiving status reports on the implementation of these programs.

Group Interview

Following the review of 2005 legislation, the consultants conducted 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. The consultants recorded participant responses to each of the group interview questions. The summaries of the participant responses prepared by the consultants are attached as [Appendix C](#).

Visioning Exercise

After the group interview portion of each focus group discussion, the consultants facilitated a visioning exercise. For this portion of each focus group discussion, the consultants distributed to participants a list of 20 written statements, 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. Through a show of hands, the consultants informally reviewed participant responses to the statements.

The written responses to the 20 statements were collected and tabulated. The document the consultants prepared to reflect the nonlegislator participants' responses to the visioning exercise statements for the three focus groups is 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 the Economic Development Committee will be holding three more focus groups in Minot and Bismarck on February 7-8, 2006, 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 and 2009 legislative session. At the completion of the focus group for the local economic developers in the eastern portion of the state, Chairman Berg adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.

Jennifer S. N. Clark
Committee Counsel

[ATTACH:4](#)