

Renville County HRA/EDA Office of Economic Development 2020 Year End Review

“Barnstorming” Visits

In an effort to forge new relationships and strengthen existing ones, the Renville County HRA/EDA made “Barnstorming” visits – quick, unannounced visits to Banks, Credit Unions and City Hall to promote economic development programs and services. We try to make these visits twice per year. We made visits in early 2020, prior to the pandemic. We handed out copies of our Renville County Business Assistance Directory and other materials, and chatted on a variety of economic development topics.



Photo Right: L to R: Stefanie Ryan – Renville County HRA/EDA, Wendy Peterson – Franklin City Clerk, and Lisa Herges – Renville County Administrator.



Lunch & Learn

Renville County HRA/EDA continued our series of monthly “Lunch & Learn” events in 2020. In person events were held early in the year, then transitioned to an online format. Some of the topics covered at these events include business succession planning, business law, business taxes, what businesses need to know about COVID-19, social media for businesses, customized training resources for businesses, marketing dos and don’ts in uncertain times, navigating change, and CARES Act grant application training / Q&As.

Photo above: Attorney Chris Kleinman presents on “Business Law 101” at our January 8, 2020 Lunch & Learn at the Buffalo Lake Community Center.

Advisory Committee Meeting

The Renville County HRA/EDA Advisory Committee meets on a quarterly basis. Some of the topics covered at these meetings include RC Hospital & Clinic's affiliation with Health Partners, the Renville County Housing Study, housing development partnerships and opportunities with the Southwest MN Housing Partnerships, the MN DEED Small Cities Development Program, Federal EDA grants for economic development infrastructure, low interest business loans from the MMRDC and more.



Photo above right: Nathan Blad – CEO of RC Hospital and Clinics, and Jackie Edwards – RC Hospital & Clinic's Director of Marketing & Communications update the Advisory Committee Meeting attendees at their January 14th meeting in Fairfax on their affiliation with HealthPartners.

Blight Mitigation Grants

The Renville County HRA/EDA had two Blight Mitigation Grant windows in 2020. Two grants were approved, and a third is in progress. Funding for this program is in our 2021 budget, and we expect some carryover from unexpended funds as well.



Meetings with Cities

HRA/EDA Staff have met with elected officials, boards and staff of several cities this past year on a variety of topics such as housing and business development / assistance. We're always appreciative for the opportunity to update cities on the work the HRA/EDA is undertaking, talk about partnership opportunities, and answer any questions they may have.

Photo left: Staff attended the Renville City Council on Monday, January 27th to talk about business assistance resources and update them on recent happenings at the Renville County HRA/EDA.



Photo above: Our housing study kick off meeting on February 27th.

Renville County Housing Study Kick Off

Renville County HRA/EDA undertook a housing study this year, funded in part by a grant from the Southwest Initiative Foundation, contributions from our cities, and the HRA/EDA. We held our Housing Study “kick off” meeting with Matt Mullins with Maxfield Research on Thursday, February 27th at the RC Government Services Center. 7 of our 9 cities attended in person, and others called in. We video recorded it, and emailed a link to that and info request forms for the consultant to all the cities.

Human Resources & Manufacturing Association

Renville County HRA/EDA partnered with Redwood County Economic Development, Central MN Jobs & Training Services, the SW MN Private Industry Council & area Chambers to start a multi county Human Resources Professionals group to allow for training opportunities and networking for our HR professionals at private businesses, nonprofits and government organizations. . We had planned to hold these quarterly events starting April 16th but due to the pandemic this program has been put on hold. We are hopeful they can begin in 2021.

ST Sports – Olivia

Renville County EDA’s loan to ST Sports in Olivia, which was approved by the HRA/EDA Board at their February Board Meeting, was closed on March 18th. This loan was in conjunction with F&M Bank Minnesota – Olivia, the City of Olivia EDA and the Mid-Minnesota Regional Development Commission.

Photo left: Renville County Commissioner Greg Snow, Ryan Meier – new owner of ST Sports, and Erik Petersen of F&M Bank Minnesota at the ST Sports loan closing.





Broadband Day on the Hill

Staff attended the MN Rural Broadband Coalition's Broadband Day on the Hill at the State Capitol on Thursday, March 12th to chat with our legislators on broadband expansion resources in Greater MN. Thank you cards or "sorry we missed you" cards were sent afterwards.

Photo right: Steve Grove, Commissioner of the MN Department of Employment & Economic Development speaks to attendees at Broadband Day.

Emergency Business Bridge Loan Program

In March, the Renville County HRA/EDA created the "Emergency Business Bridge Loan Program" with \$50,000 in reserve funds to assist businesses that were impacted by the fight against COVID-19. The program was designed to provide up to \$2,500 in bridge financing until new programs from the SBA were rolled out. Most businesses receiving these loans were ordered closed or to have modified business practices by the Governor's Executive Orders 20-04 and 20-08 – pertaining to bars, restaurants and personal services.

Loans were marketed to our email distribution lists of Cities, Lenders, Elected Officials & Boards, and via social media and press releases, etc. In all, 21 Renville County Businesses received loans. Locations of loan recipients are as follows: Bird Island – 3, Danube – 1, Fairfax-1, Franklin-1, Hector-3, Olivia-9, and Renville-3.

TC&W Railroad Event

Staff were invited to an event hosted by the Twin Cities and Western Railroad / MN Prairie Line on March 11th. It was a great networking event, and we started discussions on grant opportunities with the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority, staff from Congressman Peterson's office and others on grant opportunities from the Federal EDA. Will keep you posted as this moves along.

Photo right: Twin Cities & Western Railroad networking event held on March 11th.



Renville County Pandemic Business Resource Directory

Renville County HRA/EDA has created a "Renville County Pandemic Business Resource Directory" with additional info on loans and programs to assist businesses impacted by COVID-19 from the SBA, the State of MN and Renville County HRA/EDA. This was posted on our website and promoted at our online trainings for businesses, via email and social media, etc.



Childcare Appreciation

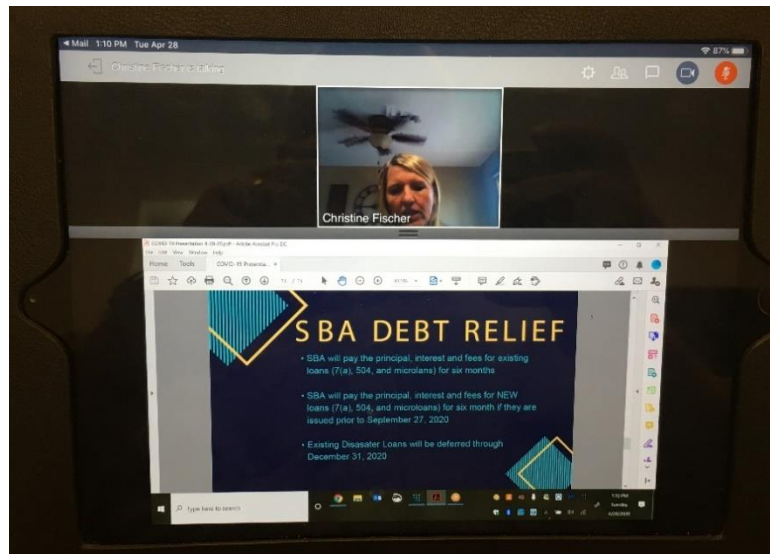
Friday, May 8th was Childcare Provider Appreciation Day. Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic we had planned to do an appreciation dinner for providers, but in light of current conditions we delivered thank you goodies (a box of cookies from the Sweet Spot Bake Shop in Fairfax, a fruit bowl and a thank you card with all of our names on it) to all 33 Childcare Providers in Renville County on May 7th & 8th. All providers were called ahead of time to inquire if it would be OK if we stopped by to deliver these. Recognition gifts were well received by childcare providers.

Photo above: The thank you goodies delivered during Childcare Appreciation Day.

Trainings for Business

Renville County HRA/EDA teamed up with the MN Small Business Development Center & Southwest Initiative Foundation to hold several trainings on resources to assist businesses impacted by the Coronavirus on April 28th. Approximately 15 businesses, lenders, elected officials and board members participated in these trainings. We anticipate holding additional trainings if / when additional funds are allocated to SBA programs by the Feds.

Photo left: Online trainings on resources to assist businesses impacted by the Coronavirus.



Radio Interview on Business Assistance Programs

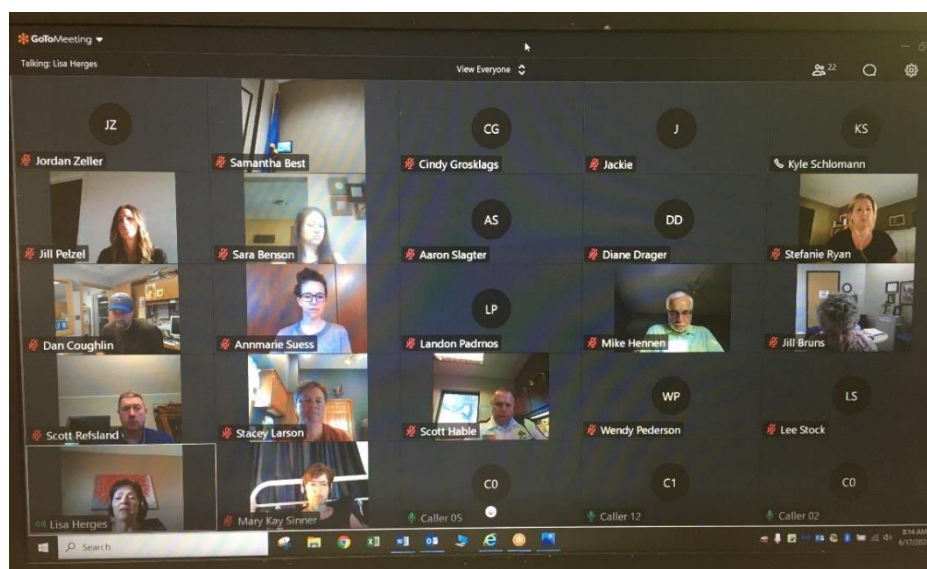
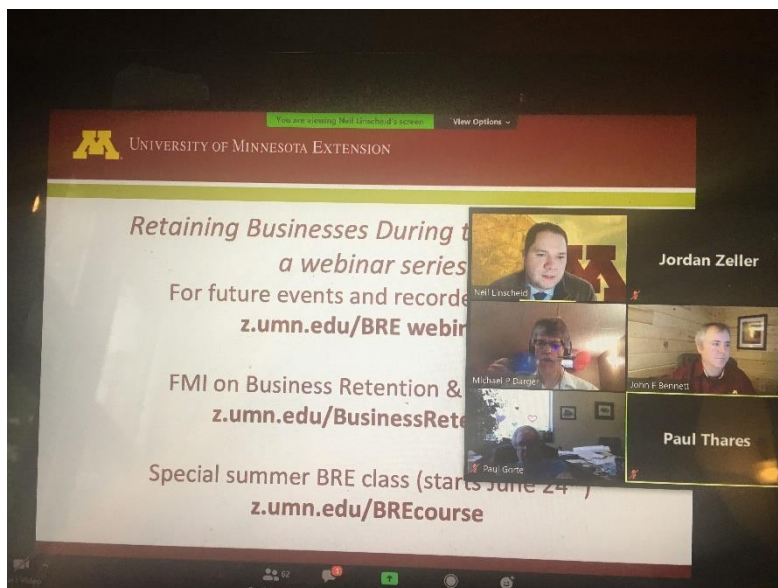
Chuck Blum with Big Country / KOLV 100.1 FM interviewed economic development staff on Friday, May 15th on assistance and resources for businesses impacted by COVID-19. We also discussed non COVID-19 topics such as our housing study, Lunch & Learns, Business Innovation Grants, and other topics. This interview was played on-air on Sunday, May 17th at 7:30 AM.

Photo right: Chuck Blum in the Big Country / KOLV 100.1 FM Studio.

Web Trainings

Renville County EDA helped promote trainings for businesses, lenders, staff and elected officials coordinated by other organizations. We try to email these trainings / webinars out as we learn of them.

Photo left: University of Minnesota Extension's Business Retention & Expansion Program does a weekly webinar for local units of government on ways they can assist businesses help withstand the current pandemic.



COVID-19 Emergency Operations

EDA Staff have been participating in the Renville County Emergency Operations Center conference calls to serve as a conduit between the County's Emergency Operations and the business community.

Photo left: attending the online Renville County Emergency Operations weekly call.

Business Innovation Grants

The Renville County HRA/EDA conducted quarterly rounds of Business Innovation Grants. \$30,000 in grant funds were awarded to Renville County businesses and nonprofits for a variety of projects.

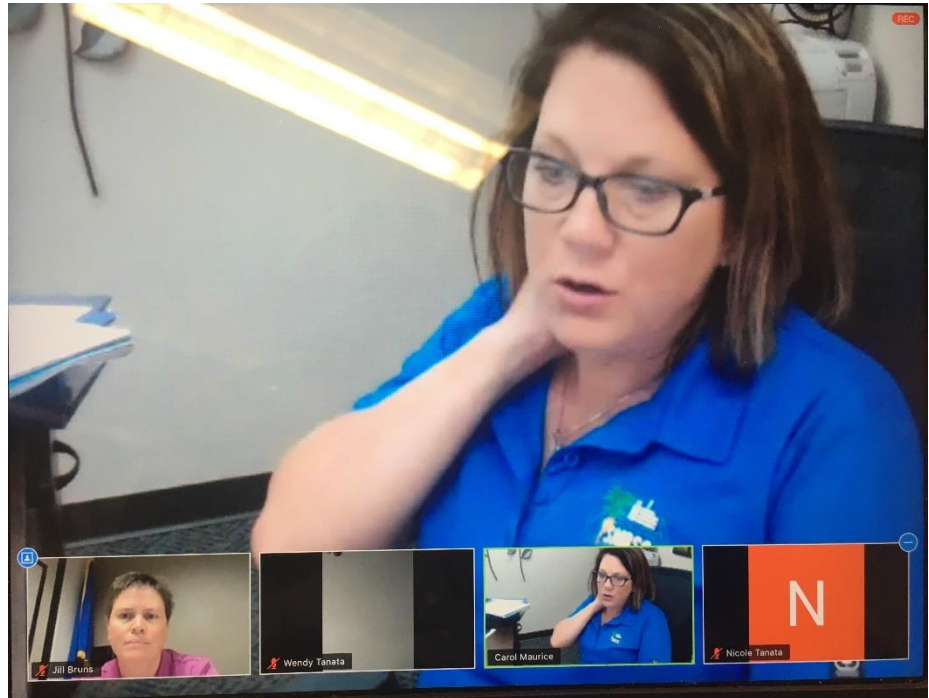
We promote this program by sending notification of this to the Cities, Townships and other contacts, press releases, as well as posting the graphics, right, on our social media accounts, etc.



COVID-19 Training for Businesses:

The RC Economic Development department teamed up with RC Public Health and Environmental Services to hold a series of trainings for Renville County businesses on how to prepare for COVID-19, and what to do if there is an outbreak. The trainings were held on June 18th and 22nd.

Photo right: Carol Maurice with the Southern MN Beet Sugar Cooperative in Renville, the largest private employer in Renville County, participates in the June 18th training.



Economic Development Association of MN (EDAM)
Economic Development staff participated in an online-only EDAM summer conference on June 17 & 18. Topics and presentations varied from business succession planning to broadband internet to business issues caused by the pandemic.

Photo left: Scott Marquardt, VP of the Southwest Initiative Foundation speaks at the Summer EDAM

Conference on June 18th

Renville County Housing Development Assistance Directory

In an effort to spur the development of new housing in Renville County, the Renville County HRA/EDA has created a Renville County Housing Development Resource Directory. This directory will be formally announced at our Housing Study Kick Off Event on the afternoon of September 24th, and be posted on our website, www.renville.com.



Small Business RLF Loan

The Renville County HRA/EDA closed on a loan to Fairfax Community Market, approved by the HRA/EDA Board at their July 2020 meeting. The business opened on August 11th, and early reports are that the business is doing well.

Photo left: L to R: Les Nelson – Mid-Minnesota Regional Development Commission Economic Development Director & Renville County HRA/EDA Loan Committee Member, Mark Gohnert – owner of Fairfax Community Market, and Nicholas Johnson – Fairfax City Administrator.

Renville County Housing Study

The Renville County Housing Study was delivered to us on September 24th and posted on our website: www.renville.com. A kick-off event was held on Thursday, September 24th at 3:30 PM with about 30 people attending. Due to the pandemic, this event was held in an online format. A press release was sent out to the news media and invitations were sent to HRA/EDA Board Members, County Commissioners, cities, townships, elected officials, lenders, developer, builders, property management companies, lumber yards, real estate agents, and others to attend. The event was recorded and posted on our website and on our social media accounts, etc. We received some good press on this in several area newspapers.

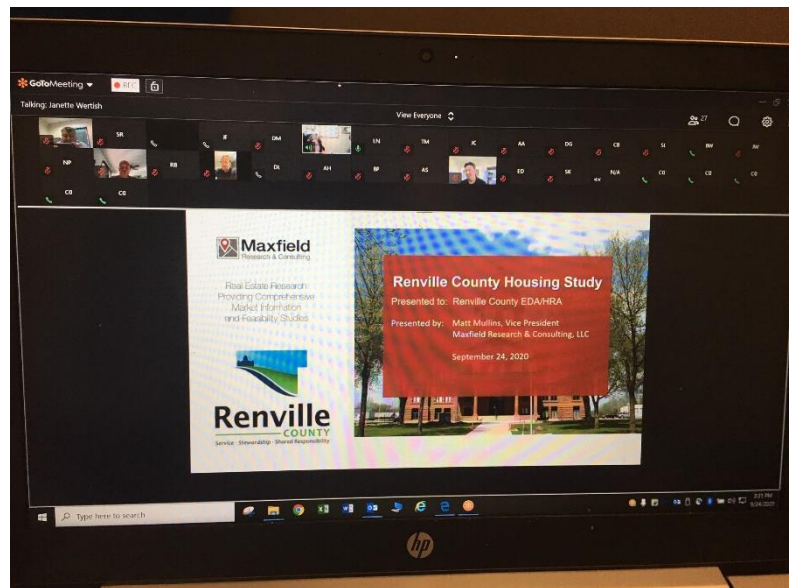


Photo above right: Matt Mullins with Maxfield Research presents on the Renville County Housing Study at our September 24th Housing Study Kick Off Event.



Housing Developer Familiarization (Fam) Tours

As part of our forthcoming Renville County Housing Study, we have started undertaking familiarization tours for housing developers to look at properties for sale and available for housing development in all ten of our Renville County Cities. We undertook our first Fam Tour on Thursday, September 3rd with Chad Adams, Executive Director of the Southwest MN Housing Partnership. We hope to schedule a few more of these Housing Fam Tours before the snow and / or COVID shuts us down for the season.

Photo left: Chad Adams, Executive Director of the Southwest MN Housing

Partnership, left, is shown property for future housing development by Mary Jo Halliday with the City of Olivia.

Land Sales

Renville County HRA/EDA closed on the sale of approximately 2.59 acres of land located near Olivia Hospital to the City of Olivia's EDA on November 12th. Purchaser Mr. Vannelli terminated our purchase and development agreement with him prior to the sale, and the Olivia EDA is now working on their own agreement with him.

The second land sale project is for the sale of approximately 1 acre of land near Olivia Hospital from Renville County to the Olivia Ambulance Service – this would be a pass-through for the Renville County HRA/EDA. This transaction has been approved by the Renville County Board of Commissioners and the Renville County HRA/EDA Board. We anticipate having a closing on this transaction soon.

CARES Act Grants Completed

Renville County completed the awarding of grants through CARES Act funds to 111 Renville County businesses and nonprofits that total \$509,928.38.

These grant funds were sourced from the Federal CARES Act dollars provided to Renville County, and subsequently allocated by the Renville County Board of Commissioners to the HRA/EDA to provide these grants. The maximum grant to businesses was \$7,500, and \$5,000 for nonprofits. Grants awarded were based on eligible expenses incurred by applicants from March – August, 2020. A press release has been sent out announcing these grants.