

Minutes of the
EMPOWER NORTH DAKOTA COMMISSION

May 28, 2020
TEAMS audio/video call
Bismarck, ND 58503

Members present:

Michelle Kommer, Vawrnita Best, Jason Bohrer, Ron Day, Ron Ness, Dale Niezwaag, Mark Nisbet, Mike Rud, Jay Skabo, David Straley, Danette Welsh

Ex Officio Members present:

Lt. Governor, Wade Boeshans, Stacey Dahl, Julie Voeck

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

Chairwoman Kommer, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Niezwaag and seconded by Day to approve the February 4th, 2020 minutes. Motion carried.

Economic Update

James Leiman

James gave a high-level economic update on the double black swan event that happened, affecting the industries of retail, agriculture, health education and other sectors, simultaneously with affecting energy prices in ND.

North Dakota had a ninety-three percent success rate with the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). Commerce, private industries, and the Governor's Office worked hard to set up a business model for regions in ND that needed the most help. Commerce worked with the Chambers of Commerce, regional Economic Developers, bankers, and private industry to provide support and resources to those that were affected most.

Goals & Review of the Commission

Lt. Governor Sanford

Lt. Governor Sanford discussed the need for the EmPower ND Commission to work together on a path forward, contributing viewpoints, and opinions for the role of the commission moving forward into the future.

Survey Update/Review

Chairwoman Kommer

Chairwoman Kommer asked the members for their viewpoint on a consensus organization.

Comments:

- 1.) All industries are being challenged with the onset of COVID-19, this is the time to bring viewpoints to the table.
- 2.) Generally, consensus is supported, but if it needs 100 percent support, then some members may not bring up issues. A voice still needs to be heard. A dissenting opinion.
- 3.) Need continuous conversations to get to those consensus.
- 4.) EmPower consensus; still doesn't mean the Legislature consensus.
- 5.) Consensus, not unanimous, not a fan of hard votes, draws a definite side.
- 6.) No surprises, opportunity to have hard discussions, go forward with what is best move for the State of ND.
- 7.) An education value comes from having those discussions.

Chairwoman Kommer asked the members for their viewpoint on the detriment to a hard vote.

Comments:

- 1.) Hard votes create long term conflict amongst working peers.
- 2.) Takes time away from discussions and becomes an easy out for further conversations.
- 3.) If you don't know where people stand, how can the commission get to the power of Empower to say we all stand behind this policy/recommendation.
- 4.) Policy statements are those we support or don't. If someone disagree, it then helps us move into those meaningful conversation.

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Chairwoman Kommer asked the members if they are satisfied with the current membership structure.

Comments:

- 1.) Many members represent associations that serve on the commission; questioning if they should serve, due to the need to protect industry/themselves.
- 2.) Industry experts and association leaders from larger companies is important, as we all take the pledge to put ND first.

Chairwoman Kommer asked the members if this system, is the “right lens” (a consensus, through the lens of which I can live with and don’t oppose it) or should a different path be used to reach a majority vote.

Comments:

- 1.) It may be a right lens but may not be the ONLY right lens.
- 2.) A good goal to start fit, encouraging discussion and education on concept and improvements. Further discussion and looking at alternatives, to where EmPower can live with, best for state and can become a standard.
- 3.) Members want to avoid breaking relationships with hard votes.

Comments simplified:

- No surprises, but a recognition that not everything is in the commission’s control. When situations arise, the commission will afford to give each other the professional courtesy to deal with those matters.

With discussions winding down, Lt. Governor Sanford asked for a **MOTION** to change the EmPower ND Commission to a majority vote process. Due to the lack of a **MOTION, it failed.** Members were in agreement to keep the commission as a consensus organization.

Industry update/future discussion topics

Ron Ness

- Escalation of state regulations
- Doubling of bonding for saltwater wells
- Cost analysis for every industry; reactions in past that are not big issues currently
- Administrative rules that are adding costs to rig operators – change during the interim and next legislative session

Ron Day

- Education and continue to advocate to grow the energy industry in ND by investing; workforce to capital dollars

Jason Bohrer

- Continued Research and Development for a carbon dioxide safe economy

Dale Niezwaag

- Restrictive local zoning in Mercer and McLean counties and happening in other counties/townships

David Straley

- Disposal wells – local issues

Danette Welsh

- Industry parks development for value-added energy and value-added agriculture
- Public education on safety protocols to be done. – various projects in the courts

Jay Skabo

- Creating new transmission of electric generation.

Mark Nisbet

- Zoning for wind; addressing the red blinking light on wind turbines

Discussions ensued on how to proceed with future meetings, that included: 1.) expertise on each topic, 2.) discussion brought forward to each commission meeting, 3.) full commission vetting on those topics, 4.) a possible move to subcommittees on vetted topics, and 5.) policy and recommendations built or produced.

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Path Forward/Next Steps
Michelle Kommer

The next two meetings will take place virtually in June. A survey will be sent out to all commission members, giving them the option to provide more thoughts/input on five topics that are led by an expert.

1. Research & Development - led by Jason Bohrer
2. Business Friendly Environment – led by Ron Ness
3. Industrial Park/Value-added Ag and Value-added Energy – led by James Leiman and Mark Nisbet
4. Public Education/Communication – led by Danette Welsh and Ron Day
5. Transmission – led by John Weeda and Jay Skabo

Public Comment

No comments

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned unanimously at 4:15 p.m.

Michelle Kommer

Chairwoman Kommer

6/11/2020
Date

Sherrí Frieze

Sherrí Frieze, Boards & Commissions EA

06.11.20
Date