

Minutes of the  
**EMPOWER NORTH DAKOTA COMMISSION**

June 30, 2020  
ND Department of Commerce  
1600 E Century Avenue Suite 2 Bismarck ND  
WSI Boardroom

**Members present:**

Michelle Kommer, Vawnta Best, Jason Bohrer, Al Christianson, Ron Day, Ron Ness, Dale Niezwaag, Mark Nisbet, Jay Skabo, Jeff Zueger, Danette Welsh

**Ex Officio Members present:**

Wade Boeshans, Stacey Dahl, Julie Voeck

**Public present:**

Call in only via Microsoft TEAMS

**CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME**

Chairwoman Kommer, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., welcoming members and guests.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion made by Ness and seconded by Day to approve the June 11, 2020 minutes. Motion carried.**

**Recap**

Since October 2019, commission members have had individual introductory meetings with the Commissioner and at commission members' request, have received various updates and presentations including presentations from the transmission authority (John Weeda), Affordable Clean Energy (Dave Glatt); Pet Chem (James Leiman); Pipeline Authority (Justin Kringstad); iPipe/EERC (Jay Almlie). Additionally, commission members designed and approved of, and subsequently participated in a survey to gather and understand their viewpoints on energy challenges, opportunities, and possible areas for agreement, among other insights, all in order to determine next steps to move forward with the Commission's mission – to make recommendations to the legislature as to the state's energy policy.

February 4<sup>th</sup> was the most recent commission meeting date prior to the current meeting due to the onset of the COVID-19 virus. May 28<sup>th</sup>, the commission reconvened, refreshing on progress to date, as well as the shifts in the economic landscape. Through robust discussion, commission members identified five areas within which commission members wished to pursue potential recommendations: R&D, Business Friendly

Environment (Regulatory Environment), Industrial Park/Value Added Ag/Energy, Public Education, and Transmission. Dialogue continued on the following topics:

**Value-Added Energy Development/Industrial Park  
Mark Nisbet & James Leiman**

**Discussions focused on action items to address  
hurdles/obstacles:**

- Working within a paradigm of the state's needs and the needs of Great River Energy.
- Exploring opportunities for value-added production over the next decade.
- Potential adjustment of Primary Sector definition, mostly for data center perspective.

**Dialogue discussion**

**Members discussed the challenges/action items in  
the approach of recruiting and/or investment of  
companies to North Dakota.**

- Workforce
- Energy prices
- Tax credit incentives, local and state
- Water
- Green electrons
- Existing rail
- Hurdles of regulations
- Educating the public

**Business Friendly Environment  
Ron Ness**

**Discussions focused on action items to address  
hurdles/obstacles:**

- Culture trends progressively worsening from the mid years of 2000
- Cultural change to grow industry
- Competition of dollars between other countries
- Hurdles of regulations in local and state
- Educating the public
- Pushback from locals, township, and county governments
- Permitting in multi-jurisdictions

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**Dialogue/Discussion**

- Political courage
- Projects that did not make it to the finish line, reason for; political opposition, economics
  - Separate case study
- Broader stakeholder engagement
- Regulatory reform
- Growing transmission load
- Building a scope for a study
- Diversify economy, commodity driven mostly
- Engaging company challenges with Commerce Department

**Next Steps**

Two more meetings will be scheduled, one for July and the other in August.  
A survey may be sent out before the next meeting in July if necessary, to further develop the ideas discussed today.

The Commerce Department will work on organization of the dialogue/discussion recommendation, bring those to the July meeting and continue refining the recommendations at the August meeting.

A one-page timeline leading up to legislative session will be available at the next meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No comments

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned unanimously at 12:00 p.m.

*Michelle Kommer* 7/21/2020  
Michelle Kommer Date  
Chairwoman

*Sherri Frieze* 07/20/20  
Sherri Frieze Date  
Boards & Commissions E.A.