



EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

April 26, 2021

Via Zoom®

100 Park Street South
Mora, MN 55051

Commission Members Present:

Gene Anderson – Kanabec County Commissioner
Bob Bollenbeck - Kanabec Co. Public Interest
Tish Carlson – Isanti Co. Municipalities
Dave Dillan – Mille Lacs Co. Municipalities
Linda Evans - Mille Lacs Co. Public Interest
Richard Hansen - Isanti Co. Townships
Robert Hoefert, Mille Lacs Co. Townships
Jeanette Kester - Pine Co. Public Interest
Tom Lawlor – Chisago Co. Public Interest
Scott Moe - Northern School Boards
Ben Montzka- Chisago Co. Commissioner
Dave Patenaude -Kanabec Co. Townships
Genny Reynolds-Mille Lacs Co. Commissioner
Peter Spartz – Pine Co. Municipalities
Kevin Stenson-Chisago Co. Municipalities
Terry Turnquist - Isanti Co. Commissioner
JJ Waldhalm, Pine Co. Commissioner
Glen Williamson-Pine Co. Townships

Commission Members Absent:

Loren Davis - Isanti Co. Public Interest
Carla Dunkley- Tribal Representative
Carri Levitski – Southern School Boards
Jim Swenson - City of North Branch

Staff Present:

Bob Voss - Executive Director
Ashely Eckdahl – Community Development
Brenda Hughley, Finance Officer
Karen Onan, Community Development
Trish Rydlund - Office Manager
Penny Simonsen – Transportation
Michelle Thomas – Economic Resiliency Coord.

Others Present:

Marty Harding – Northwoods & Water of the St.
Croix Heritage Area
Steve Fredlund

1. **WELCOME:** Chairman Montzka called the meeting of the East Central Regional Development Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. **AGENDA APPROVAL:** Evans moved to approve the agenda with addition of 7.d. Title VI – Civil Rights Resolution. Hansen seconded - motion carried.
3. **MINUTES APPROVAL:** Hansen moved to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2021 ECRDC Board meeting. Stenson seconded- motion carried.
4. **NORTHWOODS & WATER OF THE ST. CROIX HERITAGE AREA:** Marty Harding gave a presentation on the Northwoods & Water of the Sr. Croix Heritage Area. The St. Croix Watershed covers 2 states, 4 sovereign nations, 7,700 square miles, 18 counties, and 32 sub-watersheds. Following the presentation, discussion followed to support and sign a resolution for National Heritage Designation for the Northwoods & Water of the Sr. Croix Heritage Area.
5. **PERSONNEL AND BUDGET COMMITTEE (P&B):** The P&B met via Zoom prior to the ECRDC Board meeting and brought forth the following recommendations:
 - a. Proposals for Human Resources Consultant: In February, the P&B discussed how the Commission has used the same salary range table for several years with only annual cost-of-living adjustments. Also, some positions have been added, eliminated, or taken on more responsibilities. It was decided to obtain proposals from human resource consultants to conduct a study to help update our current job descriptions, salary structure, and personnel policies for recommendation to the Commission. The study would be conducted and included in the next fiscal year's budget. We received four proposals from consultants: Dave Drown Associates; Baker Tilly; AIG/Gallagher; and MRA. Following discussion,

motioned by Moe to accept David Drown Associates proposal in the amount of \$9,300. Evans seconded – motion carried.

- b. ECRDC Company Car: A request for bids was sent to each legal county newspaper for the sale of the ECRDC's 2007 Chevrolet Malibu. We received three bids with a high bid of \$1,817.

6. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Executive Director Voss provided his report which included the following:

- a. Defederalization of RLF Program: The recently enacted Reinvigorating Lending for the Future Act (the Act) authorizes EDA to release its federal interest in certain Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) awards that have operated satisfactorily for seven years beyond the final disbursement of grant funds. The ECRDC'S original Revolving Loan fund was established in 1994 and meets this requirement. Voss stated that both the CEDS Strategy Committee and RLF Loan Committee support the idea of continuing the RLF with local control. Also, to expanding the terms to match our CARES Act RLF criteria – i.e., 0% interest and no payments for up to 6 months, etc. Voss stated that a resolution Supporting a Request to Release Federal Interest in Revolving Loan Fund needs to be passed authorizing the Executive Director to submit a letter to EDA to defederalize the RLF program including an explanation of how ECRDC intend to use the RLF dollars. Hansen moved to approve the resolution and letter. Seconded by Kester – motion carried.
- b. RTCC Grant Application with 10% Local Match: Staff has spent a great deal of time preparing and submitting the RTCC Phase 4 application. This application will fund the RTCC activities for the next two years starting July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2023. A resolution was brought forth in support of this application with a 10% local match. Motioned by Williams to sign a resolution ratifying the submission with a 10% local match. Hansen seconded – motion carried.
- c. Mille Lacs County Public Interest: Advertisements were sent out for the Mille Lacs County Public Interest seat. One application was received. Motioned by Hoefert to reappoint Linda Evans as the Mille Lacs County Public Interest Representative. Bollenbeck seconded – motion carried.
- d. Title VI – Civil Rights Resolution: ECRDC's implementation of the federal Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is required to be reviewed and approved every three years. The items include:
 - i. Notification to the public of rights under the Title VI of Civil Rights Act;
 - ii. A complaint process and complaint form;
 - iii. A list of transit-related Title VI investigations, complaints, and lawsuits;
 - iv. A chart of the minority status of members of decision-making boards and committees;
 - v. A public involvement program; and
 - vi. A language assistance plan to ensure reasonable access to information for those with limited English proficiency.

Hoefert moved approval of the resolution "Endorsing East Central Regional Development Commission Title VI Program". Stenson seconded – motion carried.

7. **TREASURERS REPORT:** The Board reviewed the February and March 2021 Treasurer's report. Reynolds moved to approve the Treasurer's Report to include the checks written #10873 through #10937 along with ACH payments from February 1 through March 30, 2021. Bollenbeck seconded - motion carried. General Journals were reviewed and approved for the period February 1 through March 30, 2021.

8. **TRANSPORTATION:** Penny Simonsen reported on the following items:

- a. Transportation Alternative (TA) Program: We received word that the Mille Band of Ojibwe Vineland Sidewalk Phase III TAP project was funded in District 3. Congratulations!

There will be an TA solicitation and a Surface Grant solicitation in all 5 counties this year. Letters of Intent will be due this fall and applications will be due February 2022.

9. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & RESILIENCY COORDINATOR UPDATES:** Michelle Thomas reported on the following items:
- a. COVID RLF Loan Update: At this time the Covid RLF has loaned out \$238,550 with \$261,450 remaining to loan out. The RLF Loan committee will meet next week for two potential loan applicants for a total of \$70,000.
 - b. Broadband – Regional Planning: Staff is working with the Blandin Foundation through a program called CBR-Accelerate. This CBR—Accelerate process is designed to help rural areas in MN who have the worst broadband (Kanabec County is 87th out of 87 counties for broadband service). Pine County, Kanabec County, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and Aitkin County have joined forces to address East Central Minnesota’s broadband shortcomings and to maximize the regional framework. This cooperative team is working to pursue and achieve the best possible broadband solution for the East Central Minnesota regional community.
 - c. EDA Grant Opportunities: The US Dept. of Commerce / Economic Development Administration (EDA) will be receiving approximately \$3 Billion from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, with much available for grants for economic development projects. In early May we will receive a Notice of Funding Opportunity that will detail these grants.
 - d. Revolving Loan Fund Board: The ECRDC would like to thank Brad Larsen for all the years of service to the RLF Board. Brad resigned as an RLF Board member; therefore, there is an opening on the RLF Board for Chisago County.
10. **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION COUNCIL (ECRTCC):** Karen Onan and Ashley Eckdahl reported on the following items:
- a. Phase 4 Application: The application for Phase 4 has been submitted. This grant is for two-years running July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2023. We hope to hear if we are approved in mid-June.
 - b. MCOTA Volunteer Driver Virtual Forum Series: There will be two days with two sessions each day. The first date is May 19th with the topics of Safety & Security, Emergency Preparedness, and Passenger Assistance & Safety. The second day will be held on June 2nd with the topics of Dealing with Difficult Customers and Self Care, Ethics and Boundaries, and Best Practices & Summary. Pre-registration is required. A link can be found on the ECRTCC Facebook page.
11. **ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Montzka announced the annual meeting will be June 28, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. Stenson moved to adjourn the regular meeting of the ECRDC. Hansen seconded- motion carried.



Robert L. Voss, Executive Director



Ben Montzka, Chairman