



EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

October 25, 2021
100 Park Street South
Mora, MN 55051

Commission Members Present:

Gene Anderson – Kanabec County Commissioner
Bob Bollenbeck - Kanabec Co. Public Interest
Carolyn Cagle – Chisago Co. Townships
Dave Dillan – Mille Lacs Co. Municipalities
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
Jim Swenson - City of North Branch
Terry Turnquist-Isanti Co. Commissioner
Glen Williamson-Pine Co. Townships

Commission Members Absent:

Tish Carlson – Isanti Co. Municipalities
Loren Davis - Isanti Co. Public Interest
Carla Dunkley- Tribal Representative
Linda Evans - Mille Lacs Co. Public Interest
Carri Levitski – Southern School Boards
Jeremy Miller – Kanabec Co. Municipalities
JJ Waldhalm, Pine Co. Commissioner

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:

Cathy George – City of Sandstone
Stefanie Williamson

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:** Williamson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Lawlor seconded - motion carried.
3. **MINUTES APPROVAL:** Hansen moved to approve the minutes of the August 23, 2021 meeting. Stenson seconded- motion carried.
4. **AGENDA AMENDMENT:** Lawlor moved to amend the agenda by removing item 5 – Presentation on FY 2020-2021 Year End Audit. Kester seconded – motion carried.
5. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Executive Director Voss provided his report and brought forth the following action items:
 - a. Resolution Indicating Fulfillment of Regional Development Act/5-Year Assessment: Voss provided highlights of the 2021 5-Year Assessment as required by the Regional Development Act and fielded questions. Hansen then moved to approve the 5-Year Assessment along with Resolution No. 2021 Indicating Fulfillment of the Purpose of the Regional Development Act. Seconded by Moe – motion carried.
 - b. Certificate of Support for Sandstone Library: Voss presented a request from the City of Sandstone to support the City's plan to purchase the PHASE office building, renovate it, and move the Sandstone Public Library into the renovated building. Motioned by Kester to sign the certificate of support for the City of Sandstone. Seconded by Stenson – motion carried.

- c. Ratify First Children’s Finance Contract: The CARES Act funding included work to address the need for affordable childcare in our region. Due to time limitations, staff has begun working under an agreement with First Children’s Finance (FCF) to conduct a pilot planning project in Pine County. The study will include a needs assessment, create an inventory of available land and buildings, and provide training to potential childcare providers. An exhaustive search revealed that FCF is the only organization in our area that conducts these types of assessments, etc. so EDA is allowing this as a sole source procurement expenditure from the CARES funding. This study will lay the groundwork for providing assistance in other counties. Hansen moved to ratify the First Children’s Finance contract. Williamson seconded - motion carried.
 - d. Re-Appoint MN/DOT District 3 ATP Representatives: The current MnDOT policy manual requires that the RDCs review their appointments every two years. Stenson moved to re-appoint Genny Reynolds, Mille Lacs County elected official, and Chad Gramentz, Kanabec County Engineer, from the Transportation Advisory Committee as the MnDOT representatives. Hansen seconded - motion carried.
6. **TREASURERS REPORT:** The Board reviewed the August and September 2021 Treasurer's report. Moe moved to approve the Treasurer's Report to include the checks written #11051 through #11088 along with ACH payments August 1 through September 30, 2021. Williamson seconded - motion carried. General Journals were reviewed and approved for the period August 1 through September 30, 2021.
7. **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION COUNCIL (ECRTCC):** Ashley Eckdahl and Karen Onan reported on the following items:
- a. Staff is currently working with Arrowhead Transit to review their existing services in Chisago and Isanti Counties. When Arrowhead Transit took over for Heartland Express, they inherited their routes for the remainder of the operating year. As the year comes to a close, they are able to look into making changes for the future- whether this means expanding or eliminating routes, service hours, special runs, frequently requested stops, etc. The survey is now live on Survey Monkey (through mid-November) and can be found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Isanti> or <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Chisago>.
 - b. Staff is promoting and marketing the ECRTCC by doing interviews on KBK, YouTube® audios of podcasts on social media/website, and website posts.
 - c. Local Human Services – Public Transit Coordination Plan (LHSPTCP) initial meeting was held on September 15th. During this meeting timelines, tasks, surveys, outcomes were identified. A LHSPTCP public transit riders’ survey is online and also being distributed through the Salvation Army, HRAs and Lakes and Pines.
8. **TRANSPORTATION:** Penny Simonsen reported on the following funding opportunities:
- a. Active Transportation Fund: Active Transportation Funding is similar to the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) and Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) Grants. These are State funds with no match requirement with about \$5.5 million available. Types of projects might include: sidewalk improvements, wayside rest improvements, bike improvements, bike connector trails, etc.
 - b. Transportation Alternative (TA) Funding: TA funding available is as follows: District 3 (includes Isanti, Kanabec, and Mille Lacs Counties) has \$800,000, Metro District (includes Chisago County) has \$250,00, and District 1 (includes Pine County) has \$600,000.
9. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESILIENCY UPDATE:** Michelle Thomas reported on the following items:
- a. COVID-19 Revolving Loan Fund Activity:

Total Original Loan Amount	Number of Loans to Date	Total Loaned to Date	Available to Lend
\$500,000	12	\$423,550	\$76,450

- a. Regional Broadband Conference: A Regional Broadband Conference was held on October 6th at the Braham Event Center and also via Zoom. This event was hosted by the ECRDC in collaboration with the Initiative Foundation and Blandin Foundation. The event was open to the public with 112 residents, elected officials

and local business owners attending in-person or online. The afternoon included a panel discussion including professionals from the fields of education, health, local government and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe; a presentation of what's been happening at the county level, a discussion with Diane Wells from the Minnesota Office of Broadband about efforts at the state level and how it affects local endeavors; and a report from Nancy Hoffman explaining progress Chisago County has made. Justin Jahnz, President/CEO of East Central Energy (ECE), announced that ECE is making plans to address broadband in East Central Minnesota. Planning is only starting so no particulars were declared, but excitement was palpable.

- c. Kanabec County Broadband Feasibility Study: The Kanabec County Board approved \$25,000 from their ARPA funds to be used as 50% match for an updated Broadband Feasibility Study. Blandin Foundation has awarded Kanabec County the other \$25,000 to be used toward this study. A Request for Proposal received five Feasibility Study proposals and HR Green was selected by the Broadband team. Phase I has begun which includes GIS mapping, data and infrastructure analysis, market assessment and review of information collected by the Accelerate Team.

10. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE:** Jordan Zeller reported on the following items:

- a. City/County Clerks/Admins, Community/Economic Developers & Partners Meeting: The ECRDC held its quarterly "City/County Clerks/Admins, Community/Economic Developers & Partners" meeting on October 8th at 12:00 PM Noon at the Chisago County HRA/EDA Office in North Branch. This meeting was a "Hybrid" model, with seven people attending in-person, and approximately 20 participants online. Speakers included Natasha Kukowski with MN DEED talking on the Small Cities Development Program, Karen Onan on the ECRDC's RTCC Program, and Don Hickman on child care development resources and assistance programs. This group will next meet online on Friday, January 21, 2022.
- b. Inventors & Entrepreneur Club: The regional Inventors & Entrepreneurs (I&E) Club, co-founded by the ECRDC, returned from its summer vacation with an event in-person on September 28th at East Central Energy in Braham. This event was held in a hybrid format – both in person and online via Zoom. The theme was selling a business. Speakers were Marv Soldner, a business Broker with TransWorld Business Advisors, and Al Quarnstrom, owner of WCMP AM/FM in Pine City & KBK in Mora.
- c. EDA Grant Opportunities: The US Dept. of Commerce / Economic Development Administration (EDA) received \$3 Billion from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, with much of that available for grants for economic development projects. There are currently two applications in to the EDA from our region, one each from the City of Princeton and Pine Technical & Community College in Pine City, and we are working with several other potential applicants.

10. **ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Montzka announced the next meeting will be in person at the ECRDC office on December 20, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. Lawlor moved to adjourn the regular meeting of the ECRDC. Stenson seconded- motion carried.



Robert L. Voss, Executive Director



Ben Montzka, Chairman