



EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

October, 23, 2023
100 Park Street South
Mora, MN 55051

Commission Members Present:

Loren Davis - Isanti Co. Public Interest
Dave Dillan – Mille Lacs Co. Municipalities
Alan Duff – Isanti Co. Commissioner
Nate George – Isanti Co. Municipalities
Robert Hoefert, Mille Lacs Co. Townships
Jeannette 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 Ripka – Kanabec Co. Commissioner
Brent Switzer – Pine Co. Municipalities
Sara Treiber – Kanabec Co. Public Interest
JJ Waldhalm, Pine Co. Commissioner
Dave Waldoch – Chisago Co. Municipalities

Commission Members Absent:

Tom Anderson – Isanti Co. Townships
Jill Anderson – Southern School Boards
Kevin Schieber - City of North Branch
Glen Williamson-Pine Co. Townships

Staff Present:

Bob Voss - Executive Director
Karen Onan – RTCC Planner
Darcy Rylander – Finance Director
Trish Rydlund - Office Manager
Penny Simonsen – Transportation Planner
Michelle Thomas - Resiliency Coordinator/RTCC
Jordan Zeller – Economic Development Planner

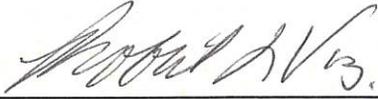
1. **WELCOME:** Chairman Montzka called the regular meeting of the East Central Regional Development Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. **AGENDA APPROVAL:** Davis moved to approve the agenda with the following addition, 9a. Letter of Support for Minnesota Department of Transportation Thriving Communities Regional Pilot Program (TCP-R). Duff seconded - motion carried.
3. **MINUTES APPROVAL:** Ripka moved to approve the minutes of the August 28, 2023 meeting as presented. Moe seconded- motion carried.
4. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Executive Director Voss provided highlights of his report including:
 - A. **Related Party Questionnaire:** Auditing standards put in place last year require that all board members be asked about potential related party implications. A potential related party means that one of the board members, or an immediate family member, could directly or indirectly receive some sort of personal gain from ECRDC entering into a transaction with an individual or business. Auditors need to be aware of any potential related parties so that they can test the transactions to make sure that it was entered into through a normal course of business. Those in attendance were asked to complete the questionnaire and turn into staff prior to departing.
 - B. **Annual Audit:** FY2023 agency-wide audit will begin this week. The auditors are expecting to provide a full report at our December 18th Commission meeting.
 - C. **Climate and Energy Project:** ECRDC has submitted a Letter of Intent to the MN Department of Commerce to apply for \$300,000 from the Local Grant Development Assistance Program to provide technical assistance to counties and communities in the region seeking to implement sustainable energy solutions. The project would fund a new staff person that could provide grant writing, financial planning stakeholder engagement, and project development support. This is a 3-years project budget with an estimated cost of \$410,389. An application for the additional amount of \$110,389, is being sought from the McKnight Foundation. Request for Proposal deadline is due November 13th.

- D. Regional Food Business Center: Staff will hold a meeting of local farmers, and producers to share concerns and needs faced as growers/producers as well as business owners. This will be held November 2nd at the ECRDC offices from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Motioned by Moe to accept the Executive Director's report. Kester seconded – motion carried.

- 5. **TREASURERS REPORT**: The Board reviewed the August and September 2023 Treasurer's report. Kester moved to accept the Treasurer's Report to include the checks written #11631 through #11678 along with ACH payments for August 1 through September 30, 2023. George seconded - motion carried. General Journals were reviewed and approved for the period August 1 through September 30, 2023.
- 6. **TRANSPORTATION UPDATE**: Penny Simonsen gave an update on grant opportunities:
 - A. Transportation Alternative (TA) Grants: TA Letters of Intent are due November 3rd with full applications due to respective MnDOT District Offices in early January. The grants include Safe Routes to Schools, Scenic Byways, Transportation Enhancements, and several other discretionary programs with a competitive program to be developed by states.
 - B. Surface Transportation Block Grants (STBG): District 3 counties (Isanti Kanabec, and Mille Lacs) will have an opportunity to apply for STBG funding for local road projects this fall/winter, in the very-other year solicitation. Chisago County is a yearly allocation for these funds. Pine County through District 1 receives funding on a rotation basis.
- 7. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**: Jordan Zeller reported on Economic Development and brought forth the following item for discussion:
 - A. Small Business Saturday: Work is underway to hold a "Small Business Saturday" planning/training event for our region's businesses on November 25th.
 - B. Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Activity: The RLF Board on September 20th approved a \$20,000 loan for the expansion of More Than Sprouts grocery in Pine City. Another loan closing occurred August 31st to IVI Holdings LLC in Sandstone.
 - C. Fall Barnstorming: Plans are underway for our annual fall "Barnstorming" visits to banks, credit unions, and city hall in the region. We do this to market our small business Revolving Loan Fund opportunities as well as other economic development programs and services.
- 8. **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION COUNCIL (ECRTCC)**: Karen Onan brought forth a Letter of Support for the MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation's application to the Federal Highway Administration to become a Regional Capacity Builder under the Thriving Communities Program for our project in the Moving Greater Minnesota Forward program. Motioned by Moe to authorize Chairman Montzka to sign the Letter of Support. Lawlor seconded – motion carried. Other items discussed included:
 - A. Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2023: Representative Stauber and Senator Klobuchar have both signed onto the Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2023.
 - B. I Like That Training: Staff are participating in the I Like That (ILT) Lean Start-Up 10-week training. This is the initial phase of the Moving Great MN Forward process in which the ECRTCC is focusing on Public Transit Service Transfer Stations.
- 9. **ECONOMIC RESILIANCY COORDINATOR UPDATE**: Michelle Thomas reported on the following items:
 - A. Childcare Across the Region Chisago County: Chisago County Board of Commissioners have approved \$100,000 from their ARPA funds to work on Child Care efforts. Of those funds allocated, \$25,000 will go to school child care programs. A strategic planning session is being scheduled to determine how to spend the remaining funds as well as funds awarded from the Initiative Foundation.
 - B. The Initiative Foundation has hired a new childcare program specialist, Jessica Gilder, who will work with childcare teams throughout the 14 counties they serve.

10. **ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Montzka announced the next meeting will be December 18, 2023, at the ECRDC Offices. Davis moved to adjourn the regular meeting of the ECRDC. Ripka seconded- motion carried.



Robert L. Voss, Executive Director



Ben Montzka, Chairman