



EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

December 18, 2023
100 Park Street South
Mora, MN 55051

Commission Members Present:

Tom Anderson – Isanti Co. Townships
Loren Davis - Isanti Co. Public Interest
Alan Duff – Isanti Co. Commissioner
Bruce Fitzwater – Chisago Co. Townships
Nate George – Isanti Co. Municipalities
Robert Hoefert, Mille Lacs Co. Townships
Tom Lawlor – Chisago Co. Public Interest
Scott Moe - Northern School Boards
Ben Montzka- Chisago Co. Commissioner
Genny Reynolds – Mille Lacs Co. Commissioner
Peter Ripka – Kanabec Co. Commissioner
Kevin Schieber - City of North Branch
Brent Switzer – Pine Co. Municipalities
Sara Treiber – Kanabec Co. Public Interest
JJ Waldhalm, Pine Co. Commissioner
Dave Waldoch – Chisago Co. Municipalities
Glen Williamson-Pine Co. Townships

Commission Members Absent:

Dave Dillan – Mille Lacs Co. Municipalities
Jeannette Kester - Pine Co. Public Interest
Dave Patenaude -Kanabec 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

Others Present

Doug Host, CliftonLarsenAllen LLP
Eric Smedsrud, CliftonLarsenAllen LLP

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:** Williamson moved to approve the agenda as recommended. Moe seconded - motion carried.
3. **MINUTES APPROVAL:** Duff moved to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2023 meeting. Davis seconded- motion carried.
4. **FY 2023 AGENCY-WIDE AUDIT PRESENTATION:** CliftonLarsenAllen (CLA) LLP completed their field work for the FY2022 single audit and FY2023 year-end audit. Eric Smedsrud presented the preliminary results of the audit which indicated: \$7,699 decrease in the Commission's General Fund balance from \$542,428 to \$534,729, and an increase in the Revolving Loan Fund balances of \$171,724. Deficiencies were noted. The FY2023 audit is currently undergoing quality review and be finalized for approval at the February 26, 2024 ECRDC Board meeting.
5. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Executive Director Voss provided highlights of his report including:
 - A. **Commission Vacancies:** A total of three vacancies still exist on the Commission. They are the seats for the Kanabec County Municipalities; the Mille Lacs County Public Interest; and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. In addition, the Southern School Board representative has exceeded the allowable number of absences per Commission's by-laws. Motioned by Moe to declare the Southern School Board position vacant. Seconded by Hoefert – motion carried.
 - B. **Climate and Energy Project:** We received word on December 8th that our Climate and Energy application with the MN Department of Commerce was approved. The application was approved for up to \$290,000 and will be negotiating the details of the contract within the next few weeks. The total 3-year

project budget is estimated at \$410,389. In addition to the Climate and Energy application the ECRDC is seeking an additional \$110,389 from the McKnight Foundation to cover most of the remaining costs for the program.

6. **TREASURERS REPORT:** The Board reviewed the October and November 2023 Treasurer's report. George moved to accept the Treasurer's Report to include the checks written #11679 through #11732 along with ACH payments for October 1 through November 30, 2023. Hoefert seconded - motion carried. General Journals were reviewed and approved for the period October 1 through November 30, 2023.
7. **PERSONNEL & BUDGET (P&B) REPORT:** The P&B met prior to the Commission meeting and brought forth the following recommendations:
 - A. FY2024 Budget and Indirect Cost Plan revision – Since the approval of the FY2024 budget in June the ECRDC has received several grant/projects. These include: MN Safe Ride, Initiative Foundation-Childcare, and Toward Zero Deaths. Motioned by Lawlor to approve the revised FY2024 Budget and Indirect Cost Plan. Seconded by Anderson – motion carried.
 - B. Personnel Policy Revisions: The P&B reviewed the recommended Personnel Policy revisions. The sections revised include: sick and safe leave, remote working, overtime/compensatory leave, travel and other expense reimbursement policy, adding Juneteenth as a holiday, definition of immediate family, leaves of absences, and longevity pay. Duff motioned to approve the revised Personnel Policies. Williamson seconded – motion carried.
8. **RURAL FOOD BUSINESS CENTER:** Darcy Rylander reported a forum was held on November 2nd to receive input from stakeholders in the local food system. From this forum goals/strategies were created:
 - A. Expand knowledge base round the local/regional food system to better understand opportunities and challenges.
 - B. Enhance coordination and communication among existing food value chain resources and agencies
 - C. Implement and support community engagement opportunities in order to increase demand for local/regional food.
 - D. Support/encourage regional aggregation/distribution opportunities to strengthen the food value chain.
 - E. Create and support opportunities for educational events to empower stakeholders to grow and strengthen their business.
9. **TRANSPORTATION UPDATE:** Penny Simonsen reported on the following items:
 - A. Toward Zero Deaths: The ECRDC began our Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) Safe Roads Coalition contract with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety starting October 1, 2023. The first Kanabec County and Mille Lacs County Coalition meetings planned to begin in late January and proceed every other month thereafter. Collectively, these groups provide the backbone of community efforts to reduce serious injury or fatalities on our roadways.
 - 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.
10. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE:** Jordan Zeller reported on Economic Development and brought forth the following item for discussion:
 - A. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Update: The ECRDC CEDS Strategy Committee met Tuesday, December 12th to review and bring forth to the ECRDC Board. Motioned by Waldoch to approve the CEDS Annual Update. Davis seconded – motion carried.
 - B. Small Business Saturday: The ECRDC along with our 5 Counties and the Small Business Development Center provided a “Small Business Saturday” online training event held November 14th. Speaker largely focused on marketing advice and ways to improve sales.

- C. Women's Small Business Month: Staff partnered with the Entrepreneur Fund's Women's Business Alliance & US Small Business Administration (SBA) to hold a Women's Small Business month event online on November 15th.
- D. EDA Report Card: The ECRDC RLF recently received an "A" rating by the Federal Economic Development Administration, the organization that oversees the RLF. This rating means financial reports will be done annually instead of semi-annually.

11. **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION COUNCIL (ECRTCC)**: Karen Onan reported on the following items:

- A. Moving Greater MN Forward: Over the past 10 weeks Staff have been focusing on follow-through from our Moving Greater MN Forward cohort. This has included 40 hours of ILT (I Like That) Academy Entrepreneurial training plus "home-work" that combined, was at least another 40 hours of work.

Fortunately, the time spent toward the outcome was very beneficial to the ECRTCC. We were able to create plans to develop Destination Transfer Stations which includes an extremely helpful 30, 60, and 90 day projection document.

12. **ECONOMIC RESILIANCY COORDINATOR UPDATE**: Michelle Thomas reported there was great interest in the 0% interest loans available for child care providers, grocers, transportation companies. No one from the grocery industry in our region has made contact. Many calls were fielded in the first couple of weeks about the program and money available.

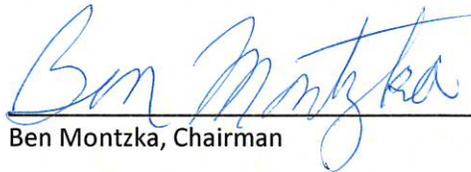
Many of the child care providers that showed interested were family providers looking for help with expansion of space, start-up costs, facility upgrades to remain in business. 4 providers are just finishing the application process—working with First Children's Finance and Child Care Aware on financial paperwork that will complete the necessary loan document requirements.

The transportation company interested in this loan was a private taxi company that has been talking with the RTCC about expansion within the region.

13. **ADJOURNMENT**: Chairman Montzka announced the next meeting will be February 26, 2024, at the ECRDC Offices. Davis moved to adjourn the regular meeting of the ECRDC. Williamson seconded- motion carried.



Robert L. Voss, Executive Director



Ben Montzka, Chairman