



EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

February 26, 2024
100 Park Street South
Mora, MN 55051

Commission Members Present:

Tom Anderson – Isanti Co. Townships
Loren Davis - Isanti Co. Public Interest
Dave Dillan – Mille Lacs Co. Municipalities
Alan Duff – Isanti Co. Commissioner
Bruce Fitzwater – Chisago Co. Townships
Nate George – Isanti Co. Municipalities
Jeannette Kester - Pine Co. Public Interest
Scott Moe - Northern School Boards
Ben Montzka- Chisago Co. Commissioner
Genny Reynolds – Mille Lacs Co. Commissioner
Kevin Schieber - City of North Branch
Brent Switzer – Pine Co. Municipalities
Sara Treiber – Kanabec Co. Public Interest

Commission Members Absent:

Tom Lawlor – Chisago Co. Public Interest
Robert Hoefert, Mille Lacs Co. Townships
Dave Patenaude -Kanabec Co. Townships
Peter Ripka – Kanabec Co. Commissioner
JJ Waldhalm, Pine Co. Commissioner
Dave Waldoch – Chisago Co. Municipalities
Glen Williamson-Pine Co. Townships

Staff Present:

Bob Voss - Executive Director
Karen Onan – RTCC Planner
Trish Rydlund - Office Manager
Penny Simonsen – Transportation Planner
Michelle Thomas - Resiliency Coordinator/RTCC

Others Present

Jill Anderson, Northern Lights Express Alliance
Keith Nelson, Northern Lights Express Alliance
Bob Manzoline, St. Louis/Lake Counties Rail Authority

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 as recommended. Moe seconded - motion carried.
3. **MINUTES APPROVAL:** Duff moved to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2023 meeting. Dillan seconded- motion carried.
4. **NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS (NLX) UPDATE:** Executive Director Keith Nelson and Jill Anderson of the NLX along with Executive Director Bob Manzoline from the St. Louis and Lake Counties Rail Authority gave an update on the progress of the NLX. Over the next several months, cities and the Northern Lights Express Passenger Rail Alliance will work with a consultant to narrow down potential platform sites in each of the cities. There will be a meeting on May 9th at 11:00 held at the ECRDC office. Officials from MnDOT will give a briefing on the NLX Project and be available to answer questions.
5. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Executive Director Voss provided highlights of his report including:
 - A. **Agency-wide Audit:** At the December 18, 2023 ECRDC Board meeting auditors from CLA auditing firm presented the FY 2023 agency-wide audit. At the time of that meeting CLA's quality review team were conducting the final checks. The Commission's General Fund balance went down slightly by \$7,699 to \$534,729 at the end of last fiscal year. The Revolving Loan Fund balance increase by \$171,724. No changes were noted during the quality review process. Kester motioned to accept the final audit as presented. Switzer seconded – motion carried.
 - B. **Mille Lacs County Public Interest Representative:** A notice was published in the Mille Lacs County papers to fill the public interest position on the ECRDC board previously held by Linda Evans for many years. One application was received from Jack Edmonds. Mille Lacs County representatives caucused. Motioned by Reynolds to approve Jack Edmonds as the Mille Lacs County public interest representative. Dillan seconded – motion carried.

- C. Regional Development & Grant Specialist: Nineteen applications were received for the Regional Development & Grant Specialist position. After a thorough review of the applications and subsequent interviews, an offer was made and accepted to Nicole Klosner. She will begin March 4, 2024 starting at Pay Grade 6 Step 2, \$65,048.26 annually on the Commission's salary schedule.
- D. Civil Rights Title VI Resolution: A resolution was reviewed for the ECRDC's Federal Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This resolution is required by some grant funders and to receive funding. Motioned by George to approval of the resolution "Endorsing East Central Regional Development Commission Title VI Program". Duff seconded – motion carried.
- E. Pay Equity Implementation Report: A pay equity report was due to the State's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) by January 31st. The report must contain payroll data that was in place as of December 31, 2023 and be formally approved by the "governing board" before being submitted. Since our last meeting was on December 18th there was no opportunity to get approval from the Commission. As usual, we communicated this situation to OMB and they allowed us to submit the report after our February meeting without any penalties. Kester moved to submit the Pay Equity Implementation report as prepared and submit it to the OMB. George seconded – motion carried.
6. **PERSONNEL & BUDGET (P&B) REPORT**: The P&B met prior to the Commission meeting and brought forth the following recommendations:
- A. Pay Adjustment Recommendation: In May the ECRDC received word that Region 5 Development Commission's application to USDA to establish Regional Food Business Centers (RFBC) in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota was approved. The subcontracts will be 5 years in duration and be funded at \$60,000 per year. Darcy Rylander has stepped into the lead role for administering this program as well as continuing as Finance Director. The P&B recommended a 2-step increase for Rylander based on the additional responsibilities. Motioned by George to approve a pay increase for Darcy Rylander from pay grade 6 step 4, \$69,015.65, to pay grade 6 step 6, \$73,216, effective March 1, 2024. Duff seconded – motion carried.
7. **TREASURERS REPORT**: The Board reviewed the December 2023 and January 2024 Treasurer's report. Reynolds moved to accept the Treasurer's Report to include the checks written #11733 through #11792 along with ACH payments for December 1, 2023 through January 31, 2024. Davis seconded - motion carried. General Journals were reviewed and approved for the period December 1, 2023 through January 31, 2024.
8. **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION COUNCIL (ECRTCC)**: Karen Onan reported on the following items:
- A. Karen gave an overview of the AARP Small Communities Flagship grant. The ECRTCC's role in the grant would be to provide outreach for the destination transfer stations and ECRDC would administer the grant. Davis motioned to make application for this grant. Dillan seconded – motion carried.
- B. ECRTCC will host an upcoming MnDOT Rail Division meeting on May 9, 2024, at 10:30 a.m. at the ECRDC offices. Those interested in information regarding the Northern Lights Express Passenger Rail Line will be invited.
9. **ECONOMIC DEV. & ECONOMIC RESILIANCY COORDINATOR UPDATE**: Michelle Thomas gave update on the following:
- A. There was one opening for a representative from Chisago County on the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Board. One letter of application was received from Dave Waldoch. Motioned by Schieber to approve Dave Waldoch as the Chisago County RLF representative. Duff seconded – motion carried.
- B. Three new loans have been approved since the last board meeting. Two family child care providers have taken advantage of the 0% interest loan we have extended from the Historic RLF. Both providers are in Mille Lacs County and approved for \$20,000 each.

C. Economic Development Grants are available for child care providers from the State for fiscal year 2024-2025. This funding is for grants to local communities for the purpose of increasing the number of quality child care providers to support economic development.

10. **TRANSPORTATION UPDATE:** Penny Simonsen brought forth the following recommendation from the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC):

A. **District 3 Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG):** The TAC met via Zoom on February 8th to review District 3 (Isanti, Kanabec, and Pine Counties) STBG project applications. This is a two-year solicitation. Region 7E FY2028 target estimate is \$1,686,040, FY2029 target estimate is \$1,686,040 for a two-year target estimate total of \$3,372,080. The TAC recommendation for District 3 is as follows:

County	Project	Funding	
		FY28	FY29
Mille Lacs County	CSAH 2	\$1,600,000	
Isanti County	CSAH 5	86,040	\$1,686,040
TOTAL		\$1,686,040	\$1,686,040

FY28: \$1,600,000 to Mille Lacs County CSAH 2; and FY29: \$1,686,040 to Isanti County CSAH 5 and \$86,040 from FY28 for the same FY29 CSAH project. Duff moved to approve the STBG funding as recommended by the TAC. Reynolds seconded – motion carried.

11. **RURAL FOOD BUSINESS CENTER (RFBC):** ECRDC will help host a Regenerative Agriculture event on April 10th at the Braham Event Center as part of the RFBC grant.

12. **ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Montzka announced the next meeting will be April 22, 2024, at the ECRDC Offices. Davis moved to adjourn the regular meeting of the ECRDC. Duff seconded- motion carried.



Robert L. Voss, Executive Director



Ben Montzka, Chairman

