



## EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

August 25, 2025  
100 Park Street South  
Mora, MN 55051

### Commission Members Present:

Tom Anderson – Isanti Co. Townships  
Wallace Bengston – Isanti Co. Public Interest  
Alan Duff – Isanti Co. Commissioner  
Jack Edmonds – Mille Lacs Co. Public Interest  
Bruce Fitzwater – Chisago Co. Townships  
Nate George – Isanti Co. Municipalities  
Robert Hoefert, Mille Lacs Co. Townships  
Jeannette Kester - Pine Co. Public Interest  
Scott Moe - Northern School Boards  
Ben Montzka- Chisago Co. Commissioner  
Rick Olseen, Chisago Co. Public Interest  
Dave Patenaude -Kanabec Co. Townships  
Genny Reynolds – Mille Lacs Co. Commissioner  
Peter Ripka – Kanabec Co. Commissioner  
Kevin Schieber - City of North Branch  
Dave Waldoch – Chisago Co. Municipalities  
Dave Youngquist – Kanabec Co. Municipalities

### Commission Members Absent:

Dave Dillan – Mille Lacs Co. Municipalities  
Shelly Johnson – Southern School Boards  
Sara Treiber – Kanabec Co. Public Interest  
JJ Waldhalm - Pine Co. Commissioner  
Glen Williamson - Pine Co. Townships

### Staff Present:

Bob Voss - Executive Director  
Nicole Klosner, Regional Dev. & Grant Specialist  
Karen Onan – ECRTCC  
Darcy Rylander – Finance Director  
Trish Rydlund - Office Manager  
Penny Simonsen – Transportation Planner  
Michelle Thomas – Community Development Planner  
Jordan Zeller – Economic Development Planner

### Others Present:

Tom Cruikshank – MnDOT District 3  
Austin Hauf – WSB Consulting

- A. **WELCOME:** Chairman Montzka called the East Central Regional Development Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- B. **AGENDA APPROVAL:** Moe moved to approve the agenda. Hoefert seconded - motion carried.
- C. **MINUTES APPROVAL:** Duff moved to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2025 meeting as presented. Bengston seconded - motion carried.
- D. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Executive Director Voss brought before the Commission the following items:
  1. Hwy 23 Corridor Study Letter of Support: MnDOT District 3, along with Mille Lacs, Isanti, and Kanabec Counties, is applying for \$3.75 million in Corridors of Commerce Project Readiness Activity funding to conduct a feasibility study for Highway 23 from the City of Foley to the Interstate 35 interchange at Hinckley. The Coalition's vision is to expand Highway 23 to a four-lane highway, citing both economic development and safety benefits. Moe moved to submit a letter of support for the Highway 23 Feasibility Study. Hoefert seconded. Olseen offered a friendly amendment to include bike and walking trails along Highway 23 in the letter of support. The amendment was accepted. The motion, as amended, carried.
  2. Veteran's Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway Re-Dedication Update: On July 27<sup>th</sup> a Re-Dedication Event for The Veteran's Evergreen Memorial Scenic Drive Byway was held at The Pine County History Museum. Their vision is to make this space a place for veterans, their families, and visitors to rest, relax & enjoy the outdoors.
  3. Commission Funds: Met with First Citizens Bank (FCB) about earning additional interest on the Commission's various savings accounts. These savings accounts, which collectively total

approximately \$500,000, include the General Fund; the ARPA RLF, Historic RLF, and the CARES RLF funds. We were able to negotiate a 3.25% annual interest rate on those accounts while maintaining the flexibility needed to make transfers when needed.

**E. PERSONNEL & BUDGET (P&B) COMMITTEE REPORT:** The P&B Committee met prior to the full ECRDC Board meeting. Treasurer Reynolds presented the P&B Committee report.

1. Audit Agreement Extension: The P&B Committee discussed extending the audit agreement with CliftonLarsonAllen LLC (CLA). CLA has conducted the Commission’s audits for several years, they are familiar with Commission operations and maintain an established working relationship with staff. With the Executive Director retiring early next year, the P&B Committee recommended continuing with CLA for an additional three years. Estimated fees for the June 30 audits of 2026, 2027, and 2028 are as follows:

<u>Audit</u>	<u>Financial Statement</u>			<u>Total Fees</u>
	<u>Audit Fees</u>	<u>Single Audit Fees</u>	<u>Technology Fees (5%)</u>	
June 30, 2026	\$ 21,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,300	\$ 27,300
June 30, 2027	\$ 22,200	\$ 5,300	\$ 1,375	\$ 28,875
June 30, 2028	\$ 23,500	\$ 5,600	\$ 1,455	\$ 30,500

Reynolds moved to extend the Audit Agreement with CliftonLarsonAllen LLC for three years. Waldoch seconded – motion carried.

2. Executive Director Search Committee: Motioned by Kester to appoint the Personnel & Budget Committee as the search committee for the Executive Director position and to authorize up to \$25,000 for the search. Olseen seconded – motion carried.

**F. TREASURERS REPORT:**

1. February and March 2025 Treasurer’s Report: The Board reviewed the February and March 2025 Treasurer’s Reports. Since the April 28, 2025, ECRDC meeting was canceled due to weather, approval of the February and March reports was required at this meeting. Reynolds moved to approve the Treasurer’s Reports, including checks #12045 through #12144 and ACH payments for February and March 2025. Ripka seconded – motion carried. The General Journals for February and March 2025 were also reviewed and approved.
2. June and July 2025 Treasurer’s Report: The Board then reviewed the June and July 2025 Treasurer's report. Reynolds moved to accept the Treasurer's Report to include the checks written #12174 through #12220 along with ACH payments for June and July 2025. Edmonds seconded - motion carried. General Journals were reviewed and approved for the period June and July 2025.

**G. CLIMATE AND ENERGY (C&E):** Nicole Klosner reported on the following:

1. Met with the City of Finlayson to discuss a Small Cities Grant.
2. Working with the City of Sandstone on an Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant for the John Wright Building.
3. Working with Pine City Elementary School on an HVAC program for energy efficiency.

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

1. On July 1<sup>st</sup> the ECRTCC was awarded their grant for FY2025/2026.
2. Participating in the I Like That (ILT) Academy. This program is instrumental in preparing all RTCCs for the upcoming 2026 grant which will be highly competitive throughout Minnesota.

3. Partnering with the Grant Plains Institute to pursue the Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot project, which will support the advancement of our Destination or Transfer Station (DoTS) a vital infrastructure initiative aimed at addressing transportation gaps along our east/west routes.

I. **COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Michelle Thomas reported on the following items:

1. The ECRDC is partnering with Mille Lacs and Kanabec Counties to reinforce the critical message to *Learn Your Limits*. This program is intended to inform the public on how little it takes to reach the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) legal limit.
2. Two businesses submitted applications for the ECRDC Revolving Loan Fund. The applicants include: Minnesota Machining in Wyoming and Tibbetts Wilderness Folk School in Milaca.

J. **TRANSPORTATION UPDATE:** Penny Simonsen reported on the following:

1. Transportation Alternative Grants solicitation will begin this fall. Staff will be making contacts to let them know this will be starting soon.
2. Kanabec County will be applying for a Safe Routes to School (SRTS ) Boost Grant. SRTS Boost Grants are a specific funding opportunity to support non-infrastructure efforts that enhance walking and biking to school. These grants help advance existing SRTS efforts and are intended for communities that have already developed an SRTS plan or similar comprehensive approach, with no local match required.
3. Staff has had conversations with Bryan Anderson, MnDOT District 1, and the City of Finlayson to coordinate costs for TH 18 projects.

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

1. The ECRDC is assisting the City of Rush City with applying to the Federal EDA for infrastructure for a new industrial park. The application has been submitted and is being reviewed by the Federal EDA.
2. Staff, along with the Chisago County HRA/EDA, are assisting the City of Shafer's EDA with developing an Economic Development Strategic Plan. We anticipate this plan will be completed around the end of this year.

L. **ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Montzka announced the next meeting will be October 27, 2025, at the ECRDC offices. Olseen moved to adjourn the meeting. Duff seconded- motion carried.



Robert L. Voss, Executive Director



Ben Montzka, Chairman