EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
February 23, 2026
100 Park Street South
Mora, MN 55051

Commission Members Present:
Tom Anderson – Isanti Co. Townships
Wallace Bengston – Isanti Co. Public Interest
Todd Christensen – Isanti Co. Commissioner
Jack Edmonds – Mille Lacs Co. Public Interest
Robert Hoefert, Mille Lacs Co. Townships
Shelly Johnson – Southern School Boards
Scott Moe - Northern School Boards
Ben Montzka- Chisago Co. Commissioner
Rick Olseen, Chisago Co. Public Interest
Julena Rahier – Pine County Municipalities
Genny Reynolds – Mille Lacs Co. Commissioner
Peter Ripka – Kanabec Co. Commissioner
Glen Williamson - Pine Co. Townships
Dave Youngquist – Kanabec Co. Municipalities

Commission Members Absent:
Dave Dillan – Mille Lacs Co. Municipalities
Bruce Fitzwater – Chisago Co. Townships
Nate George – Isanti Co. Municipalities
Jeannette Kester - Pine Co. Public Interest
Dave Patenaude -Kanabec Co. Townships
Kevin Schieber - City of North Branch
Sara Treiber – Kanabec Co. Public Interest

Staff Present:
Natalie Koerber - Executive Director
Nicole Klosner – Community Development Planner
Karen Onan – ECRTCC
Trish Rydlund - Office Manager
Michelle Thomas – Community Development Planner
Jordan Zeller – Economic Development Planner

Commission Member Present via Zoom
Steve Hallan – Pine County Commissioner
Dave Waldoch – Chisago Co. Municipalities

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:** Olseen moved to approve the agenda with a change to the EDA resolution. Christensen seconded the motion. Motion carried

C. **MINUTES APPROVAL:** Ripka moved to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2025, meeting. Youngquist seconded the motion. Motion carried.

D. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Executive Director Koerber introduced herself and gave a brief background about herself. She then brought before the Commission the following items:
   1. Safe Deposit Signature Card: First Citizens Bank signature cards and the safe deposit box have been in the process of transfer since the hiring of the new Executive Director. Moe moved to authorize the transfer to Natalie Koerber. Ripka seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
   2. Mille Lacs County Public Interest Representative, Pine County RTCC Representative and Personnel & Budget (P&B) Committee Member: Olseen moved to appoint Jack Edmonds as Mille Lacs County Public Interest Representative, Jeannette Kester as Pine County RTCC Representative, and Julena Rahier as Pine County P&B Committee member. Bengston seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
   3. Executive Director Six-month Work Program: Executive Director Koerber gave an overview of the Executive Director's six-month work program.

E. **PERSONNEL & BUDGET (P&B) COMMITTEE REPORT:** The P&B Committee prior to this meeting. Glen Williamson presented the following recommendations:

1. Executive Director Six-Month Work Program: Motioned by Williamson to accept the Executive Director's six-month work program. Christensen seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
2. Transportation Planner Merit Increase: Nicole Klosner assumed the Transportation Planner position previously held by Penny Simonsen and will continue supporting the Climate & Energy program and Historic Bluff Country CMP. Christensen moved to ratify a step increase for Nicole Klosner from Pay Grade 6, Step 4 ($72,864.35) to Pay Grade 6, Step 5 ($75,050.25), effective February 16, 2026. Hallan seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

F. **TREASURERS REPORT:** Genny Reynolds presented the Treasurer's Report.

1. December 2025 and January 2026 Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's Report was reviewed. Reynolds moved to accept the report, including checks #12306 through #12357 and ACH payments for December 2025 and January 2026. Hoefert seconded the motion. Motion carried.

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

1. EDA Application and Local Match: Staff are applying to the Federal Economic Development Administration for a new three-year Partnership Planning Grant (PPG). ECRDC would commit a 40% local match totaling $140,000. Moe moved to adopt the resolution committing the 40% local match. Williamson seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
2. Revolving Loan Fund (RLF): The ECRDC RLF closed two loans in late December, one to Lee's Pro Shop for $67,500 and El Limon LLC, a new restaurant in Wahkon, for $40,000.
3. "Barnstorming" Visits: Staff began spring "Barnstorming" visits in Chisago, Pine, and Mille Lacs counties to promote the RLF and other economic development programs and resources.

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

1. MN DOT RTCC Grant Application: Staff are applying for the two-year Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council grant through MnDOT for FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities, due March 20.

There are two resolutions that require matching funds, Part A: Mobility Management and Part B: Pilot Project. Olseen moved to adopt the resolution committing ECRDC to provide a local match of not less than 10% and up to 20% of net capital costs for both applications. Ripka seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

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

1. Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway (HBCSB) Corridor Management Plan: MnDOT requested ECRDC assistance in updating the Corridor Management Plan. The planning contract totals $125,000 and must be completed by June 2027. Olseen moved to authorize execution of the contract. Youngquist seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
2. Entrepreneur Workshop Series: The City of Isanti, North 65 Chamber of Commerce, and ECRDC are collaborating to deliver monthly entrepreneurship workshops throughout 2026 to support new and existing businesses.
3. Child Care Initiative: Staff are in discussions with the Initiative Foundation regarding funding to support regional child care efforts.

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

1. Energy Audits: Energy Audits: Energy audits have been completed for the John Wright Building (Sandstone), Pine City High School/Elementary School and Sturgeon Lake City Hall. Audits have been scheduled for the Rush City High School and Elementary school.
2. Staff met with the Department of Commerce and the State Competitiveness Grant program has been extended until the end of June 2027.

K. **TRANSPORTATION UPDATE:** Nicole Klosner reported on the following:

1. Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding: The Transportation Advisory Council met February 12 to review and rank four applications (two from Isanti County and two from Kanabec County). The funding target is $1,616,940 per year, totaling $3,372,880 for two program years.

   Ripka moved to authorize funding as recommended by the TAC:

   a. Kanabec County CSAH 11 (TH 23 to CSAH 19): Fully funded at $1,616,940 in FY2030 with $84,524 AC payback in FY2031.
   b. Isanti County CSAH 3 Projects: Combined request of $2,280,000 partially funded with the remaining balance of $1,532,416 in FY2031.

   Moe seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Rank	County Route Number	Project Description	MILES	FUND RECOMMENDATIONS	
				FY30	FY31
#2	Isanti Co. - CSAH 3	CSAH14 to TH65 Roadway Reclamation, Reconditioning & Resurfacing (RRR&R)	4.5	-0-	$1,280,000
#2	Isanti Co. - CSAH 3	.5 miles west of CSAH 1 to CSAH 14 - RRR&R	2.52	-0-	$252,416
#1	Kanabec Co. - CSAH 11	Intersection of TH23 to Intersection of CSAH 19 RRR&R	4.98	$1,616,940	$84,524
#3	Kanabec Co. - CSAH 1	Intersection CSAH 1/CSAH 11 to Intersection of CSAH 1/Sherwood St. - RRR&R	5.97	-0-	-0-
		TOTAL FUNDING		$1,616.940	$1,616,940

L. **ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Montzka announced the next meeting will be April 27, 2026, at the ECRDC offices. Olseen moved to adjourn the meeting. Christensen seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Natalie Koerbor, Executive Director

Ben Montzka, Chairman