EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
April 27, 2026
100 Park Street South
Mora, MN 55051

Commission Members Present:
Tom Anderson – Isanti Co. Townships
Wallace Bengtson – Isanti Co. Public Interest
Todd Christensen – Isanti Co. Commissioner
Dave Dillan – Mille Lacs Co. Municipalities
Jack Edmonds – Mille Lacs Co. Public Interest
Bruce Fitzwater – Chisago Co. Townships
Steve Hallan – Pine County Commissioner
Robert Hoefert, Mille Lacs Co. Townships
Scott Moe - Northern School Boards
Ben Montzka- Chisago Co. Commissioner
Rick Olseen, Chisago Co. Public Interest
Dave Patenaude -Kanabec Co. Townships
Julena Rahier – Pine County Municipalities
Genny Reynolds – Mille Lacs Co. Commissioner
Peter Ripka – Kanabec Co. Commissioner
Kevin Schieber - City of North Branch
Dave Waldoch – Chisago Co. Municipalities
Glen Williamson - Pine Co. Townships
Dave Youngquist – Kanabec Co. Municipalities

Commission Members Absent:
Nate George – Isanti Co. Municipalities
Shelly Johnson – Southern School Boards
Jeannette Kester - Pine Co. Public Interest
Sara Treiber – Kanabec Co. Public Interest

Staff Present:
Natalie Koerber - Executive Director
Nicole Klosner – Community Development Planner
Karen Onan – East Central Reg. Transp. Coord. Council
Trish Rydlund - Office Administrator
Darcy Rylander, Finance Director
Michelle Thomas – Community Development Planner
Jordan Zeller – Economic Development Planner

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:** Williamson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ripka seconded the motion. Motion carried.

C. **MINUTES APPROVAL:** Christensen moved to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2026 meeting. Bengtson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

D. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Executive Director Koerber reported on the following items:

1. FY26 Revised Budget: Koerber provided an update on the FY26 Revised Budget. Hoefert moved to approve the FY26 Revised Budget with a fund balance of $39,735. Waldoch seconded the motion. Motion carried.
2. FY26 Indirect Cost Plan: Moe moved to approve the revised FY26 Indirect Cost Plan. Ripka seconded the motion. Motion carried.
3. Initiative Foundation Regional Childcare Planning Grant: Williamson moved to authorize the Executive Director's signature for the Initiative Foundation Childcare Planning Grant. The grant period runs from March 2, 2026 through March 2, 2027, in the amount of $27,000. Motion carried.

4. Personnel Policies: Personnel Policies will be reviewed and presented at the August 2026 ECRDC Board meeting.

E. TREASURER'S REPORT: Genny Reynolds presented the Treasurer's Report.

1. February and March 2026 Treasurer's Reports: The Treasurer's Reports were reviewed. Reynolds moved to accept the reports, including checks #12358 through #12398 and ACH payments for February and March 2026. Williamson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

F. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE: Jordan Zeller reported on the following items:

1. "Barnstorming" Visits: Staff continue their spring round of "Barnstorming" visits, which provide opportunities to promote the Revolving Loan Fund and other economic development programs and resources to banks, credit unions and city halls.
2. Revolving Loan Fund (RLF): The RLF Committee met on April 3 and approved a $33,000 loan to a new business in Willow River. The RLF currently has available funds and staff continue actively marketing the program to new, expanding, and relocating businesses throughout East Central Minnesota.
3. Federal EDA Grant Application: Staff assisted the City of Rush City with an application to the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) for infrastructure improvements related to a new industrial park. The application is currently under review. Staff are also beginning work with the City of Mora on industrial park upgrade assistance.
4. Census 2030: Staff participated in meetings with the Minnesota State Demographer and the U.S. Census Bureau regarding preparations for the 2030 Census. Following the 2020 Census, Minnesota retained its eighth congressional district by fewer than 100 people. Staff will continue collaborating with these organizations to promote awareness and participation in the upcoming census.

G. EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION COUNCIL (ECRTCC): Karen Onan reported on the following items:

1. Vehicle Needs: Staff are investigating vehicle options for St. Clare Living Community of Mora and Mille Lacs Health Systems to use when Timber Trails Public Transit and other transportation services are unavailable.
2. Connected and Automated Vehicles (CAV): Connected and automated vehicles have the potential to provide significant benefits to Minnesota residents, businesses, and visitors. Region 7E hopes to improve connections to transportation hubs along the Highway 23 corridor. Minnesota continues planning and preparing for CAV implementation with a focus on accessibility and public benefit.
3. ECRTCC Advisory Board Meeting: The next RTCC Advisory Board meeting will be held via Zoom on May 14 at 9:00 a.m. Interested individuals may contact the office for the Zoom link.

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

1. Entrepreneur Workshop Series: The City of Isanti, North 65 Chamber of Commerce, and ECRDC are collaborating to offer monthly entrepreneurship workshops throughout 2026 to support new and existing businesses.

2. Child Care Initiative: Staff worked with counties to develop a comprehensive scope of work aligned with county priorities and funding requirements. The collaboration resulted in a contract with the Initiative Foundation totaling $10,500 per county.

3. Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan: Planning is underway for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway contract. An official kickoff meeting with city and county officials is scheduled for May.

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

1. Energy Audits: Energy audits were completed by Lakes and Pines CAC, and results were discussed with the City of Sturgeon Lake. Michaels Energy is currently conducting an audit for the City of Wyoming.

2. Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG): The EECBG program may be extended through May 2027. Other RDCs are experiencing challenges utilizing their funding allocations, and additional funding may potentially be redirected to ECRDC.

3. Other Potential Projects:
   a. Exploration of energy efficiency audits for homeowners.
   b. Potential partnership opportunities with Lakes and Pines CAC through the Conservation Improvement Program to replace existing HVAC and electrical systems.

J. TRANSPORTATION UPDATE: Nicole Klosner reported on the following items:

1. Corridor Management Plan: Staff continue work related to corridor management planning activities initiated in March.

2. Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway (LMLSB): Staff met with the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Committee in March to discuss the future of the program. In May the committee will be meeting at the LMLSB Overlook for the semi-annual Adopt-A-Park clean-up day. They have participated in the Adopt-a-Park program for the past several years. The Adopt-A-Park is a volunteer initiative where individuals, families, businesses, or community groups partner with local municipalities to clean and beautify local parks and trails.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Montzka announced that the next meeting will be the **Annual Meeting on June 22, 2026, beginning at 5:30 p.m. at Sunrise Township Hall, 12080 Sunrise Road, Harris, Minnesota.**

Williamson moved to adjourn the meeting. Waldoch seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Natalie Koerbor, Executive Director

Ben Montzka, Chairman