



EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

100 Park Street South

Mora, MN 55051

April 27, 2015

7:00 P.M.

Commission Members Present:

Karen Amundson – Kanabec Co. Public Interest
Greg Anderson – Isanti Co. Commissioner
Linda Evans – Mille Lacs Co. Public Interest
Frank Grundmeier – Pine Co. Townships
Steve Hallan – Pine Co. Commissioner
Richard Hansen – Isanti Co. Townships
Steven Kimmel – Chisago Co. Public Interest
Sue Larson – Isanti Co. Public Interest
Tom Lawlor – Southern School Board
Ben Montzka – Chisago Co. Commissioner
Diane Larkin – Chisago Co. Townships
Dave Patenaude – Kanabec Co. Townships
Genny Reynolds – Mille Lacs Co. Commissioner
Marlys Palmer – Isanti Co. Municipalities
Bill Schlumbohm – Chisago Co. Municipalities
Steve Odegard – Northern School Board
Barb Welty – Mille Lacs Co. Townships

Commission Members Absent:

Gordon Gullixson - Kanabec Co. Municipalities
Kirsten Kennedy – City of North Branch
Kathi Ellis – Kanabec Co. Commissioner
Thom Walker – Mille Lacs Co. Municipalities
Marlys Palmer – Isanti Co. Municipalities
Carla Dunkley – Tribal Representative

Staff Present:

Bob Voss – Executive Director
Bob Bollenbeck – Transportation/TZD Program
Jennifer Russell – Economic Development Director
Penny Simonsen – East Central Sr. Resource Center

1. **WELCOME:** Chairman Montzka called to order the meeting of the East Central Regional Development Commission at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Montzka recognized Lindstrom City Councilor Bill Schlumbohm to the Commission as the region's municipal representative from Chisago County. It was also announced that Quamba Mayor Gordon Gullixson was selected to replace Mora City Councilor Robert Jensen as Kanabec County's Municipalities representative on the Commission.
2. **AGENDA APPROVAL:** Larson moved to approve the agenda with the addition of a) Consider Safe Roads applications for Kanabec, Isanti, and Mille Lacs Counties and; b) Approve Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) applications and planning assistance for Region 7E communities. Welty seconded – carried.
3. **MINUTES APPROVAL:** Larson moved to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2015 meeting. Hanson seconded – motion carried.
4. **TREASURERS REPORT:** The Board reviewed the February 2015 and March January 2015 Treasurer's report as prepared by staff. Odegard moved to approve the Treasurer's Report to include the checks written from February 1, 2015 to March 31, 2015. Kimmel seconded – motion carried. The general journal entries were included in the review and approved for the time period February 1, 2015 to March 31, 2015.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT (Items 5 thru 8)

5. **ECRDC Board Vacancies:** Quamba Mayor Gordon Gullixson was elected to represent Kanabec County municipalities and Lindstrom City Councilmember William (Bill) Schlumbohm will represent Chisago County municipalities. Efforts continue to fill the Pine County public interest seat vacated by Lynn Zeleny who stepped down in December.
6. **Aging Program Update:** The Central MN Council on Aging forwarded the final 4th Quarter 2014 contract payment of \$23,849 for the Caregiver Program on March 12th. This was the last of the payments/reimbursements from the 2014 aging contracts.
7. **Pay Equity Report:** Received word from the MN Department of Employee Relations that our Pay Equity Implementation report was approved on March 23, 2015. The information used for the report was payroll data that was in place on December 31, 2014. This report must be done every three years so our next report will be due in January of 2018.
8. **Snake River Watershed Office Space:** Kelly Osterdyk of the Kanabec Soil & Water Conservation District inquired recently about possible office space at the ECRDC for a Coordinator position that the Snake River Watershed District will soon be hiring. The space is needed for three years and would require an internet connection, phone, etc. The ECRDC has available space due to the recent departure of the aging programs. Voss indicated that he had contacted realtors in the area and stated that rental rates for office space in Mora range from .55¢ to \$1.85 per sq. ft. per month. Much discussion centered on the “fit” with the ECRDC’s activities, etc. The Commission also discussed potential real estate tax liabilities that may arise for leasing space; possible security concerns for having other entities in the building, etc. Noting the concerns, Welty moved NOT to offer the space rental. Evans seconded. Further discussion ensued about a possible one-year lease option as a “something was better than nothing” approach and that the Watershed District would likely be a good tenant. Welty then moved, Evans seconded to amend the previous motion to offer the Watershed District a one-year lease at a rate of \$200 per month which includes use of the internet. Motion carried with 4 voting against.

WORK PROGRAM AND PROJECT UPDATE REPORT (Items 9 thru 16)

9. **Scenic Byway Planning:** Jennifer Russell organized a second meeting of stakeholders along the St. Croix Scenic Byway which took place at the Marine on St. Croix City Hall on March 16th. The planning process will look at improvements that can better highlight amenities along the byways especially those that might be eligible for federal Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) funding. The next meeting will be held on May 7th at the public library in Bayport, MN. To date, enhanced signage and overlook opportunities have been highlighted as priorities for the St. Croix byway. The final report for both the Veteran’s Evergreen Memorial and St. Croix Scenic Byways are due to MnDOT by the end of May.
10. **Safe Roads/TZD:** Staff has been meeting with groups in Mille Lacs and Pine Counties to discuss the possibility of starting a Safe Roads Coalition. Crash data indicates that these areas have seat belt, speed, or impaired driving issues that are above the statewide average. Strategies must include participation from Engineering, Enforcement, Emergency Services, and Education (the 4 Es). Typically, applications for Safe Roads funding will be due to the MN Dept. of Public Safety

in June. Successfully funded projects will begin on October 1, 2015. Mille Lacs County has made significant headway in assembling a Coalition of the needed stakeholders and intends to have the ECRDC apply for funding to start a Safe Roads program.

11. **Safe Routes to Schools:** Penny Simonsen continues to work with stakeholders in Kanabec County and Hinckley on their respective Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) planning projects and things are proceeding on schedule. Meanwhile, letters were sent to all school districts in the region reminding them of the opportunity to apply for SRTS funding in the upcoming cycle. To date, Taylors Falls Elementary and Milaca have indicated an interest, along with Braham and Center City who indicated an interest in first quarter 2015. It is anticipated that 4 or 5 more proposals for planning funds will be forwarded to MnDOT in June. Larson moved to approve Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) applications and planning assistance for Region 7E communities. Hanson seconded – motion carried.
12. **Hazard Mitigation Planning:** The Hazard Mitigation Plan update process is underway with Kanabec County. Also, received word on March 10th from the MN Dept. of Homeland Security (DHSEM) that the ECRDC’s application for FEMA funds to update the Mille Lacs County Hazard Mitigation Plan was approved. Penny Simonsen is the lead staff person on the project and will work closely with the Mille Lacs County Emergency Services Team on the update. Staff had a “kick-off” meeting with Jim McClosky of DHSEM on March 16th where a number of items were covered including project timelines, budgets, reporting requirements, use of the State’s E-Grant system, etc. Work under the grant agreement can start immediately.
13. **Blandin Broadband:** Staff has been meeting with representative stakeholders along the northern portion of Region 7E and southern Aitkin County – collectively the “Central Woodlands” region to discuss strategies for improving broadband service particularly in the rural areas. Voss reported that he made an application for a \$10,000 grant from the Blandin Foundation to inventory available internet services providers, note their capabilities (speed, etc.), and identify the geography covered. The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission in Duluth will assist in preparing the maps for the project. We were notified that the grant did receive approval from Blandin but will require a 25% local match. Voss stated that the grant documents were received electronically today but he is waiting for the Board to ratify the grant before he “e-signs” and returns them to Blandin. Evans moved to authorize the Executive Director to approve and sign the Blandin grant as presented. Welty seconded – motion carried. Amundson indicated that Kanabec Broadband Initiative has done some mapping already and will follow up with ECRDC staff to see what might be shared.
14. **Regional Trails Planning:** Participated in a meeting on April 16th in Pine City coordinated by Rick Olseen of Congressman Nolan’s office to discuss regional trails planning and funding for various projects. Staff has contacted the State DNR about possible regional trails funding to assist with the development of trails.
15. **Hwy 95 Corridors of Commerce:** Participated in a kick-off meeting for the Highway 95 Corridor of Commerce Coalition on April 9th in Cambridge. The group consists of local units of government and other stakeholders along the portion of State Hwy 95 between Princeton and Taylors Falls. Cambridge Mayor Marlys Palmer and North Branch Mayor Kirsten Hagen-Kennedy facilitated the meeting. The hope is that the Coalition will be a venue to discuss, identify, and address various transportation and transit needs as well as other planning and land use issues along

the route. There was some discussion about what organizational model was needed for the coalition – a sample joint powers agreement was offered as a possibility. Bollenbeck and Voss shared what the ECRDC’s involvement has been along the corridor such as advocating for safety improvements and the Isanti TZD program.

16. **Revolving Loan Fund:** The RLF board will be reviewing two applicants. Fish House Coffee Cafe will be located in Mora. The request is for \$17,500 for working capital and equipment. BowDaddy is requesting \$35,000 from ECRDC for an archery shop located in Isanti. The meeting date is TBD but will take place before the end of April. Jennifer has attended a few Chamber events to help market the RLF program.
17. **REGIONAL TOPICS:** Hallan reported that Pine County is in the process of hiring its first Economic Development Coordinator.
18. **OTHER BUSINESS:** A Personnel & Budget Committee meeting was set for May 12, 2015 to work on FY 2016 budget, work program, etc. Also, Voss stated that he is scheduled to give an ECRDC update to the Mille Lacs County Township Association on April 28th in Onamia.
19. **ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Montzka announced the next (annual) meeting will be June 22, 2015 at the ECRDC office in Mora at 5:30 p.m. Hansen then moved to adjourn the regular meeting of the ECRDC at 8:10 p.m. Larson seconded – motion carried.



Robert L. Voss, Executive Director



Ben Montzka, Chairman