



Commission Meeting

Wednesday, April 12, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.



Bethany Lutheran College - HH 314 | 700 Luther Drive, Mankato

COMMISSION MEETING

April 12, 2023 | Bethany Lutheran College – Honesy Hall # 314, Mankato, MN

Dinner Buffet and Networking Time at 5:30 p.m. | Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

AGENDA

	<u>Time</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Action</u>
I. Call to Order	6:00		
II. Pledge of Allegiance			
III. Approval of New Commissioners			
A. Dave Borchart – Brown County, Cities under 10K			Action
B. Shanon Nowell – Mayor of St. Peter, Nicollet County Cities over 10k			Action
C. Rob Wilkening – Mayor of Waldorf, Waseca County Cities under 10K			Action
IV. Roll Call – Secretary Branstad			
V. Approval of Agenda		1	Action
VI. Approval of January 11, 2023 Minutes		2	Action
VII. Approval of Treasurer’s Report – Treasurer Dranttel		6	Action
VIII. Finance Director’s Report – Ky Battern	6:15		
A. Audit Report			Action
B. Resolution 2023 – 05 – Consolidation of Defederalized Revolving Loan Funds		11	Action
IX. Chair’s Report – Chair Laven	6:40		
A. Introduction of New Commissioners			
X. Executive Director’s Report – Nicole Griensewic	6:55	12	
A. Broadband Discussion – Bree Maki, Broadband Director			
B. Susan Brehm – Chicago Region for Federal EDA			
XI. Other Business	7:45		
A. Commissioner Updates			
B. Meeting Evaluation		Handout	
XII. Adjournment	8:00		Action

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at Kato Ballroom, Mankato, MN.

II. APPROVAL OF NEW COMMISSIONERS

- Doug Trytten, Mayor of Kiester, Faribault County, Cities Under 10k
- Paul Harris, St. James City Council Member, Watonwan County, Cities Under 10k
- Lisa Norton, Mayor of Eagle Lake, Blue Earth County, Cities Under 10k
- Mary Milbrath, Nicollet County Townships
- Patty O'Connor, Blue Earth County Commissioner
- Bob Nielsen, Sibley County Townships

Schafer moved to approve the New Commissioners. Lilienthal seconded. Motion carried.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Andrea Boettger, Steve Cooling, Chris Dalton, Bradley DeVos, Lyle Femrite, Elroy Glidden, Robert Goblirsch, Dawn Kratzke, Mike Laven, Christian Lilienthal, Tom Loveall, Blair Nelson, Ayan Omar, Richard Peterson, Gary Richter, Steve Rohlfsing, Phil Schafer, Scott Schlueter, Brigid Tuck

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Elliot Belgard, Jim Branstad, Marie Dranttel, Michele Miller, Patty O'Connor, Keira Oeltjenbruns, Mike Pfeil, Pam Rodewald, Chera Sevcik, Jim Whitlock

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Holmseth, Scott Windschitl

OTHERS PRESENT: Paul Harris, Mary Milbrath, Bob Nielsen, Lisa Norton, Nicole Griensewic, Ky Battern, Joel Hanif, Nate George, Sam Sharp, Kristian Braekkan, Alejandra Bejarano, Joel Hanif, Leah Petricka, Sabri Fair, Paola Ferrario, Frances Long, Heather Bartelt

There was a quorum.

V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Dalton moved to approve the agenda as presented, Rohlfing seconded. Motion carried.

VI. APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 12, 2022 MINUTES

Schafer moved to approve the October 12, 2022 minutes as presented, Cooling seconded. Motion carried.

VII. TREASURER'S REPORT

Ky Battern presented the Treasurer's Report in Dranttel's excused absence.

Schafer moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, Femrite seconded. Motion carried.

VIII. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Battern shared that on December 12th, 2022, RNDC succumbed to a power surge that destroyed a piece of the RNDC server system. Backup system failed on December 5th and the IT provider did not respond to the alert until December 12th, which resulted in 7 days of financial data and work saved at the risk of being lost. Thriveon contracted with a data recovery specialist to restore RNDC's data and damaged hard discs.

Battern noted that audit is not complete due to Abdo having a mixture of staffing shortages, unforeseen circumstances, and the disruption to accessing RNDC files created by the power surge on December 12th. Battern shared that upon obtaining access to the missing documents, Abdo will give priority to completing the audit.

Battern shared that the check listing for November will be missing from the January Commission packet due to not having access to the accounting software.

Battern shared that Thriveon successfully migrated RNDC phone system to Microsoft Teams. All staff members can work remotely while being able to take and make calls from the respective Region Nine phone numbers.

Battern noted that Region Nine submitted and received approval from the EDA for defederalization of the legacy Revolving Loan Funds.

Battern shared that Region Nine is working with a Waseca based chiropractor and financial advisor to provide gap funding for a new building purchase within the city.

IX. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Laven spoke on the history of the region and RNDC have changed in the past 50 years.

A. Introduction of New Commissioners Paul Harris, Lisa Norton, Mary Milbrath and Bob Nielsen

Laven welcomed the new commissioners. The Chair then asked the new commissioners to introduce themselves.

B. Germany Delegation Recap

Commissioner Dalton presented a PowerPoint presentation to the Full Commission of highlights from the Germany Delegation. Dalton spoke on how the cities of Düsseldorf, Münster, Senden, and Saerbeck are converting from fossil fuels for energy to wind, solar, hydrogen and more. Dalton shared his takeaways from the learning exchange with North Rhine–Westphalia. He explained how he can apply what was learned during the exchange to New Ulm as the city looks at updating its utility infrastructure.

Discussion followed.

C. Committee Caucus

X. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. Introduction of new RNDC Staff

Laven welcomed Sam Sharp, the new Environment and Sustainability Planner. The Chair then asked Sharp to introduce himself.

B. Resolution 2023 – 01 CEDS APR

Petricka presented the Annual Performance Report to the Full Commission. Petricka requested the Full Commission for approval to submit the report to the EDA.

Griensewic noted that the following grants will be submitted.

- National Endowment to the Humanities (NEH)
- MPCA Grant
- EDA grant on Foreign Direct Investments – Center for Global Partnerships

Griensewic noted that RNDC will be transitioning to more grant writing as larger projects such as CARES, Eagle Lake plan, and CEDS APR are concluding.

Griensewic shared that she, Chairman Laven and Vice Chair Boettger will attend the NADO D.C. Conference March 12-15th.

Griensewic noted that she will be doing more days at the state Capitol and meeting with legislative leaders and new committee chairs.

Griensewic shared with the Full Commission, current commissioner vacancies and requested assistance in spreading the word.

Tuck moved to approve the Resolution 2023 – 01 CEDS APR, Femrite seconded. Motion carried.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Commissioner Updates

Chair Laven asked for updates, if any. Commissioners shared updates from their local jurisdictions.

B. Meeting Evaluation

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Nelson moved to adjourn, Kratzke seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Mike Laven, Chair

Andrea Boettger, Vice Chair

REGION NINE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
TREASURER'S REPORT
February 28, 2023

CASH BALANCE January 31, 2023 **\$ 2,586,806.51**

Cash Receipts - Checking	313,128.41	
Cash Receipts - Savings	-	
6 County deposits and interest	1,110.20	
9 County deposits and interest	8,724.54	
Tornado deposits and interest	4,273.03	
Cares deposits and interest	9,499.09	
Micro deposits and interest	817.17	
Interest	1,688.07	
TOTAL RECEIPTS		\$ 339,240.51
Payroll Disbursements		(91,654.53)
Accounts Payable & Other Disbursements		(49,894.56)

CASH BALANCE February 28, 2023 **\$ 2,784,497.93**

Region Nine Checking and Savings	
Checking	\$ 478,142.14
Savings	19,562.86
Total	\$ 497,705.00

Revolving Loan Funds	
6 County	\$ 160,290.40
9 County	700,736.88
Tornado	428,364.20
Cares Act	181,012.14
Micro	816,389.31
Total	\$ 2,286,792.93

CASH BALANCE February 28, 2023 **\$ 2,784,497.93**

REGION NINE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 2023 CASH RECEIPTS
FY23

Description	Amount	
DATE: 2/2/2023		
Martin County Tax Settlement Check #204638	983.67	
Waseca County Tax Settlement Check #52802	2,520.70	
SCSC Wellness Reimbursement Check #076129	1,695.83	
MADO Cost Reimbursement NWRDC Check # 26836	1,419.95	
Sibley County Tax Settlement Check # 416650	504.53	
Watonwan County Tax Settlement Check #63900	592.62	
MADO Cost Reimbursement Region Five Check #11132	1,135.96	
MADO Cost Reimbursement WCIF Check #62241	1,845.93	
MADO Cost Reimbursement SWRDC Check #59951	851.97	
Clean Energy Travel Reimbursement Check #38223791	1,500.00	
TOTALS		13,051.16
DATE: 2/10/2023		
ASAP Grant Pay ACH	300,000.00	
TOTALS		300,000.00
DATE: 2/13/2023		
Renewing the Countryside ACH	77.25	
TOTALS		77.25
February 2023 TOTALS		313,128.41

**Region Nine Development Commission
Board Payment Listing Report - February 2023**

Check#	Check Date	Vendor Name	Check Amount	Description
115749	02/01/2023	Goodwin, Nancy	(225.00)	Bush Grant Planning Support/Consultation/Facilitation - 12/21 to 12/31
115750	02/01/2023	Goodwin, Nancy	(225.00)	Bush Grant Planning Support/Consultation/Facilitation - 12/21 to 12/31
115752	02/01/2023	Goodwin, Nancy	(225.00)	Bush Grant Planning Support/Consultation/Facilitation - 12/21 to 12/31
			(225.00)	Bush Grant Planning Support/Consultation/Facilitation - 12/21 to 12/31
115755	02/01/2023	Creative Ad Solutions Inc	670.00	Lapel Pins Region 9 - Invoice # INV-250080
115756	02/01/2023	DM Stamps & Specialties	167.35	Name Plates for New Commissioners - Invoice # IV00539501
115757	02/01/2023	Lynn, Andrea	599.00	Grower's Network Marketing Presentation 1/18/23
115758	02/01/2023	Guerrero, Maria	135.97	Interpreting Services 1/22/23 for Climate Presentation in St. James
115759	02/01/2023	Metro Sales Inc	377.25	Copier Lease Payment - Invoice # INV2212028
115760	02/01/2023	Neubau Holdings LLC	3,115.00	February Lease Payment Region 9
115761	02/01/2023	Karen Stevenson/Security Storage Systems	100.00	Storage Rental February
115762	02/01/2023	SFM	496.00	Workers' Comp - Invoice # 2933783
115763	02/01/2023	Shred-It, C/O Stericycle Inc	124.80	January Shredding Service - Invoice # 8003144945
115764	02/01/2023	Xcel Energy	74.53	Electricity Service 12/13/22 to 1/17/23 - Statement # 812753172
115765	02/01/2023	Thriveon Inc	9.99	Replacement Printer Cable
115766	02/01/2023	Thriveon Inc	48.63	Thriv-Voice Support February - Invoice # 171337
115767	02/01/2023	Thriveon Inc	3,411.56	IT Support February - Invoice # 171338
115768	02/01/2023	Spectrum	119.98	Business Internet 1/23/23 to 2/22/23
115769	02/01/2023	Spirited Journeys LLC	1,395.00	USDA Grant Expenditures 1/4/23 to 1/31/23 - Invoice # 1280
115770	02/03/2023	Wells Fargo	27.00	Land to Air Express Return to Mankato - 1/8 - PF
115771	02/03/2023	Wells Fargo	77.27	Make Stickers - Stickers for 50th Celebration - 1/4 - NG
			31.83	Hy-Vee Mankato - Fuel for Traverse - 1/5 - NG
			32.77	La Plaza Fiesta Madelia, MN - Chamber of Commerce Lunch with Nicole - 1/5 - NG
			69.99	Hy-Vee Mankato - Cake for 50th Celebration - 1/12 - NG
115772	02/03/2023	Wells Fargo	73.98	Amazon 2 Commissioner Plaques - 12/24 - HB
			73.43	Amazon Office Supplies - 12/26 - HB
			19.78	Amazon Adhesive Wall Hooks - 12/29 - HB
			33.78	Amazon Silver Foil Certificates and Monitor Stands - 12/31 - HB
			70.00	Japan U.S. Investment Event Registration for Nicole - 1/10 - HB
			56.85	Target - Chocolates and Hand Sanitizers for Commission Meeting - 1/11 - HB
			165.21	Hotel Stay Phil Schafer for 50th Celebration - 1/12 - HB
115773	02/03/2023	Wells Fargo	148.33	Investhotel Muenster Berlin - Hotel Room Germany Delegation - 12/27- KB
			67.31	Notary Stamp and Supplies for Frances - 12/29 - KB
			2,652.95	Adobe Subscription 2023 - 12/31 - KB
			61.40	Postage to Germany and Stamps - 1/13 - KB
			39.00	Overlimit Fee - 1/22 - KB
115779	02/13/2023	Wells Fargo	83.40	Doodle Subscription 2023 - 12/22 - AB
115780	02/13/2023	Wells Fargo	1,035.00	Sustainable Farming Conference 2/11/23 - 1/20 - SF
115781	02/14/2023	Blethen Berens	216.00	Consultation Re: PTO Accrual 1/30/2023 - Statement # 65
115782	02/14/2023	FurstStaffing	7,050.00	Executive Director Salary Survey - Invoice # 2000071711
115783	02/14/2023	Metro Sales Inc	413.00	Contract Usage and Base Rate Charge - Invoice # INV2212075
115784	02/14/2023	Principal Life Insurance Company	327.46	Life Insurance Premiums 2/15/23 to 3/14/23 - Account Number 1125885-10001
115785	02/14/2023	River Bend Business Products	687.00	Printing Services for Commission Meeting - Invoice # 380734-00
115786	02/14/2023	Thriveon Inc	47.23	May Managed Services Voice - Missed Invoice - Invoice # 162091
115787	02/14/2023	United Team Elite	304.00	Shirts for Region Nine Commissioners - Invoice # 7081
115788	02/14/2023	Vanderberg Cleaning Services LLC	388.35	Janitorial Services for February - Invoice # 15126
115789	02/06/2023	Wells Fargo	83.40	Doodle Subscription 2023 - 12/22 - AB
	02/13/2023		83.40	Doodle Subscription 2023 - 12/22 - AB
115790	02/16/2023	Kruse, David	96.00	Dashboard Hosting February - Invoice # KT2143
115791	02/16/2023	Kruse, David	96.00	Dashboard Hosting February - Invoice # KT2143
	02/17/2023		96.00	Dashboard Hosting February - Invoice # KT2143
115792	02/21/2023	Rathskeller Inc	191.69	Catering New Ulm Germany Delegation
115793	02/21/2023	Boettger, Andrea S	185.50	Mileage and Per Diems for January
115794	02/21/2023	CenturyLink	147.84	Toll Free Phone Service Charge 1/8/23 to 2/7/23
115795	02/21/2023	Friedrichs Law Office, PA	900.00	Mairs-Hagen Closing Fees
115796	02/21/2023	Goblirsch, Robert	547.20	Mileage and Per Diem for Meetings September 2022 through February 2023
115797	02/21/2023	Guerrero, Maria	135.97	Interpreting Services St. James 1/22/23
115798	02/21/2023	iSpace environments	6,520.28	Conference Room Equipment
115799	02/21/2023	Lime Valley Advertising Inc	414.00	Programming Services and Stock Video for Website Redesign
115800	02/21/2023	Neubau Holdings LLC	3,115.00	March Lease Payment for Office Space
115801	02/21/2023	Thriveon Inc	1,220.00	Down Payment for Firewall Upgrade Project #5072 - Invoice # 171809
			1,177.98	Invoice Balance for Firewall Upgrade Project #5072 - Invoice # 171808
			4,395.50	Progress Billing for Modern Workplace Project #4962 - Invoice # 171781
115802	02/21/2023	Verizon Wireless	126.82	Cell Phone and Hot Spot Charges 1/9/23 to 2/8/23 - Invoice # 9927195024
Check Total	43,729.96			
Report Total:	43,729.96			

Finance

- On March 14th we received a draft of the financial statements for our audit ending June 30, 2022. They are on pace to have the final audited statements by the end of March.
- Bank Reconciliations and monthly data entry has been caught up after our month-long time span of our accounting system being down in December/January.
- Thriveon has completed our move to a 'Modern Workplace' and has removed all the old equipment from our storage area.

Revolving Loan Fund

- At this board meeting a request will be made to combine our defederalized RLF funds into one singular account. This step has been recommended by the EDA and will greatly reduce the accounting requirements in moving from five standalone RLF's down to two (RLF Legacy and CARES Act RLF).
- Frances and I are two months into our Equitable Lending Leaders program. We are currently working on developing a listing of connectors within the R9 community that we can draw information from to better understand struggles many new or existing businesses are experiencing regarding their financing.

Region Nine Area, Inc.

- Abdo has started working on the 990-tax return for Region Nine Area Inc.



Your regional partner for progress.

3 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 310, Mankato, MN 56001
507.387.5643 • 800.450.5643 • fax: 507.387.7105

To: Region Nine Commission

From: Ky Battern, Finance Director

Date: April 12, 2023

Re: Consolidation of Newly Defederalized Revolving Loan Funds

On December 8, 2022, R9 received approval for the defederalization of the 6 County, 9 County, Micro, and Tornado Revolving Loan Funds (RLF). Defederalization can be granted to a revolving loan program after the completion of 7 years of successful operation under the Economic Development Authorities (EDA) reporting and performance criteria. Upon defederalization, RLF programs are offered a greater level of flexibility than those still under the reporting requirements of the EDA.

This defederalization releases our organization from needing to separately track these funds. In discussion with Catherine Canavan from the EDA their recommendation would be to consolidate these funds in order to simplify the administration of our RLF program. This consolidation would allow us to move from five revolving loan funds down to two greatly simplifying the administration of the program.

We ask that the commission approve the consolidation of the recently defederalized RLF's into what will be known as the R9 Legacy Revolving Loan Fund as per the attached resolution. Below is a summary of the active loans and cash balances (prior to any transfers owed to the General Fund) within these newly defederalized RLF's as of March 2023.

Revolving Loan Fund	Active Loan's Disbursed	Principal Remaining
6 County	\$100,000	\$50,684
9 County	1,044,650	874,772
Tornado	642,120	268,788
Micro	25,000	16,309
Total	\$1,811,770	\$1,210,553

Revolving Loan Fund	Cash on Hand
6 County	\$160,290
9 County	700,737
Tornado	428,364
Micro	816,389
Total	\$2,105,780

Ky Battern, CPA
Finance Director





RESOLUTION

Region Nine Development Commission
2023 – 05

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CONSOLIDATION OF DEFEDERALIZED REVOLVING LOAN FUNDS

- Whereas,** The State of Minnesota established Region Nine Development Commission (RNDC) for the nine-county region of South Central Minnesota; and
- Whereas,** RNDC as the Economic Development District for the nine-county region of South Central Minnesota, received Economic Development Authority (EDA) approval for the defederalization of the 6 County, 9 County, Tornado, and Micro Revolving Loan Funds on December 8, 2022; and
- Whereas,** RNDC now requests these revolving loan funds to be consolidated into one revolving loan fund to be known as the R9 Legacy Revolving Loan Fund.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that Region Nine Development Commission hereby approves the consolidation of the 6 County, 9 County, Tornado, and Micro Revolving Loan Funds into the R9 Legacy Revolving Loan Fund (RLF).

Dated this 12th of April, 2023

Signed:

Mike Laven, Chair

Jim Branstad, Secretary

Staff Updates – April 2023

Nicole Griensewic

Attended the NADO Policy Conference in Washington, D.C. from March 12-15th where Nicole presented on the learning exchange and its outcomes. Attended the board of directors meeting and informed all regional chapters of intent to run for Secretary of the Board in August.

Attended the Federal Correctional Institution Waseca Community Relations Board meeting on March 8th. Have had follow up meetings to discuss volunteer service opportunities with the inmates and the RNDC team (and their dogs).

Attended the Center for Rural Behavioral Health's first annual Lectureship and Award Ceremony on March 23. Griensewic serves on the Advisory Council.

Organized and attended the NRW German Delegation event on March 26th in Minneapolis. Specialists from NRW represented industry involved in energy storage technologies and circular economy concepts. RNDC staff and commissioners were well represented and were able to create new relationships.

Traveled to Duluth on March 29-30 for quarterly MADDO Executive Director Meetings.

Met with Steve Riedel of Global Minnesota to discuss potential partnerships. Riedel was previously employed at the MN Trade Office and led the Energy/ Environment delegation to the UK and Finland for the Governor's Trade Mission in 2021.

Attended MADDO Meetings in St. Cloud on April 10-11 with planners and Executive Directors. The first day will focus on what other MN RDOs are doing w. their communities on Climate/ Clean Energy initiatives. The second day will include going over best practices for the CEDS.

Heather Bartelt

Heather attended the REDA meeting on March 8th, where discussions mostly were centered around the topic of the Joint Service Agreement document. Heather has since reached out to Ryan Vesey with Greater Mankato Growth to have a sit-down meeting to discuss the goals and objectives of RNDC's role in REDA.

Heather and Kristian worked together over the past month to finalize award recommendations for the Main Street Economic Revitalization Program (MSERP) grant. In the second round, GMG received 55 applications compared to the 32 applications in the first round. The amount to be distributed in the second round is \$1,022,462.00.

Heather, Corree, Alejandra, and Nate have begun brainstorming ideas for the 2023 Bus Tour Sites.

Alejandra Bejarano

Alejandra and Kristian continue leading a local talent retention task force with MNSU. Alejandra has met with local organizations such as the Workforce Council, MVAC, DEED, and GMG to explore collaboration opportunities. Taylor Corporation is hosting a "mini reverse career fair" with a small group of students from Gustavus College. Kivu Immigration Law is partnering with a student club at

MNSU to explore opportunities for corporate sponsorship that would support organizational and professional development. Alejandra will meet with the student retention team at MNSU to share more about the task force and its deliverables. Alejandra is working with MNSU to identify and prepare a group of international students to join future GMG's "Business after-hours" events.

Alejandra attended the recent Workforce Council meeting and the Youth Council, which she recently joined.

Samuel and Alejandra are working on finalizing the scope of work for the city of Saint James as part of a planning grant they are submitting to the EDA.

Alejandra joined COPAL's regional committee monthly meeting to present R9's current initiatives.

Alejandra finalized an internal debrief evaluation guide for projects she shared with staff for feedback. Staff members will use this guide used to evaluate projects after completion.

Kristian Braekkan

Kristian has finalized the regional manufacturing resilience study, funded by the federal EDA, and passed on the draft to Nate for design and completion. The regional Equity Blueprint accompanies the final plan as a budgeted match component via Bush Foundation and EDA alignment of project scopes. Additionally, Sabri has contributed a complementary Sustainable Manufacturing case study to reflect the changing nature of manufacturing. Kristian has also worked in partnership with Paola and Nicole on a local technical assistance application to the federal EDA for funding to assess current and emerging needs for foreign direct investments in the region that was submitted the last week of March. He has also supported colleagues on future applications to the Bush Foundation for sustainability planning (Sam and Sabri) and the federal EDA for workforce attraction and retention (Alejandra). Kristian and Leah have and continue explored opportunities to engage organizations that recruit and assist with the creation of childcare opportunities in Minnesota, and working on an economic impact assessment for a slaughtering/meat processing facility in Waseca county as part of the MBFAA project with MNSU Mankato.

Sabri Fair

Over the past couple of weeks Sabri has been working to create partnerships for Local Foods Week. This summer the event will feature 9 restaurants and 9 farmers from across the region! This is a marked increase from the 3 restaurants who were interested last year. The event will take place from July 24th - 30th and will involve restaurants creating a dish that highlights what their partner farm produces. Last week Sabri also organized a food safety training and a farm to school networking event that saw schools and farmers from across the region connect. This event was especially timely as many schools across the state received grants to purchase local Minnesota products to serve their students. Sabri has also continued work with the St. James and Comfrey as they have community meetings about sustainability and clean energy. Sabri and Sam also heard from the MPCA (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency) that our grant application to do a Climate Resilience Plan for the City of Comfrey was awarded! This was the first grant he has ever applied for and his first successful grant application!

Paola Ferrario

Paola Ferrario has been diligently engaged in various projects aimed at enhancing the socioeconomic growth of rural communities in Region Nine. Specifically, she has been instrumental in developing a grant proposal for an online entrepreneurship program geared towards empowering these communities. The proposal has already been submitted, and the outcome is anticipated by the end of March 2023. Paola has also played a key role in a technical assistance grant for Region Nine, which focuses on promoting foreign direct investment with a grant request to the Economic Development Administration (EDA).

Paola has been instrumental in organizing a networking event for the German delegation, scheduled for March 26th in Minneapolis. This event is a direct outcome of the German exchange collaboration in December 2022 and will provide an opportunity for Region Nine communities to explore new collaborative opportunities. Additionally, she presented at the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) on Climate Smart Municipalities and the German exchange program, an event that drew colleagues from federal and regional development organizations in Washington D.C.

Paola has been actively engaged in the Mainstreet Businesses Focused on Food and Agriculture (MBFFA) project, which aims to support entrepreneurs in the agricultural field. She has spearheaded the development of three videos that showcase the needs of starting entrepreneurs in the Ag field and how businesses can support them. These videos will be shared through a strategic social media campaign.

Paola has been working closely with a consultant to set up and finalize the onboarding of a project management tool. The tool will enable the team to visualize and track organizational results, monitor workloads, and keep track of leads and grants being worked on.

Nate George

Nate attended and reported on Guido Wallraven's trip to Region Nine. He sent out advisories to connect media with the events beforehand and reporting on the outcomes. This has led him to try to make connections with larger media markets to continue telling the story of Region Nine to a wider audience.

He has begun working with Heather and Corree to plan the 2023 bus tour. This includes reaching out the venues, planning the schedule, organizing speakers, arranging guests and speakers, and other logistics.

Nate has been working with Kristian on the Manufacturing Resilience Plan. His part in this project is editing, layout, design, and distribution of the finished plan. The majority of the plan has been edited and typeset and the remainder is estimated to be completed in late spring, early summer.

Planning has also begun for Local Foods Week. Nate is working with Sabri, Mogwai Collaborative, and the Grower's Network to coordinate promotions and marketing materials.

Nate is also working with Joel on the Local Human Services-Transit Coordination Plan. The purpose of this plan is to evaluate existing transportation providers, identify needs and services, and establish transportation related goals for the region.

This has been done in conjunction with the daily communications tasks of social media, public relations, and quick turnover tasks for the staff.

Joel Hanif

Joel is working with local stakeholders in St. Peter and Mankato as well as SHIP to organize a bike and pedestrian summit to be held in late summer or early fall. Additionally, Joel has been communicating with MDH and Alta Planning and Design on organizing a regional Walkable Community Workshop facilitator training. Joel also submitted a budget proposal to SHIP for a Safe Routes to School Plan for Waterville-Elysian-Morristown Schools.

On March 24, Joel met with MnDOT District 7 and Central Office staff for grant monitoring and discussion of next year's work plan. Joel will be presenting the proposed workplan at the next TAC meeting with adoption slated for the May board meeting.

Joel has had considerable involvement in planning for outreach on future MnDOT projects in the region. On March 28 and 29, Joel attended scoping meetings for future MnDOT projects on Highway 13 in Waterville and between Waterville and Montgomery. Also, Joel coordinated an open house for the MnDOT District 7 ATIP at Bridge Plaza on April 12.

Lastly, Joel submitted a draft of the Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan to MnDOT. Once MnDOT's comments are received, the draft will be revised and go out for public review.

Corree Johnson

Corree Johnson is leading efforts to update RNDC's style guide, communications plan, and other marketing collateral (e.g., newsletter template, email signatures) to reflect the new website's design better. Additionally, she has been working with staff to update website content to reflect our services and messaging better. All new materials will be completed and rolled out to staff by May 1. She maintains the website and its software.

Due to a third-party software update, Corree is working with Kristian Braekkan and consultant Dave Kruse to update the Region Nine Dashboard. This will include updating the style, interface, and adding new metrics and content to the dashboard that will be more effective as we look to align it with RNDC's CEDS and Legislative Priorities.

Corree supports the Legislative & Communications Committee by preparing agendas, taking meeting minutes, etc. At this time, the committee is reviewing RNDC's Legislative Priorities, after which Corree will update all supporting documents with the new priorities.

Additionally, Corree helps with other communication activities, including creating flyers, presentations, social media content, copyediting, etc., and participates in the Bus Tour Planning Committee.

Aaron Pacheco

Aaron is working on an entrepreneurship and innovation project to better understand the relationships between entrepreneurs within rural communities and their contributions as business owners and innovators among industry. The project scope has expanded to include input and collaborative participation with professional and academic business incubators by means of Aaron's participation in the Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE), representing Region Nine as an economic development leader. Concurrently, Aaron is working on a development project, still in the design phase, to understand the impacts of foreign and domestic investment in manufacturing on rural communities and the labor force. These two projects will eventually be tied together to see how investment in the region can be applied to better small business and skilled labor opportunities.

Leah Petricka

A meeting with the CED committee was held on March 21. The focus of the meeting was to gather input on how the committee would like to receive information and how its members can participate in sharing the work of the organization. Also talked about the purpose of the committee, roles and structure of the group.

Leah has reached out to each of the counties to collect broadband contacts and early assessments of how each has been involved in broadband expansion efforts. She is looking to understand how RNDC can support the counties in this effort. A proposal was provided to the Le Sueur-Waseca Library system to receive a mini-grant to conduct surveying and asset mapping. They received the award and Leah will begin working on this project April 3.

Leah has continued to work with Kristian to do an economic impact study for a meat processing and retail market and helped draft the narrative for a grant application to the Department of Agriculture for meat cutting and butchery education at the high school level.

Leah has been supporting transportation efforts as Joel finalized the local transit plan and prepares the MnDOT workplan for FY2024. Under the plan, pedestrian counters will be deployed in more communities and a heightened effort on active transportation.

Sam Sharp

Samuel has continued his efforts working with the Saint James and Comfrey communities in their pursuit of sustainable and climate-smart initiatives. Working collaboratively, Samuel has helped facilitate community-led conversations surrounding renewable and clean energy projects that align with the Minnesota Climate Action Framework and the statewide 2040 goals set forth by Governor Walz. Additional community-based project goals include composting systems, green spaces and pollinator friendly habitat, and publicly accessible educational resources.

Samuel has participated in ongoing discussions with the Bioeconomy Opportunity Zone Initiative (BDOZ) Program facilitated by Ecostrat. This program serves to assess a zone's capacity to support the implementation of biodigesters based on existing infrastructure and feedstock within the region. Samuel and Sabri are also supporting an individual from Comfrey with their grant application to REAP, (*Rural Energy for America Program*) for residential solar. Additionally, Samuel is working with Alejandra

on a strategic resilience and development plan for the city of Saint James, where his primary responsibilities focus on sustainability and clean energy initiatives the community is interested in pursuing.

Samuel, Sabri, and Kristian are finalizing the BUSH grant application, which focuses on resilient economic development. Samuel and Sabri are supporting Saint James with a joint application to the MPCA under the Environmental Justice Government to Government (EJG2G) Program, where the primary efforts focus on weatherization of homes and workforce development for green jobs.

Lastly, Samuel attended the delegation event in Minneapolis, MN, where the city of New Ulm will be hosting representatives and industry professionals from Germany to build relationships, exchange knowledge, and explore the potential for international partnership opportunities.

Terms & Abbreviations

APR – Annual Performance Reports (CEDS)	MCLA - Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs
ATP - Area Transportation Partnership	MDH – Minnesota Department of Health
AURI – Agricultural Utilization Research Institute	MnDOT – Minnesota Department of Transportation
CEDS – Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	MnSCU – Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System
COPAL – Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Acción Latina (Communities Organizing Latino Power and Action)	MPCA – Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
CGMC – Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities	MSA – Metropolitan Statistical Area
DEED – Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development	MSU-M – Minnesota State University, Mankato
DHS – Minnesota Department of Human Services	MYLAP – MN Young America Leaders Program
EDA – Economic Development Administration	NEH – National Endowment for the Humanities
EDD – Economic Development District	NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Services
GAC – Gustavus Adolphus College	REDA – Regional Economic Development Alliance
GIS – Geographic Information Systems	REV – Rural Entrepreneurial Venture
GMG – Greater Mankato Growth	RLF – Revolving Loan Fund
GMDC – Greater Mankato Diversity Council	RNAI – Region Nine Area Inc.
GMNP – Greater Minnesota Partnership	RNDC – Region Nine Development Commission
HACER – Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research	SACE – Southern Agricultural Center for Excellence
HUD – Department of Housing and Urban Development	SBDC – Small Business Development Center
LCWM – Lake Crystal Welcome Memorial	SCBDN – South Central Business Development Network
LGU – Local Government Unit	SCC – South Central College
LMI – Labor Market Information	SHIP – Statewide Health Improvement Partnership
LMI – Low-to-Moderate Income	SMIF – Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
MADO – Minnesota Association of Development Organizations	SRTS – Safe Routes to Schools
MAPO – Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization	STIP – State Transportation Improvement Program
	TAC – Transportation Advisory Committee