



REGION NINE



**DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

Commission Meeting

Wednesday, June 21, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.



Kato Ballroom | 200 Chestnut Street, Mankato, MN 56001

COMMISSION MEETING

June 21, 2023 | Kato Ballroom

Networking & Appetizers at 5:00 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. Roll Call – <i>Secretary Branstad</i>			
IV. Approval of Agenda		1	Action
V. Approval of April 12, 2023 Minutes		2	Action
VI. Treasurer’s Report – <i>Treasurer Dranttel</i>		6	Action
VII. Finance Director’s Report – <i>Ky Battern</i>	6:05	9	
VIII. Chair’s Report – <i>Chair Laven</i>	6:15		
A. Approval of Public Interest Commissioner -Health & Human Welfare		10	Action
IX. Executive Director’s Report – <i>Nicole Griensewic</i>	6:25	13	
X. Public Hearing of FY24 Budget	7:10		
A. Call for Opening Public Hearing	7:15		Action
B. Approval of FY24 Operating Budget			Action
C. Approval of Preliminary Levy			Action
D. Call for Close Public Hearing	7:45		Action
XI. Other Business	7:50		
A. Commissioner Updates			
B. Meeting Evaluation		Handout	
XI. Adjournment	8:00		Action

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. APPROVAL OF NEW COMMISSIONERS

- A. Dave Borchart – Brown County
- B. Shanon Nowell – Mayor of St. Peter, Nicollet County Cities over 10K
- C. Rob Wilkening – Mayor of Waldorf, Waseca County Cities under 10K

Belgard moved to approve the New Commissioners. Pfeil seconded. Motion carried.

IV. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Elliot Belgard, Andrea Boettger, Dave Borchert, Jim Branstad, Steve Cooling, Marie Dranttel, Lyle Femrite, Elroy Glidden, Robert Goblirsch, Paul Harris, Dawn Kratzke, Mike Laven, Christian Lilienthal, Tom Loveall, Mary Milbrath, Blair Nelson, Bob Nielsen, Lisa Norton, Shanon Nowell, Patty O'Connor, Keira Oeltjenbruns, Richard Peterson, Mike Pfeil, Gary Richter, Steve Rohlfig, Phil Schafer, Scott Schlueter

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Chris Dalton, Ayan Omar, Doug Trytten

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Holmseth, Michele Miller

MEMBERS RESIGNED: Pam Rodewald, Chera Sevcik, Brigid Tuck

OTHERS PRESENT: Brad DeVos, Bree Maki, Layne Kockelman Nicole Griensewic, Ky Battern, Leah Petricka, Nate George, Frances Long, Heather Bartelt

There was a quorum.

V. APPROVAL OF REVISED AGENDA

Chair Laven noted that the Chicago Regional Director for the Federal EDA is unable to be present at the Commission Meeting this evening due to an illness.

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

VI. APPROVAL OF JANUARY 11, 2023 MINUTES

Schafer moved to approve the January 11, 2023 minutes as presented, Milbrath seconded. Motion carried.

VII. TREASURER'S REPORT

Dranttel presented the Treasurer's Report.

Rohlfing moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, Harris seconded. Motion carried.

VIII. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. Audit Report

Kockelman, representing Abdo, overviewed RNDC annual audit results and stated the audit was clean, with no findings.

Nelson moved to approve the audit as presented. Norton seconded. Motion carried.

B. Resolution 2023 – 05 – Defederalized Revolving Loan Funds

Battern announced that RNDC was granted permission by the EDA to defederalize the RLF in December 2022, which means that reporting obligations, interest rate limitations, and fund classification restrictions have been lifted. Battern shared that currently there are five revolving loan funds (RLF) and with the defederalization, RNDC will be able to transition from five RLF's to two. Discussion followed.

Belgard moved to approve Resolution 2023 – 05 as presented. Goblirsch seconded. Motion carried.

VIII. CHAIR'S REPORT

A. Introduction of New Commissioners

Laven welcomed the new commissioners. The Chair then asked Borchert and Nowell to introduce themselves. New commissioner, Rob Wilkening was excused.

X. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Griensewic asked Leah Petricka to share news with the Full Commission. Petricka noted that she will be resigning from RNDC effective April 14th. Petricka thanked the Commission for her time at RNDC.

Griensewic noted that RNDC has been having conversations with the MN Department of Ag. regarding the possibility of creating a biozone in Brown and Watonwan County or region wide. This designation would help attract anaerobic biodigester companies to build in the region as an example. Griensewic shared that RNDC can supply those interested in learning more about anaerobic biodigesters with more information from Dr. Christof Wetter, Professor University of Münster, program partner with Climate Smart Municipalities, (CSM).

Griensewic asked the commissioners who attended the March 26th Business to Business event in Minneapolis, MN to share their experiences. Commissioner Richter was unable to find words to express how well RNDC has been with making connections. Commissioner Boettger mentioned that “international partnerships are becoming a serious deal and [the German Delegation] will be traveling to New Ulm with a future delegation where there are lots of opportunities for New Ulm to be explored”. Griensewic noted that RNDC relationship with MSU-M has never been stronger, as RNDC continues to work with the University and MinnPoly Technical University. MSUM and MinnPoly were represented and supported the event. Discussion followed.

Griensewic shared that she has been facilitating a relationship between Business Finland and the MinnPoly Technical University, as the Finnish are leaders in Polytechnical Institutes.

Griensewic mentioned that RNDC currently has several grant applications pending. Griensewic added that she should be able to provide an update on their status by the Full Commission meeting in June.

Griensewic shared that Kristian Braekkan, the Economic Development Director will be transitioning to part-time status as of May 1. Discussion followed.

Griensewic noted that Pam Rodewald, Nicollet County, Cities under 10K, Chera Sevcik, Health & Human Services, Public Interest and Brigid Tuck, Regional School Boards gave their resignations to the Commission. Griensewic noted that due to workload, RNDC will not be actively seeking to fill the vacancies. Griensewic asked the Commissioners to spread the word and have interested individuals fill out an application. The Commissioners then decide based on the applicants at a future Commission meeting.

Griensewic shared that RNDC has received three applications for the Health & Human Services vacancy. Griensewic noted that pending space on the Annual Bus Tour, she would like to invite them to spend the day with the Commissioners on June 21st. Applicants will be asked to present on their interest in serving. Commissioners will then vote to decide who will be the next Public Interest Commissioner.

Griensewic shared that CEDA is seeking state funding for technical assistance for rural communities with populations of 3,000 or under. Griensewic shared concern there this

may be duplication of RNDC's work. Griensewic will be reaching out to her MADO colleagues for more context. Discussion followed.

A. Broadband Discussion

Chair Laven introduced Bree Maki, Director of the Office of Broadband, to give a presentation on Broadband and Digital Inclusion in Minnesota.

Maki gave a brief overview of the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development and the definition of broadband. Maki presented the benefits of having reliable broadband and the importance of ensuring all individuals and communities have access. Maki noted that the state of Minnesota has Digital Connection Committees, and the purpose of these committees is to gather local information and provide feedback. Maki stressed the importance of the Digital Connection Committees as a way for individuals to have their concerns heard. Maki went on to share a variety of potential funding opportunities for communities. Discussion followed.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Commissioner Updates

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

B. Meeting Evaluation

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Norton moved to adjourn, Nelson seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Mike Laven, Chair

Jim Branstad, Secretary

REGION NINE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
TREASURER'S REPORT
May 31, 2023

CASH BALANCE April 30, 2023 **\$ 2,560,909.85**

Cash Receipts - Checking	263,677.47	
Cash Receipts - Savings	-	
6 County deposits and interest	1,110.20	
9 County deposits and interest	10,724.54	
Tornado deposits and interest	4,897.81	
Cares deposits and interest	9,573.18	
Micro deposits and interest	451.96	
Interest	2,146.03	
TOTAL RECEIPTS		\$ 292,581.19
Payroll Disbursements		(81,460.75)

Accounts Payable & Other Disbursements **(134,024.73)**

CASH BALANCE May 31, 2023 **\$ 2,638,005.56**

Region Nine Checking and Savings	
Checking	\$ 345,343.54
Savings	19,495.43
Total	\$ 364,838.97

Revolving Loan Funds	
6 County	\$ 163,797.81
9 County	639,172.74
Tornado	442,541.70
Cares Act	208,442.74
Micro	819,211.60
Total	\$ 2,273,166.59

CASH BALANCE May 31, 2023 **\$ 2,638,005.56**

**Region Nine Development Commission
Board Payment Listing - May of 2023**

Check#	Check Date	Vendor Name	Check Amount	Description
115657	05/12/2023	Wells Fargo	20.91	Walgreen's Chicago, IL - Index Cards and Printer Paper - 11/9 - PF
115948	05/02/2023	Wells Fargo	106.10	Amazon Office Supplies - 3/31 - HB
			119.40	Canva Subscription - 4/6 - HB
			184.71	Homewood Suites St. Cloud - MADO Energy Conference Hotel Stay Sam - 4/11 - HB
			184.71	Homewood Suites St. Cloud - MADO Energy Conference Hotel Stay Sabri - 4/11 - HB
			165.19	Homewood Suites St. Cloud - MADO Energy Conference Hotel Stay Nicole - 4/11 - HB
			184.71	Homewood Suites St. Cloud - MADO Energy Conference Hotel Stay Alejandra - 4/11 - HB
			18.84	Amazon Colored Copy Paper - 4/12 - HB
			44.60	USPS - Mailed Commissioner Plaques - 4/13 - HB
			30.41	Amazon Office Supplies - 4/13 - HB
			6.99	Hy-Vee Mankato - Cookies for Meeting - 4/19 - HB
115949	05/02/2023	Wells Fargo	192.20	Airline Ticket San Jose - 3/24 - AB
			30.00	Olde Brick House St. Cloud, MN - MADO Conference - 4/11 - AB
115950	05/02/2023	Wells Fargo	31.02	Hy-Vee Mankato, MN - Fuel for Traverse - 1/26 - SF
			39.00	Late Charge - 2/16 - SF
			11.04	Periodic Finance Charge - 2/16
			(115.00)	Sustainable Farming Refund - 2/9 - SF
			(115.00)	Sustainable Farming Registration Refund 2/8 - SF
			64.34	Caribou Coffee Mankato, MN - Coffee for Guido Walraven Visit 2/20 - SF
			18.00	Parking for March 26 Germany Event - 3/27 - SF
			48.65	Hy-Vee Mankato, MN - Fuel for Traverse - 3/27 - SF
			168.76	Radisson Minneapolis, MN - Hotel Stay for March 26 Germany Event - SF
			20.30	Olde Brick House St. Cloud, MN - Meal MADO Conference - SF
			43.66	Hy-Vee Mankato, MN - Fuel for Traverse - 4/12 - SF
115951	05/02/2023	Wells Fargo	4,370.60	Banquet Hall Rental and Catering March 23 Germany Event - 3/21/23 - NG
			702.80	Airline Ticket Salt Lake City, UT NADO Meeting 6/24/23 - 3/22/23 - NG
			21.40	Patrick's St. Peter Meal 3/24 Meeting w/ Brad Devos - 3/24/23 - NG
			0.99	Apple iCloud Storage March - 3/25/23 - NG
			20.46	The Freehouse Minneapolis, MN 3/27 - Meal March 26 Germany Event - NG
			39.98	Oui Bar & Kitchen Minneapolis, MN - Meal Nicole and Andrea - 3/27 - NG
			203.33	Hotel Stay Radisson March 26 Germany Event - 3/27 - NG
			1.00	Parking March 26 Germany Event - 3/27 - NG
			28.12	Hungry Hippie Tacos Duluth, MN - MADO Conference - Meal - NG
			74.77	Room Rental Tax March 26 Germany Event - 3/29 - NG
			295.10	Holiday Inn Duluth, MN - Hotel Stay MADO Conference - 3/30 - NG
			42.93	The White Horse St. Cloud, MN - Meal MADO Conference - 4/10 - NG
115952	05/02/2023	Wells Fargo	1,223.74	Hilton San Jose, CA - Hotel Stay 4/25 to 4/29 Alejandra - 3/23 - KB
			1.74	USPS Mailed 1099 Forms to IRS - 3/31 - KB
			58.77	Office Max/Depot Mankato, MN - Address Labels and File Folders - 4/5 - KB
115953	05/02/2023	Wells Fargo	25.00	Ag Utilization Virtual Conference Aaron Pacheco - 4/4 - KB
115954	05/02/2023	Wells Fargo	225.00	Minnesota Transportation Conference 5/15 - 4/20 - JH
115955	05/02/2023	Wells Fargo	3.33	Oui Bar and Kitchen Minneapolis, MN - 3/26 - PF
			203.33	Radisson Minneapolis, MN - Hotel Stay March 26 Germany Event - 3/27 - PF
115956	05/03/2023	GHG Corporation	75.00	TeamKeeper Timesheet Software - Invoice #94931
115957	05/03/2023	Abdo	570.00	Audit Review and Preparation of Audit Data FY22
115958	05/03/2023	Boettger, Andrea S	150.13	Mileage and Per Diem for 4/6 and 4/24 Meetings
115959	05/03/2023	Karen Stevenson/Security Storage Systems	100.00	Off-Site Storage May - Invoice #24539
115960	05/03/2023	Xcel Energy	65.40	Electricity Service 3/19/23 to 4/17/23 - Statement #824948668
115961	05/03/2023	Colin Scharf	270.00	Contract Grant Work March and April 2023
115962	05/03/2023	Spirited Journeys LLC	1,597.50	USDA Grant Expenditures 4/4/23 to 4/29/23 - Invoice #1308
115963	05/03/2023	Thriveon Inc	1,121.25	Firewall Upgrade Progress Billing Project #5072 - Invoice #174855
115964	05/03/2023	Vanderberg Cleaning Services LLC	388.35	Janitorial Service for May - Invoice #15611
115965	05/03/2023	SFM	492.00	Work Comp Installment Payment for 3/6/23 to 3/6/24
115966	05/03/2023	Lime Valley Advertising Inc	57.50	Programming Services - How to (Mass Password Reset) - Invoice #23305
115967	05/03/2023	Spectrum	119.98	Business Internet 4/23/23 to 5/22/23 - Invoice #8352 30 061 0820665
115968	05/03/2023	Shred-It, C/O Stericycle Inc	134.04	Shredding Services March 2023
115969	05/03/2023	Living Earth Center	1,746.20	USDA Grant Expenditures April 2023 - Invoice #1012
115970	05/03/2023	Belgard, Elliot R	92.40	Mileage and Per Diem 5/3 TAC Meeting
115971	05/09/2023	Bethany Lutheran College	729.48	Gustavus Room Rental and Catering Full Commission Meeting 4/12/23 - ID #162371
115972	05/09/2023	Thriveon Inc	3,365.17	IT Support for May 2023 - Invoice #175012
115973	05/09/2023	Abdo	2,300.00	RNAI Audit Progress Billing FY22 - Invoice #471490
115974	05/09/2023	GMS	1,338.09	GMS Monthly Billing 1/23 to 4/23
115975	05/09/2023	Harris, Paul	368.37	Mileage and Hotel Reimbursement for Germany Event 3/26/23
115976	05/09/2023	Blethen Berens	500.50	Inquiry re: Juneteenth Holiday - Statement #67
115977	05/09/2023	Principal Life Insurance Company	327.46	Life Insurance Premiums 5/15/23 to 6/14/23 - Account #1125885-10001
115978	05/09/2023	Sannerud, Eric	200.00	Grower's Network TED Talk
115979	05/09/2023	Metro Sales Inc	377.25	Copier Base Rate Charge 4/27/23 to 5/26/23 - Invoice #INV2274198
115980	05/09/2023	Metro Sales Inc	501.91	Contract Usage Charge 1/27/23 to 4/26/23
115981	05/09/2023	River Bend Business Products	21.90	Color Copier Paper - Invoice #385230-00
115982	05/16/2023	Branstad, Jim	92.40	Mileage and Per Diem - Board Meeting 5/10/23
115983	05/16/2023	CenturyLink	144.00	Toll Free Line Charge 4/8/23 to 5/7/23 - Invoice #640504573
115984	05/16/2023	Femrite, Lyle	50.48	Mileage and Per Diem - Board Meeting 5/10/23
115985	05/16/2023	Laven, Mike	40.00	Per Diem - Board Meeting 5/10/23
115986	05/16/2023	Nelson, Blair	79.30	Mileage and Per Diem - Board Meeting 5/10/23
115987	05/16/2023	Neubau Holdings LLC	3,115.00	June 2023 Lease Payment
115988	05/16/2023	Rohlfing, Steve J	67.51	Mileage and Per Diem - Board Meeting 5/10/23
115989	05/16/2023	Schafer, Philip H	121.88	Mileage and Per Diem - Board Meeting 5/10/23
115990	05/16/2023	Verizon Wireless	126.76	Cell Phone 5/9/23 to 6/8/23 - Invoice #9934392208
115991	05/30/2023	Xcel Energy	65.16	Electricity Service 4/17/23 to 5/16/23 - Statement #828974202
115992	05/30/2023	Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota	315.74	Grant Award Billable Hours and Mileage 4/1/23 to 4/30/23 - Invoice #20230331R10
115993	05/30/2023	NuVantage Employee Resource	780.00	NuVantage FY23 Cap Contract - 4/1/23 to 5/30/24 - Invoice #0151738
115994	05/30/2023	Battern, Ky	72.37	St. Cloud Finance Director's Meeting - Fuel for Traverse and Lunch Reimbursement
115995	05/30/2023	Boettger, Andrea S	270.65	Mileage and Per Diem for May Meetings - 5/4, 5/10, 5/17
115996	05/30/2023	Karen Stevenson/Security Storage Systems	100.00	Off Site Storage Unit June - Reference #24540 - Customer ID Reg9Dev
115997	05/30/2023	Kato Events Center	500.00	Down Payment for Room Rental and Catering - Bus Tour 6/21/23
115998	05/30/2023	Griensewic, Nicole	39.15	Commissioner Breakfast Meeting w/ Mike Laven 5/26
Check Tot:	32,036.21			
Report Tot:	32,036.21			

REGION NINE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
May 2023 CASH RECEIPTS
FY23

Description	Amount
DATE: 5/1/2023	
ACH Deposit MN State	30,000.00
ACH Deposit ASAP Grant Pay	70,000.00
DATE: 5/11/2023	
Renewing the Countryside ACH Payment	38.63
DATE: 5/16/2023	
ACH Deposit MN State MBFFA	3,960.93
DATE: 5/19/2023	
SMIF Pathways to Prosperity - #53808	4,500.00
Germany Event Sponsorship - #232542	1,500.00
Germany Event Dinner Reimbursement - St. Peter - #145490	100.00
Le Sueur Tax Settlement - #73162	7.12
DATE: 5/24/2023	
Online Transfer Black Frost Distilling	100,000.00
DATE: 5/25/2023	
ACH Deposit MN State	2,256.14
DATE: 5/31/2023	
Petty Cash	93.73
SMIF REV Business Assessment - #41415	6,667.00
St. Cloud MADDO Travel Reimbursement - #11266	918.37
Le Sueur Tax Settlement - #73793	43,625.55
TOTALS	263,667.47
May 2023 TOTALS	263,667.47

Finance

- The request has been made to our auditors, Abdo, to move up the dates of the audit field work for the audit ending June 30, 2023. The goal will be to have a final report issued by the end September. Auditing firms who specialize in government and school district audits experience a busy season in the fall of the year as they work to complete all the June 30 year ends. In requesting to have our fieldwork done sooner the hope would be to be completely done with our audit prior to the start of this busy season that they experience. After struggling through and learning the year end process for last year's audit, I am very comfortable with the shortened timeline.
- Within the budget to be presented at this meeting there is a line item for the purchase of a new Region Nine fleet vehicle. There is approximately \$80k sitting within the auto-fund to cover the cost of the purchase. If the budget is approved by the Board, we will look to order a cross-over SUV hybrid of some sort under the state's negotiated contract pricing. The current vehicle, a 2014 Chevy Traverse with 100k miles, will be offered in as trade-in.
- Ongoing and extensive work has been done to create a framework for the compilation of monthly financial statements. The plan for these statements would be to show YTD actual expenses and revenues on a modified-accrual basis calculation out the month end fund balances. This steps in this process are the same as would normally occur as part of our year end audit preparation, but once the first initial month is closed out maintenance should be relatively simple.

Revolving Loan Fund

- The loan committee met on two different occasions to discuss an application of a particular loan client and I am please to inform the group that the application for the Picklebarn has been approved. The Picklebarn is located here in Mankato and is a tournament grade pickleball facility. This recreation facility is a great addition to our R9 community and I would encourage anyone interested in learning about the fast growing sport to stop in and meet with the owners, Mitch and Sidney Elofson.
- Upon the final approval of the FY24 budget and the finish of the monthly financial statements build, I plan to resume marketing RLF by visiting bankers within the area. Frances has created a spreadsheet mapping out those bankers of which to visit at each bank within our nine-county area.
- Frances and I have a schedule of existing loan client site visits on our calendars, and we've been meeting with one to two loan clients weekly to touch base and meet many for the first time. These meetings were very informative and have become one of the more enjoyable aspects of our work.
- Currently, there is approximately \$1.7 million available to lend out. We have several projects that we anticipate to see applications coming over the next few months.

Region Nine Area, Inc.

- 990 Tax Return Completed.

VIII. Chair's Report

A. Approval of Public Interest Commissioner - Health & Human Services

Date

03/11/2023

Name

Sarah Berry

Phone

(507) 835-0656

Email

sarah.berry@co.waseca.mn.us

Address

1000 Elm Ave W
Waseca, Minnesota 56093
United States
[Map It](#)

Why do you wish to serve on the Region Nine Development Commission?

I have worked in Waseca County for more than two decades and during that time it has become increasingly clear how interconnected our county and region are. Improvements in rural areas require regional attention to affect change.

What makes you best able to represent the interests of health and human services in the region?

I have worked in many aspects of public health, including a decade in Environmental Health where I worked closely with establishment owners and contractors. I have built partnerships with schools, city administration, law enforcement and first responders before and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please list any civic, leadership, professional, or volunteer activities you are, or have been, involved with:

I currently serve on the Governor's Committee for Safety, Health, and Wellbeing of Agricultural and Food Processing Workers, the Region 9 Transportation Advisory Committee and The Minnesota Source Water Protection Advisory Committee. I have previously served as the Local Public Health Association Region 6 Chair. I direct a youth choir at my church and have been a member of the Waseca Area Chorale.

Endorsements

Click the plus icon to add another line.

Name	Title	Organization	Phone
De Malterer	County Commissioner	Waseca County	507-340-2097
Chera Sevcik	Executive Director	Human Services of Faribault & Martin Counties	507-238-4757
Michael Johnson	County Administrator	Waseca County	507-835-0631

VIII. Chair's Report

A. Approval of Public Interest Commissioner - Health & Human Services

Date

03/16/2023

Name

Michelle Markgraf

Phone

(605) 376-0350

Email

michelle@markgrafconsulting.us

Address

820 Summit Ave.
New Ulm, MN 56073
United States
[Map It](#)

Why do you wish to serve on the Region Nine Development Commission?

The adage is true: a rising tide lifts all boats. I am invested in my local community and want to see it thrive. To do so, it must be in a region with robust economic development. This can only be accomplished when people work together to find and implement new ideas that benefit the people and businesses in our area. I want to be one of those people, facilitating connections and ideas.

What makes you best able to represent the interests of health and human services in the region?

My undergraduate degree is in elementary education, and I have seven years of teaching in a classroom and dozens of years of volunteer teaching (e.g., Sunday School). In 2011 I began working for Sanford Health in Sioux Falls. I worked for the Sanford Health Network, which oversees all the rural hospitals in the health system. Working with hospital CEOs and CNOs taught me the importance of understanding how to work together to accomplish objectives.

During that time, I volunteered as a rape crisis advocate, assisting victims of sexual assault. This led to my becoming the executive director of the Compass Center, a rape and domestic abuse center. I led a team of counselors and victim advocates who provide free services to survivors of sexual and domestic violence. In that position, I worked with local, county, and state government officials, law enforcement, and hospitals to ensure the best care for abuse survivors. I testified at legislative hearings and worked with the Senate majority leader to enact legislation.

Since coming to New Ulm, I have been very involved with human service nonprofits. I worked with an international nonprofit headquartered in Wisconsin to create a program that gives churches the tools and training to support abuse survivors. I served as an interim executive director of Ivy House for a year. This nonprofit provides free childcare to kids ages 0-12 when families experience stress. It also provides an advocate to assist parents and helps them find resources to mitigate that stress.

I currently sit on the operations board of Oak Hills, a long-term care and senior living center in New Ulm. Heart of New Ulm, an organization promoting a wellness culture in New Ulm and Brown County, recently asked me to join its leadership team. I am a member of the advisory board for Freedom for the Captive, a national organization that provides education about child abuse and neglect.

Because of my time at The Compass Center, mental health and substance abuse (the two are correlated) are important issues for me. They keep people out of the workforce and affect the productivity of those employed. Mental health issues use valuable community resources and account for an estimated 20% of all law enforcement callouts. Our communities do not have adequate resources to handle this problem. Many people with mental health issues use an ER bed for several days because no other place is available.

Please list any civic, leadership, professional, or volunteer activities you are, or have been, involved with:

VIII. Chair's Report

A. Approval of Public Interest Commissioner - Health & Human Services

Founder: 100 Women Who Care - New Ulm Area
Board Member: Oak Hills Living Center
Leadership Team: Heart of New Ulm
New Ulm Commissioner: New Ulm Economic Development Authority; New Ulm City Charter Commission
Member: Downtown Action Team (Heart of New Ulm), New Ulm Transportation Committee
Volunteer: Ivy House (Childcare volunteer)
Board member Freedom for the Captives (Secretary)
Member: Minnesota District Commission on Special Ministries

Endorsements

Click the plus icon to add another line.

Name	Title	Organization	Phone
Andrea	Boettger	City of New Ulm/ R9	610-737-6486
Chris	Dalton	City of New Ulm	507-359-8233
Michelle	Trent	The Compass Center	605-354-9476

The Effects of the Tax Levy

Impacts of Not Taking Tax Levy

55%

of the total budget is from tax levy

\$20,000

Approximate reduction of budget for FY23-24

-\$233,198

Financial impact over next ten years



Reserves will be depleted lowering RND's ability to adapt to changing economic conditions

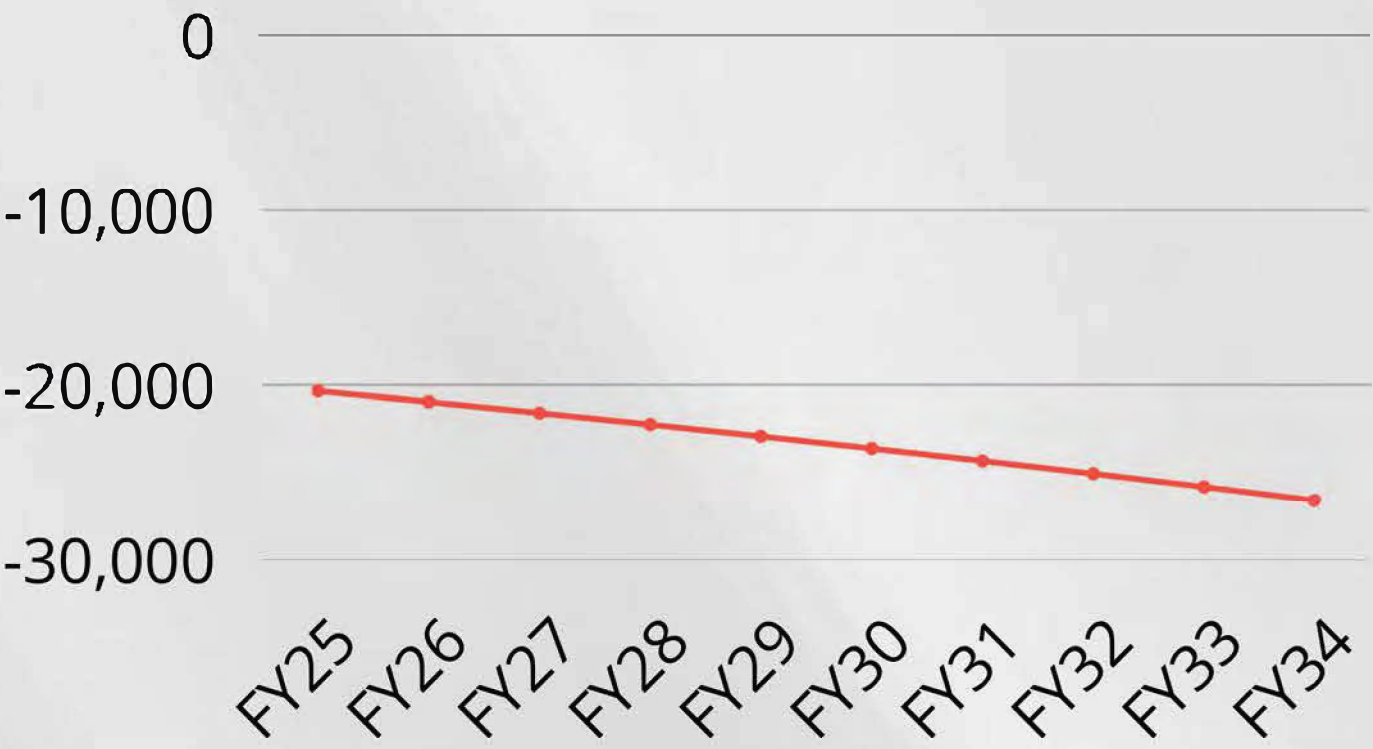


Continue to run a "lean-team" that has lead to burnout and turn over



Increases in health insurance, COLAs, and inflation will have greater impact without ample reserve funds

Reduction of Operating Budget Compared to 3% Increase - Total Effect = -\$233,198



Approved County Tax Levy Increases

Blue Earth	6.00%
Brown	7.70%
Faribault	5.90%
Le Sueur	5.20%
Martin	4.79%
Nicollet	5.20%
Sibley	2.40%
Waseca	2.77%
Watsonwan	3.50%
Average	4.83%

Tax Levy Cost Per County	1%	2%	3%
Blue Earth	\$1,739	\$3,478	\$5,217
Brown	619	1,238	1,857
Faribault	579	1,158	1,737
Le Sueur	812	1,624	2,435
Martin	802	1,605	2,407
Nicollet	784	1,568	2,352
Sibley	528	1,055	1,583
Waseca	482	965	1,447
Watsonwan	340	681	1,021
Scott/City of New Prague	95	190	285

Additional Impacts of a 0% Tax Levy

- RND's is projecting expenses will exceed revenues by \$265,877 within the General Fund
- Not approving the tax levy effects all subsequent years
- RDC levy increases are capped at 3% annually. RND's will be unable to recoup these lost funds

Fiscal Year 2023-2024 - Total Increase

1%

\$6,781

2%

\$13,561

3%

\$20,342

Fiscal Year 2023-2024 - Total R9 Levy

1%

\$684,848

2%

\$691,628

3%

\$698,409

What RND's Does With the Tax Levy



Grant Matches
These funds allow us to apply for funding requiring monetary and in-kind matches.



Cost of Living Increases
The levy helps to offset the increased cost of health coverage, inflation, and COLAs.



Supports All RND's Projects
The levy increases RND's ability to provide the region with resources vital to area.

Staff Updates – June 2023

Nicole Griensewic

The Budget and Personnel committee and the board have been meeting regarding the FY24 budget. At the Commission meeting, the Commission will be asked to vote on the budget, with votes on: Cost of Living Allowance Adjustment, (COLA), Step Increase(s) for staff and whether to take the allowed 3% increase of the local levy. The levy is the main source of income for the organization, making up 55% of the total budget.

The Regional Development Act only allows for a 3% yearly increase in the tax levy. In any year that this is not taken, the base remains what it was prior then if the allowed 3% of the levy is not taken, it will set RNDC back in the years to come as it is impossible to 'catch up'. Inflation and cost of living increases are not factored in and would hold the organization back. This could impact the ability to have dollars available for grant matches and other future needs. RNDC is unlike cities, counties, and other governments that can raise the amount of the levy when needed. We do not have this ability. The difference this year between 0% and 3% is \$20k. Currently the gap between revenues and expenditures is \$265,877. If the levy vote is 0% increase, the negative financial impact over the next ten years will be \$233,198.

The past ten years, RNDC has been able to add dollars to the cash reserves by running on a lean team. At times this strategy negatively impacted the team by creating burn out and turnover. It is important to understand with the current deficit budget, RNDC would need to utilize reserves. There is a strong concern that at this time next year, having utilized the reserves will be viewed as a negative. Another factor to be considered is the addition of another mandatory holiday, Juneteenth, which will add to personnel expenses. At this time we are also unaware of what potential health cost increases in the next fiscal year. Personnel costs are 80% of our expenses. I would ask that these factors be considered.

By not taking the 3% of the levy, it will tie the hands of future commissioners.

Participated in the quarterly MADO Executive Director meetings in Bemidji June 12-15th. The directors had a facilitator lead Strategic Planning discussions for MADO. The group did a service project together for the Ridgway Neighborhood in Bemidji and had a tour of the Conifer Campus. MADO directors plan to have continued conversations w. MN Dept. of Commerce and the McKnight Foundation, as the MN Regional Development Commissions were recently written in to be eligible applicants for the State Competitiveness Fund (federal dollars for climate action being matched with state dollars). The RDCs are eligible to apply up to \$300k to provide technical assistance to our local municipalities. Currently, details are not available.

Attended the funeral of Commissioner Blair Nelson in Waseca. A Memorial is being collected to help plant trees in the region. Honored Blair with a write up in the e-newsletter. A

certificate of appreciation for his service will be shared with his family at a later date along with the memorial. His family shared that he enjoyed his time and the work of RNDC very much.

Griensewic will be participating in the NADO Board of Directors' meeting later this month. NADO is interested in having Griensewic take on a leadership role by running for Board Secretary in August. If elected by peers to the Executive Committee, it would be a six-year commitment, working up to President of NADO and then serving as Immediate Past President. The Executive Committee has monthly calls and an annual April Fly In, to have meetings with federal agencies, including EDA, USDA-RD and the White House to discuss rural economic development issues, needs and trends.

Heather Bartelt

Heather has been busy with continuing the planning for the annual bus tour aside, Nathan, Corree and Alejandra.

Heather has continued to focus on planning and organizing the Board of Director's, Commission meeting, and Budget & Personnel Committee meeting.

Heather and Kristian and been working alongside GMG on last minute distribution of funds revisions to the Main Street Economic Revitalization Program grant.

Alejandra Bejarano

Alejandra is collaborating with the Waseca-Le Sueur Regional Library System on a grant they received from the Minnesota Office of Broadband. The grant's objective is to facilitate the development of a statewide digital equity plan aimed at reducing disparities in access, device ownership, and digital skills. With assistance from Nate, Alejandra has been working closely with the staff from the Waseca-Le Sueur Regional Library System to implement a digital and technology access survey, as well as conduct focus groups and interviews. Alejandra is also involved in the process of creating a digital asset inventory.

In addition, Alejandra continues to lead the local task force on workforce resilience, with support from Kristian. As part of this initiative, Alejandra is collaborating with DEED, Ramsey County, the Associated General Contractors of Minnesota, MNSU, and private industry in the construction management field. They are organizing and hosting an event in the fall, specifically targeting companies in the construction management sector who are interested in employing and hiring international talent. The task force plans to hold in-person meetings during the summer to establish objectives for the upcoming fiscal year.

Furthermore, Alejandra and Kristian are in the process of preparing and organizing ongoing meetings with the Community and Economic Development committee for the remainder of the year. Topics for future meetings include clean energy, workforce development, foreign

direct investment, and research conducted by the University of Minnesota Extension on historic rehabilitation tax credits.

Alejandra was contacted by Tiffany Lamb, Windom's EDA director, to provide support as the town prepares for Hylife's plant sale. Since the new buyer has decided not to retain the current workers, the city is bracing itself for the considerable impact this will have on the local community, businesses, and schools. As issues arise, a group of regional volunteers convenes biweekly to collaborate on a regional level, and Alejandra has joined these meetings. Discussions have been held regarding the possibility of employers in South-Central Minnesota hiring some of the laid-off workers.

Alejandra continues her participation as economic development representative for the Workforce Council. She also continues supporting the prosperity initiative as advisory committee member. The program is accepting new applicants, and the committee will be reviewing new applications this month. Alejandra also supports the "informal to formal project" led by HACER with the support of the University of Minnesota Extension.

Kristian Braekkan

Kristian has two major projects that run through the summer months that are under way. He is conducting an assessment of entrepreneurial ecosystems for the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) as they re-evaluate and assess their Rural Entrepreneurial Venture (REV) and Prosperity Initiative (PI) programs through the 20-county region. Kristian is doing an economic analysis of local resource endowments and institutional arrangements contractually for SMIF, with a pending end-date of late August. The work may continue contractually in the fall of 2023 and spring of 2024 depending on staff capacity. Second, Kristian has been engaged by Neighbor's Meat LLC in New Richland (Waseca County) through the Mainstreet Businesses Focused on Food and Agriculture (MBFFA) project to evaluate the feasibility of pursuing a Food Safety Inspection Upgrade, which would enable the organization to become a federally inspected slaughtering and processed meats retail facility. The stated objective underlying the assumptions for the USDA required study is to generate the capability to assist local producers get the meat they produce on the plates of local restaurants and food trucks as well as schools.

Sabri Fair

For Local Foods Week Sabri has organized a photographer to travel to all 16 (maybe 18) sites in June. The photos will also be made available to the participating farmers and restaurants to continue using as marketing and promotional material for their business.

Farmers at the community farm have started getting their plots organized and planted now that the rain and flooding have subsided. Many of the East African farmers are planting crops

that are culturally relevant which they can't find in stores in our region like managu, a leafy green that is highly nutritious and has medicinal properties.

Sabri has been working with farmers and hunger relief partners to apply for the Local Food Purchase Assistance Grant through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. This grant will allow partners like South Central Minnesota Food Recovery and local Head Start programs to receive local fresh produce from farmers in their community and distribute it at no cost. Their current application will purchase close to \$60,000 worth of local products from farms across our region.

Sabri has continued supporting the Safe Routes to School Plan in Madelia. This month the planning team reviewed the draft plan and provided comments. One of the most valuable comments we got from the team was to make the plan clearer regarding how the community can turn the recommendations into a grant application with a high chance of success. We have done this by more closely tying our recommendations to supporting data from the survey and outlining more possible infrastructure items they could implement to solve the issues they are facing.

Sabri organized a meeting between employees and officials of the City of Comfrey with a solar installer to dig deeper into the opportunities solar might offer their wastewater treatment plant. One of the attendees was an employee of the Minnesota Rural Water Association, an organization that provides technical assistance to communities of less than 10,000 people on their drinking and wastewater systems. The conversation was very fruitful, and all the attendees learned a lot about solar, batteries, and the Comfrey wastewater treatment plant. The next steps will include getting official quotes from installers.

Sabri and Joel deployed bike and pedestrian counters on trails in communities that have had Transportation Alternatives investments. In mid-May, a counter was deployed on the Sleepy Eye Lake Trail. In late May, a counter was deployed on the Stoltzman Road trail in Mankato. The trail counts will help MnDOT, and the communities see the level of usage their investments have gotten.

Paola Ferrario

Paola, in her role as a dedicated professional working on Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and business development for Region Nine, has been actively engaged in various activities to attract investments and foster economic growth. Here is an overview of her recent accomplishments and ongoing efforts:

Follow-up with Interested Companies:

Paola has been diligently following up with companies that have expressed interest in investing in Region Nine. Her focused approach includes providing detailed information about the region's advantages, investment opportunities, and incentives. Through ongoing

communication and proactive support, Paola is creating a conducive environment to nurture potential investments.

Promotion of Network and Partnership with the German-American Chamber of Commerce:

Recognizing the significance of international connections, Paola has continued to strengthen the network and relationship with the German-American Chamber of Commerce. Recently, she attended the chamber's event in Chicago, which facilitated valuable networking opportunities with German and American companies. Additionally, Paola participated in a Business-to-Business (B2B) opportunity centered around Circular Economy subjects, further enhancing bilateral trade and investment between Germany and Region Nine.

Analysis of Competing Regions:

In her pursuit to attract new investments and headquarters to Region Nine, Paola has been conducting thorough analysis of how states like Illinois and other participants pitch their respective regions. This research allows for an evaluation of their strategies, enabling Paola to refine her own approaches and effectively showcase the unique benefits and incentives offered by Region Nine.

Legislative and Communications Committee Activities:

Paola has taken an active role in organizing the Legislative and Communications Committee. As part of this effort, she has been connecting with water experts to arrange a presentation. Professor Wetter from Germany, along with Michael Abbing, will be visiting the region to speak about the water treatment system in Morris, with the support of Blaine Hill. This event will be open to all communities and directly address the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) of the region.

Grant Submission for HeroX:

Paola has been working diligently on submitting a grant proposal for HeroX. The proposed program aims to promote the certification of a Business Development Opportunity (BDO) zone, which would significantly enhance the region's ability to attract FDI. This strategic initiative aligns with the overall objective of driving economic growth and attracting investment to Region Nine.

In conclusion, Paola's diligent efforts in the realm of Foreign Direct Investments, business development, and committee activities have contributed significantly to the growth and development of Region Nine. Her proactive approach in following up with interested companies, promoting networking opportunities, analyzing competing regions, organizing committee activities, and pursuing grant opportunities demonstrates her commitment to achieving the region's economic goals.

Nathan George

Nathan is managing two social media marketing campaigns. One is promoting the Agricultural Entrepreneur Needs Assessment survey. This has been focused on running sponsored ads on Facebook which are being sent to users that have agricultural or restaurant interests between 19 to 65+. The focus of the survey is to help align the services offered by RNDC and our partners with the needs of ag entrepreneurs. The campaign and survey are part of the Mainstreet Business Focused on Food and Agriculture (MBFFA). RNDC is partnering with Minnesota State University, Mankato's Strategic Partnership Center, and U.S. Small Business Administration.

The second marketing campaign is to promote Local Foods Week which will take place in July. Local Foods Week partners local growers with local restaurants to create dishes using locally produced ingredients. This campaign is again focused on Facebook which is where the majority of the intended audience and participants go for social media. The goal is to highlight these partnerships, promote the participants, and increase awareness of the South-Central Minnesota Grower's Network. RNDC is partnering with MSUM's Strategic Partnership Center and Mogwai Collaborative.

Nathan is continuing his work with the Bus Tour Committee. The locations, speakers, and catering have been finalized. Registration closes Wednesday, June 14th. The goal of the bus tour is to highlight RNDC's work and the success stories of our partners.

Nathan is working with Alejandra on promoting a digital needs survey for the Waseca-Le Sueur Regional Library System. The goal of the survey is to assess the digital needs of the residents. This includes equipment, training, and assessing what is needed to meet their needs. The promotion will be focused on local engagement in the counties and focused social media efforts. June 14th from 4-8 p.m., RNDC will be facilitating an event at the Waseca-Le Sueur Regional Library.

He is also working with Joel on the Madelia SRTS plan. Nathan's role will be to edit the report and format it to MnDot's template. This will also include taking photos of Madelia for the layout. The goal of this report is to make recommendations to the city on possible steps to take to encourage biking and walking to school safely.

The above tasks are in addition to daily tasks which include writing the e-newsletter, social media management, website administrative tasks, researching and promoting available funding opportunities, and internal and external communications.

Joel Hanif

Joel's work continues on several projects, including the Madelia Safe Routes to School Plan, the regional Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan, and various duties as prescribed by Region Nine's MnDOT planning grant. In this period, Joel revised the Madelia

Safe Routes to School plan after meeting and discussing the draft plan with stakeholders. Joel also began the procurement process for acquiring new bike racks for Madelia Elementary School with additional implementation funds made available by MnDOT.

Joel submitted a draft of the Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan for MnDOT to review. He will incorporate MnDOT's comments into the final draft. While that plan is out for review, Joel has still been engaging stakeholders on next steps based on the plan's findings. Many conversations have shown a renewed interest in a Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC) to better facilitate cooperation between multiple transit agencies (public and private) and human service providers and ultimately make mobility in the region easier.

Within the MnDOT planning grant, Joel has done a variety of work. He has been engaged with the Brown-Le Sueur-Nicollet-Waseca SHIP and Rice County SHIP offices on getting funding for a Safe Routes to School plan for the Waterville-Elysian-Morristown School District. While the contract is still pending, SHIP has committed to provide \$8,000 in funding between the two offices, and MnDOT District 7 will allow Region Nine to use planning grant dollars to cover the remaining costs. This project will begin in July.

Joel has been assisting in the planning of two events happening this summer and fall in the region. The first of these is a Walkable Communities Workshop facilitator training ("train the trainer") in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health and Alta Planning and Design. This will tentatively occur on July 27 in St. Peter. The second event is an active transportation summit that will be held in September in North Mankato. This event is being planned in partnership with Mark Plotz of The Smallest Cog Bike Shop, SHIP, and Greater Mankato Bike Walk Advocates.

Joel, with the help of Sabri, has deployed bike and pedestrian counters on trails in communities that have had Transportation Alternatives investments. To date, counters have been deployed and data has been collected on the Watline Trail in St. James and the Sleepy Eye Lake Trail, and the Stoltzman Road Trail in Mankato. The trail counts from all these locations will help MnDOT and the communities see the level of usage their investments have gotten. Joel will be working with MnDOT on future bike and pedestrian counter sites for the next fiscal year.

Joel, along with co-chair Tony Klaers of the Headwaters Regional Development Commission, hosted a virtual quarterly meeting of the RDO transportation planners in late May. This meeting included presentations on Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessments, the Carbon Reduction Program, implementation of the federal Justice40 initiative, an update on MnDOT planning contracts, and various committee updates and new committee assignments. The next convening of the RDO transportation planners will be in August in Fergus Falls. Joel will

continue to organize and facilitate these meetings until his two-year co-chair term ends in February 2025.

Corree Johnson

Corree continues to monitor the RNDC website to improve SEO and update content. She is also developing landing pages for each of the 17 metrics on the regional dashboard that will provide additional insights and resources.

Corree will be working with Kristian on three projects this summer, including 1) finalizing a feasibility study for Neighbor's Meat LLC as part of the MBFA grant, 2) developing a framework for the NUBRIC EDA grant for the needs assessment and feasibility study, and 3) creating a report for the contractual work for SMIF's assessments of REV and PI communities.

Additionally, Corree is helping with logistics for the upcoming Annual Bus Tour.

Aaron Pacheco

Working closely with Kristian Braekkan, Aaron is working on a two-part study examining the impacts of income level and industry diversity on entrepreneurship and innovation in the region. The first part is focused on the regional economy of southern Minnesota/Iowa, of which Region Nine is firmly integrated. Many large anchor employers in the manufacturing sector have seen significant growth over the years, while small businesses and new ventures have not experienced the same vigor. Launching from the report written for the manufacturing resilience grant, Aaron will look at what particular industries dominate employment in the region and how further investment will impact the workforce, community well-being, and innovation.

The second part is through Aaron's collaborative work between his part-time position at Region Nine and his doctoral research at Indiana University (IU). Through connections established by Aaron as a representative of Region Nine in the Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE), and fully funded by his department at IU, he will be working in Chile this summer to examine how their world-renowned public program to promote entrepreneurship and innovation is integrated internationally as well as internally between different sub-regions of the country. In nearly every continent, countries have begun to adopt the Chilean model, including a Startup Chile office located in downtown Chicago. The ultimate goal is to understand how these programs, which situate themselves deep in large metropolitan centers, can incorporate often neglected rural communities, or instead, attract talent and skilled labor to further fuel rural-to-urban "brain drain." If Region Nine is to retain its talent and boost innovation, there must be an ecosystem to sustain it.

Sam Sharp

Samuel has been working extensively on a grant application funded through the DOE's National Resources Energy Laboratory (NREL) Energizing Rural Communities Prize, which serves to fund innovative rural energy projects that directly benefit communities with populations less than 10,000. The NREL Energizing Rural Communities Prize is split into two phases: Phase I which awards \$100,000 for project planning activities and preparation for implementation, and Phase II which awards an additional \$200,000 to leverage the progress achieved in Phase I and fund the implementation of projects plans conceived in the first phase. The project will focus on generating a Bioeconomy Development Opportunity (BDO) Zone Rating for the entirety of region nine - with a prioritization of meeting the NREL's criteria of communities under 10,000.

The BDO Zone Rating program is facilitated through Ecostrat a Toronto based company that specializes in identifying regional assets that can be then aggregated and converted into biofuels. If awarded funding, RNDC intends to allocate the entire \$100,000 to receiving the BDO Zone rating through a partnership with Ecostrat. If awarded the initial \$100,000 in Phase I, RNDC will then pursue the second round of funding in Phase II, in which the budget will be more allocated to RNDC to perform on the ground engagement and facilitation of stakeholder conversations.

Samuel has been instrumental in coordinating dialogue with Ecostrat and other stakeholders to develop an application package for this funding opportunity. Samuel has reached out to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and GreaterMSP to secure letters of support in this initiative. With the region's abundance of feedstock and agricultural residuals, we believe this opportunity could be monumental in transforming the region's energy landscape and generating exposure to the international market.

The BDO Zone rating consists of two major components: the rating itself and a widespread promotional marketing strategy facilitated by Ecostrat. Ecostrat has access to developers and investors worldwide and will promote the region's viability for hosting bioprocessing facilities upon completion of the rating. Samuel, Paola, and Sabri have played key roles in portraying the potential benefits of this rating to key stakeholders such as GreaterMSP and the MDA. With GreaterMSP's interest in developing a sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) hub, we believe there is a natural partnership between the region and GreaterMSP's mission to meet their emission standards and reform the current market of aviation fuels. Samuel has been involved in key conversations surrounding the potential for biofuels in the region, with communities such as Saint James and Comfrey expressing a strong interest in pursuing such initiatives. Samuel, Paola, and Sabri contributed immensely to the successful completion and submittal of the application and the award announcements are anticipated to occur in July 2023.

Samuel has been supporting the communities of Comfrey and Saint James as they strive to integrate more sustainable and renewable energy practices into their communities. Comfrey intends to construct a solar array for their wastewater treatment plant, and Samuel and Sabri have been facilitating conversations with utilities personnel, solar experts, and the Comfrey community to help bring this idea into fruition. Saint James has also been highly interested in pursuing sustainable practices and Samuel has been assisting them with navigating their options and connecting them with experienced professionals to support these endeavors. Specifically, the Climate Smart Saint James (CSSJ) community group has been hosting monthly meetings to discuss methods of implementation, marketing strategies, and funding opportunities. Samuel has been in attendance for each meeting and has been working closely with members of CSSJ to gauge interest and offer insight on how to bring their ideas to the fore. Samuel assisted CSSJ and Meadowlark Prairies in grant writing efforts for a community resilience grant set forth by POET, an ethanol production company.

In late 2022/early 2023, Samuel and Sabri, on behalf of RNDC, applied for the MPCA's Stormwater, Wastewater, and Community (SWC) Resilience funding opportunity with the intentions of putting together a resilience plan for Comfrey, MN. In March 2023, the MPCA awarded this funding opportunity for Comfrey and as of May 30th, 2023, the funding has been made available. These planning efforts will focus on providing the City of Comfrey with a detailed set of guidelines relating to energy efficiency, sustainability, and overall community resilience to combat the effects of climate change. The recent flooding impacts have served as a sobering reminder that we must provide our communities with the knowledge and tools to better prepare themselves for natural disasters. Throughout the summer, Samuel and Sabri will be working with the Comfrey community through engagement efforts, meeting with utilities personnel, and providing educational resources that will inform community members on sustainable and resilient practices.

Lastly, Samuel helped develop an application for the BUSH Foundation's funding opportunity pertaining to sustainability and more efficient energy initiatives. This application took a region-wide approach to integrating educational resources, community outreach, and providing technical and grant-writing assistance to communities interested in these initiatives. Unfortunately, funding was not awarded for this application. However, the language and narrative developed in this application will be applicable to future funding opportunities as they are made available.

Terms & Abbreviations

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