REGION NINE
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

COMMISSION MEETING
Meeting Minutes
June 21, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Elliot Belgard, Andrea Boettger, Dave Borchert, Steve Cooling, Marie Dranttel, Lyle Femrite, Elroy Glidden, Robert Goblirsch, Mike Laven, Tom Loveall, Mary Milbrath, Shanon Nowell, Patty O'Connor, Keira Oeltjenbruns, Mike Pfeil, Gary Richter, Phil Schafer, Scott Schlueter, Doug Trytten, Rob Wilkening

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Paul Harris, Dawn Kratzke, Richard Peterson, Steve Rohlfing

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Holmseth, Michele Miller, Jim Whitlock

MEMBERS LATE: Jim Branstad, Chris Dalton, Christian Lilienthal, Bob Nielsen, Lisa Norton, Ayan Omar

OTHERS PRESENT: Brad DeVos, Michelle Markgraf, Sarah Berry, Nicole Griensewic, Ky Battern, Sabri Fair, Sam Sharp, Paola Ferrario, Joel Hanif, Alejandra Bejarano, Nate George, Heather Bartelt

There was a quorum.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Belgard moved to approve the revised agenda as presented, Nowell seconded. Motion carried.

V. APPROVAL OF APRIL 12, 2023 MINUTES

Schafer moved to approve the April 12, 2023 minutes as presented, Glidden seconded. Motion carried.

VI. TREASURER'S REPORT

Dranttel presented the Treasurer's Report.

Norton moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, Branstad seconded. Motion carried.

VII. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Battern noted that due to Frances Long's departure from RNDC, there will be a slight difference in the budget to accommodate the increased salary for the revised Loan Specialist position. Battern noted the Loan Specialist position is not at the same decision making level as the Finance Specialist position.

Battern shared that Abdo will be conducting the RNDC audit in August 2023 and should have a completed report by the end of September 2023.

Battern shared that there is a line item for a new RNDC vehicle as the current one has high mileage and deferred maintenance will be needed.

Battern shared he has completed the framework and the treasurer reports will have a new layout in the upcoming board & commission packets.

Battern shared that with the departure of Long, the RLF Program may take a pause as his focus will be on the Finance Director duties.

Battern noted that The Picklebarn has closed on their loan with RNDC.

Battern noted there are funds available to loan out and requested the commissioners to spread the word.

VIII. CHAIR'S REPORT

A. Approval of Public Interest Commissioner – Health & Human Welfare

Laven invited Michelle Markgraf and Sarah Berry, the candidates for the Public Interest Commissioner – Health & Human Welfare vacancy to introduce themselves and explain why they are interested in the position.

Laven asked the commission to vote for one candidate. Votes were counted and Sarah Berry was pronounced the winner after initially having a tie vote.

IX. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Griensewic shared that Frances Long's last day with RNDC will be June 23rd.

Griensewic shared that RNDC will be posting a position for a Lending Specialist. The Lending Specialist position will exclusively work with the loan program.

Griensewic shared the current Full Commission vacancies.

Griensewic thanked the Commissioners who were able to attend the bus tour earlier today. Griensewic requested feedback from the Commissioners on how to structure future bus tours to maximize interest and participation.

Griensewic highlighted the stops for this year which included the City of Eagle Lake, JR's Barn and Pleasant Grove Pizza Farm.

Griensewic highlighted Local Foods Week will be taking place July 24 – 30, 2023.

Griensewic shared that she will attend the NADO Board of Directors Meeting in Salt Lake City, UT, June 26 – 28th.

Griensewic shared the State Competitiveness Fund with the Commission. Griensewic noted that RDO's would be able to apply for up to $300,000 to use for technical assistance for municipalities regarding clean energy, and climate resiliency work. Discussion followed.

Griensewic shared that RNDC is looking to apply for the International Economic Development Council's (IEDC) Economic Recovery Corps. If selected, RNDC would be able to support a recovery position at no cost to RNDC for two years.

Griensewic shared that the Budget & Personnel Committee is currently working on drafting language for Code of Conduct, Executive Director position goals, along with creating a more formalized processes.

Griensewic noted that RNDC will be revising and updating the Policy Manual this fall.

Griensewic highlighted a handout in the commission packet, which shows how the RNDC Tax Levy dollars are distributed throughout the region and provides a visual representation of what a 0 – 3% increase looks like. Griensewic raised concerns that if a 3% levy increase is not passed, RNDC will not be able to recoup those funds to stay current in the future and could create a future budget deficits. Discussion followed.

Battern shared documents showing the current budget outlook and asked the commission if there were questions.

Battern noted that the largest shift in the budget is that several larger grants are expiring.

Commissioner Loveall requested clarification on the current grants RNDC is pursuing. Griensewic asked Ferrario for an explanation regarding the grant she wrote for the technical assistance grant, offered by the Federal EDA. In response, Ferrario highlighted that this grant would enable RNDC to actively seek out valuable qualitative and quantitative information about the region, with the goal of enhancing its competitiveness both nationally and internationally.

X. PUBLIC HEARING OF FY24 BUDGET

A. Call for Opening Public Hearing

Cooling made a motion to Open Public Hearing at 7:15 p.m.. Norton seconded. Motion carried.

B. Approval of FY24 Operating Budget

Lilienthal made a motion to approve the FY24 Operating Budget. Wilkening seconded. Motion carried.

C. Approval of Preliminary Levy

Loveall made a motion to approve the Preliminary Levy of 1%. Lilienthal seconded. Discussion followed. Motion failed. Berry, Boettger, Borchert, Dranttel, Laven, Milbrath, Nowell, O'Connor, Oeltjenbruns, Omar, Pfeil, Richter, Schlueter, Trytten, Wilkening opposed.

Boettger made a motion to approve the Preliminary Levy of 3%. Nowell seconded. Motion carried. Belgard, Cooling, Femrite, Glidden, Goblirsch, Lilienthal, Loveall, Nielsen, Schafer opposed.

D. Call for Close Public Hearing

Femrite made a motion to Close Public Hearing at 7:45 p.m. Belgard 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

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Norton moved to adjourn, Nelson seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Mike Laven, Chair

Marie Dranttel, Acting Secretary, & Board Treasurer