BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
Meeting Minutes
May 14, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

<u>MEMBERS PRESENT</u>: Andrea Boettger, Jim Branstad, Marie Dranttel, Mike Laven, Tom Loveall, Christian Lilienthal, Patty O'Connor, Steve Rohlfing, Phil Schafer, Rob Wilkening

<u>OTHERS PRESENT</u>: Jessica Beyer, Joel Hanif, Sarah Janovsky, Shanon Nowell (virtual)

There was a quorum.

3. COMMITTEE MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS

Patty O'Connor is a newly appointed member of the Board of Directors representing Blue Earth County. Shanon Nowell joined the meeting remotely and is serving as the Chair of the Budget and Personnel Committee.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Laven requested the addition of an action, "Commissioner Absence Discussion," under the Chair's Report for this evening's meeting, referencing a letter he received and distributed to the board in advance.

<u>Boettger moved to approve the agenda. Schafer seconded. Motion carried.</u>

5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

<u>Lilienthal moved to approve the consent agenda. Rohlfing seconded. Motion carried.</u>

6. APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION 2025-02 RDC TRANSPORTATION PLANNING GRANT

RNDC Transportation Planner, Joel Hanif, presented draft contracts related to a two-year planning grant in partnership with MnDOT District 7. This grant supports RNDC's involvement in both regional and statewide transportation planning. The contract totals $150,000 over two years, with the current year's portion at $75,000 due to the state's biennial funding structure. The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) reviewed and recommended the work plan for approval.

The work plan outlines activities such as ATP coordination, TAC administration, transportation planner convenings, statewide and regional planning efforts (including Safe Routes to School and Zero Deaths initiatives), and limited conference attendance (capped at 2%). Matching funds are provided through in-kind staff time. RNDC continues to prioritize Safe Routes to School planning, with efforts underway to identify communities in need of plan updates or first-time planning.

<u>Branstad moved to approve Resolution 2025-02 RDC Transportation Planning Grant. Loveall seconded. Motion carried.</u>

7. RNDC DELEGATION TO AACHEN, GERMANY OVERVIEW

Vice Chair Boettger provided an overview of the AGIT Aachen, Germany, delegation that visited Region Nine last fall, as well as a preview of the upcoming Region Nine delegation to Aachen this June. She noted that the upcoming visit will serve as a continuation of the previous exchange and will include key stakeholders focused on issues of mutual interest and concern to both regions. The international partnership has been supported in part by funding from the McKnight Foundation, which enabled Region Nine to host and participate in these exchanges.

The partnership aims to foster cross-cultural collaboration, prioritizing climate resilience and clean energy, while also advancing regional development and workforce development. During the German delegation's visit to Minnesota, they met with elected officials, educators, planners, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders to learn about local innovations in flood mitigation, sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), and circular building materials.

The upcoming June visit will focus on continued dialogue around renewable energy, clean technologies, and regional workforce strategies, with a strong emphasis on student internship exchanges between universities. Outcomes of the previous exchanges include successful student placements at public utilities in New Ulm, deeper university partnerships (such as with the University of Münster and Minnesota State University, Mankato), and ongoing efforts to connect skilled graduates with rural career opportunities. This next phase of the partnership aims to further develop those initiatives while learning from Germany's regional development strategies focused on resiliency.

8. OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUEST APPROVALS

Tonight's agenda includes two travel requests requiring approval: one for the NADO Summer Board Meeting and one for the Aachen, Germany Delegation.

Airfare for the Germany trip was booked at economy rates, with expenses covered by McKnight Foundation funds. A concern was raised regarding the timeliness of the travel request, as it was submitted less than a month in advance and may conflict with an existing budget and personnel matter. Members discussed the importance of aligning future travel requests with the annual budgeting process.

It was also noted that while not all trips are included in the original budget, the budget may be amended as needed to accommodate such requests.

<u>O'Connor moved to approve the out-of-state Travel Request for the NADO Summer Board Meeting. Wilkening seconded. Motion carried.</u>

<u>Branstad moved to approve the out-of-state Travel Requests for the Aachen, Germany, Delegation. Dranttel seconded. Motion carried.</u>

9. Finance Areas of Work Overview & Budget Update/Discussion

Jessica Beyer noted the current period is especially busy with fiscal year-end tasks, budgeting, and preparations for the audit. Dranttel, as Treasurer, has been supporting these efforts, working with outside firms like Burkhardt & Burkhardt to ensure clean audits and financial readiness. The conversation highlighted that although Region Nine has saved money by not currently paying a Finance Director, those funds are being strategically used to contract out essential audit preparation tasks, helping reduce long-term costs.

Second-round interviews for the Finance Director are scheduled for Friday, May 16, 2025. Questions were raised about the financial system in place, which was described as outdated and difficult, particularly the grant management software. The team acknowledged the need to eventually replace it with something more modern, possibly through a joint effort with other Regional Development Organizations (RDOs). However, this will only move forward once a new director is on board and up to speed.

The budget process is underway with team meetings and strategic adjustments, including reductions in contracted positions like AmeriCorps and Green Corps. They're watching grant funding closely, noting both successful awards and recent denials. The Budget & Personnel Committee meets on June 3rd to review and refine budget options before the June 18th annual meeting. Board members expressed concern over keeping levy increases minimal—potentially proposing 1%, 1.5%, or 2% options—given pressure on local governments due to reduced federal aid, inflation, and rising health insurance costs. There was consensus that Region Nine must remain fiscally conservative, adaptable to funding uncertainties, and transparent in its strategy moving forward.

10. Information/Discussion Items

a. Chair's Report – Chair Laven

    1. Resolution 2025-03 Proposed FY26 Meeting Dates

The board discussed the proposed meeting dates and agreed to schedule an additional meeting on March 11, 2026, despite potential overlaps with LMC, AMC, and other events. It was noted that members could participate virtually, or the meeting could be canceled if deemed unnecessary, but having it scheduled is beneficial in preparation for the April Commission meeting.

Wilkening proposed amending the FY26 Meeting Dates to include an additional Board of Directors meeting on March 11, 2026, and to submit the revised resolution to the full commission for approval. Loveall seconded the motion. Motion carried.

2. Commission Nominating Process & Officer Elections

Slate of Officers will be:

i. Chair - Mike Laven
ii. Vice Chair - Andrea Boettger
iii. Treasurer - Marie Dranttel
iv. Secretary - Jim Branstad

3. Commissioner Absence Discussion

A draft letter was presented for review, intended to notify the City of North Mankato that their representative on the Commission has missed three consecutive meetings. Discussion followed regarding representation for cities with populations over 10,000 and the number of seats allocated on the Commission under state statute, bylaws, and other governing documents. It was determined that the draft letter will need to be revised and brought back to the Board after additional research is completed.

4. Commissioner Absence Discussion

Loveall moved to rescind the December 4, 2024, decision removing Faribault County's representative (himself) and to retract the October 16, 2024, Removal Letter. Lilienthal seconded the motion. Motion carried.

b. Executive Director's Report – Jessica Beyer

Jessica reported that the staff report has been updated to a new project-based layout and that work is underway to incorporate a Gantt chart to better track project progress. She noted the addition of two new commissioners representing the Youth High School Age Commissioner seat and Blue Earth County's small cities. Open seats remain for representatives from Faribault County Townships and Special Interest Groups-Minority Populations. Jessica also shared that RNDC is partnering with Greater Mankato Growth and Minnesota State University, Mankato, to host a Workforce Summit on May 20. She reminded board members to sign up for the upcoming Bus Tour scheduled for June 18. Additionally, she noted that Nicole returned this week from medical leave, and a video message Nicole prepared while attending the SelectUSA Summit was shared with the board.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioners shared updates from their communities.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Wilkening moved to adjourn. Loveall seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

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Mike Laven, Chair	Jim Branstad, Secretary