

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m. at RNDC in Mankato, MN

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Andrea Boettger, Jim Branstad, Marie Dranttel, Lyle Femrite, Mike Laven, Phil Schafer

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Tom Loveall, Steve Rohlfig

MEMBERS ABSENT: Christian Lilienthal

OTHERS PRESENT: Nicole Griensewic, Ky Battern, Nate George, Sabri Fair, Heather Bartelt

There was a quorum.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Schafer moved to approve the agenda. Boettger seconded. Motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF JUNE 7, 2023 MINUTES

Femrite moved to approve the June 7, 2023 minutes as presented, Branstad seconded. Motion carried.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT

Dranttel presented the Treasurer's Report.

Shafer moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Boettger seconded. Motion carried.

Battern shared the new layout of the audit-ready monthly statements with the board. Battern noted that the next step will be to eliminate the cash receipts and cash balances report. The finished report layout will show actual bank reconciled bank amounts.

Battern shared that there was a larger-than-expected reduction in the General Fund balance, due to the lesser allocation of time by RNDC towards the completion of the USDA grant, as compared to the initial projection.

Battern shared that conversations have been held with Blue Earth County regarding potentially taking over the administration of the area's Emergency Communications Board (ECB). Blue Earth County has served notice to the ECB stating they will no longer be assuming the responsibilities. The program works to ensure that emergency responders have the ability and bandwidth to reliability communicate in disaster or emergency situations. The coverage area for this program approximately matches the service area for Region Nine. Members of the ECB would pay a set fee to Region Nine to oversee the program and we would need to allocate approximately 500 hours of staff time. Discussion followed.

VI. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Battern highlighted the transition from Wells Fargo to US Bank is approaching its final stages. At present, no financial transactions have been initiated, pending the completion of the required paperwork by the MAGIC Fund. Battern noted that the conversion process is slated for finalization by the end of August, enabling RNDC to use the account.

Battern shared that an offer for the Loan Specialist position was extended and accepted to Courtney Wright. Wright will join RNDC on August 21st.

VII. CHAIR'S REPORT

A. DRAFT Code of Conduct Review

Chair Laven addressed the drafted code of conduct with the board. Laven noted that the purpose of having a code of conduct is to act as a guide in the event issues arise. Discussion followed.

B. Board Portal Review

George walked through the Board Portal with the board. Griensewic asked the board for their input regarding what information would be valuable to add to the Board Portal. Commissioner Branstad suggested having the full RNDC meetings calendar posted. Chair Laven proposed a comprehensive review of the page's sequencing to enhance its overall coherence and flow. Commissioner Dranttel expressed interest in having the Audit Reports available on the portal. Discussion followed.

VIII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. Local Foods Presentation

Fair presented on Building a Local Foods System in Region Nine. Fair shared the story of a local small farm that has been successfully growing vegetables and selling them to local schools, restaurants, the St. Peter coop, and Farmer's Markets.

Fair shared the benefits of having Local Food and Farmers include:

- Keeps money local
- Food creates a community and sense of home for immigrants
- Increase resilience of our food system
- Increase health and wellbeing of communities

Fair noted that RNDC is achieving these goals of Building a Local Foods System in Region Nine with the assistance of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Grant. The NRCS Grant allows RNDC to facilitate the Region Nine Grower's Network with trainings and education opportunities, community building and problem solving. Fair shared that land access is a barrier, so RNDC has been working with the Living Earth Center to offer larger growing spaces at an incubator farm.

Fair highlighted Local Foods Week that took place July 24 – 30, 2023. Fair noted that 7 farmers and 8 restaurants participated in the event and the goal was for the restaurants to create a dish highlighting foods from local farmers. RNDC took on the role of highlighting the stories behind the food to educate consumers on the availability of local foods.

Fair shared that he has been working with Farmland Access Meet & Greet to connect farmers looking to retire with new farmers. Fair noted the next event will take place on September 10th in Montgomery, MN.

Fair noted that Region 5 was the lead applicant and awarded the MiNKota grant by the USDA Regional Food Business Center for the next five years. Fair shared this will allow RNDC to continue working on the incubator farm with the Living Earth Center and Local Foods Week.

Fair shared that he is currently preparing an application for Regional Food Recovery Plan. The application would help farmers spread the word about their crops being available and not having food end up in local landfills because there is no system set up to capture it. Discussion followed.

Fair noted that RNDC was awarded \$100,000 from the Department of Energy to do a Bioeconomy Development Opportunity Zone (BDOZ) assessment. RNDC will be working with a consultant to investigate agricultural waste and residue that would normally end up in landfills and convert them into energy.

B. NADO Recap

Griensewic shared that NADO Staff Retreat will be held in Minnesota and will have the first-ever NADO site visit to RNDC on August 31st. Griensewic has created an agenda for the day. RNDC will be able to highlight our work as well as NADO sharing their work with RNDC.

C. Staffing Updates

Griensewic shared that RNDC has extended an offer to Mercedes Sempe for part-time temporary work (approximately 6 months). Sempe will help facilitate round table discussions and outreach to the communities.

D. Out of State Travel Request – Courtney Wright

Battern recommended Courtney Wright to attend a loan software conference in Denver, on September 13th.

Branstad moved to approve the Out of State Travel Request for Courtney Wright.
Schafer seconded. Motion carried.

Griensewic shared that RNDC was not awarded the FDI grant.

Griensewic noted that RNDC is still pursuing the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). If awarded that would be for a part-time temporary position.

Griensewic shared that RNDC made it to the second round for an Economic Recovery Corps fellow for 2 ½ years.

Griensewic shared a press release for Angie's Kettle Corn recognizing them as a Small Business Administration Legacy Business.

Griensewic shared with the board that Commissioner Doug Trytten passed away.

Griensewic shared that Councilman Matt Peterson was on the Council agenda to be appointed to RNDC Commission by North Mankato on August 7th. Peterson, if approved, will replace Commissioner Whitlock on the RNDC Full Commission.

Griensewic noted that RNDC will be involved in an MPCA event in St. Peter on August 11th. The MPCA will announce the Southern Minnesota Resiliency Grants in St. Peter, Comfrey and New Ulm.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Commissioner Updates

Commissioners shared updates from the municipalities.

B. Meeting Evaluation

Chair Laven reminded the members of the Board to fill out the meeting evaluation handout.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Femrite moved to adjourn. Boettger seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Mike Laven, Chair

Jim Branstad, Secretary