

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at South Central Service Cooperative.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Elliot Belgard, Sarah Berry, Dave Borchert, Steve Cooling, Chris Dalton, Lyle Femrite, Elroy Glidden, Robert Goblirsch, Stephanie Hilpipre, Dawn Kratzke, Mike Laven, Christian Lilienthal, Mary Milbrath, Bob Nielsen, Lisa Norton, Shanon Nowell, Patty O'Connor, Gary Richter, Steve Rohlfing, Phil Schafer, Scott Schlueter, Rob Wilkening (late)

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Andrea Boettger, Jim Branstad, Marie Dranttel, Paul Harris, Katelynn Kratz, Tom Loveall, Mike Pfeil, Julie Tesch

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Holmseth, Ayan Omar, Matt Peterson

OTHERS PRESENT: Nicole Griensewic, Ky Battern, Sarah Janovsky, Kristian Braekkan, Mercedes Sempè, Alejandra Bejarano, Nate George, Joel Hanif, Sabri Fair, Samuel Sharp, Mireille Ghassan

There was a quorum.

IV. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Norton moved to approve the consent agenda, Cooling seconded. Motion carried.

V. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ky Battern, Finance Director, briefed the commission on RNDC related financial matters.

VI. CHAIR'S REPORT

- A. Approval of Regional School Board Commissioner: the nominating committee (Budget & Personnel) brought forward Rita Rassbach as a Regional School Board Commissioner Candidate. Rita was unable to attend the meeting but submitted an introductory video for the commission to view.

Belgard moved to approve Rassbach as a Regional School Board Commissioner, Schafer seconded. Motion carried.

- B. Term as Chair: the Budget & Personnel Committee, serving as the nominating committee, is accepting nominations for Commission Chair. The committee is also recommending a slate of officers to be voted on at the June 12th Commission meeting. Per the bylaws, two names are to be brought forward at least 20 days prior to June's annual meeting for a vote.

VII. NORTH STAR PROMISE PRESENTATION

Saga gave a presentation on the data she has collected and analyzed on the North Star Promise (NSP) and discussed how the NSP could potentially impact Minnesota in general and Region Nine in particular. The research and presentation examined the potential impacts of the NSP program on communities and economies from various perspectives, including industry clusters, public universities, and gender pay disparities.

VIII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- A. St. James Energy Grant update – Sabri Fair
Sabri worked with Convivencia Hispana, a community organization, in St. James to apply for and successfully received \$100,000 in funding from the Department of Energy through their Community Energy Innovation Prize. The group will use the funding to hire and train Spanish-speaking Community Energy Navigators, who will have the goal of organizing 200 free energy audits for the community. With the data compiled from the energy audits, the community will be prepared to apply for and implement scalable projects that can meet the needs of multiple residences at once.
- B. BDO Zone 'A' Rating – Sam Sharp
The BDO Zone Rating system is a regional biofuels assessment that is designed to attract investors and developers to the region. Region Nine received the nation's first investor grade 'A' rating for the abundance of corn stover feedstock. Sam is having conversations with companies interested in the region. RNDC will be applying for the second round of funding in July: DOE's NREL's Energizing Rural Communities Phase II Prize for \$200,000.
- C. Safe Streets and Roads for All – Joel Hanif
RNDC is seeking funding from the USDOT for a Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) planning grant to create a regional comprehensive road safety action plan. If funded, RNDC would hire a new transportation planner to be the lead on carrying out this work. The total project cost would be \$425,000 (\$340,000 in grant funding, \$85,000 matched by RNDC). The action plan has eight elements: 1. Leadership Commitment and Goal Setting; 2. Planning Structure; 3. Safety Analysis; 4. Engagement and Collaboration; 5. Equity; 6. Policy and Process Changes; 7. Strategy and Project Selections; and 8. Progress and Transparency. Going through this process will make communities in the region competitive for infrastructure dollars to fund projects prioritized in the action plan. The final product will compliment existing Safe Routes to School efforts and South Central Minnesota's Towards Zero Deaths (TZD), programming.

- D. National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) - Nate George
Nathan George described RNDC's application for a National Endowment for the Arts Research Grant. He told the commission that the grant would be for a needs assessment analyzing arts and cultural programming in the region. He said the hope is to address gaps in the current programming and find ways to bring opportunities to rural communities.
- E. American Connection Corps – Alejandra Bejarano
The American Connection Corps (ACC) is an AmeriCorps program focused on building local capacity and advancing economic prosperity by placing fellows in rural communities and legacy cities nationwide. After applying, the American Connection Corps program has decided to move forward with RNDC as a host organization for an ACC member. This member would offer additional support for broadband initiatives in the region. Alejandra is leading this effort and collaborating closely with Scott McFarland, Director of National Service at Lead for America. The next steps involve recruitment and interviews.
- F. Plan Update: Faribault Co. and Sibley Co. – Mercedes Sempè & Kristian Braekkan
Mercedes and Kristian gave an update on strategic economic development planning with Faribault and Sibley counties. The Faribault County plan was finalized the first week of April and will be presented to the county board on May 7th. The Sibley plan will be finalized and presented to the county board by June 30th.
- G. NADO / National League of Cities (NLC) Conference – Commissioner Norton
Mayor Norton recently participated in the NLC Conference in Washington, D.C. on behalf of the City of Eagle Lake. Nicole and Chair Laven and Vice Chair Boettger were also there during that time and conducted meetings together. Norton shared her experience with the commission and encouraged them to do policy visits in the future.
- H. RNDC Organizational Chart and Staffing Update – Nicole Griensewic
Nicole noted that RNDC Intern, Mireille, will be staying part-time to help with grant-specific tasks while a planner position is vacant. Several grants that have been applied to were reviewed. If the grants are successful there will be significant staffing implications. Nicole walked through what an organizational chart may look like if granted pending funds.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioners shared updates from their communities.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Kratzke moved to adjourn, Milbrath seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Mike Laven, Chair

Marie Dranttel, Secretary