

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Andrea Boettger, Jim Branstad, Marie Dranttel, Mike Laven, Tom Loveall (virtual), Christian Lilienthal, Patty O'Connor, Phil Schafer

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Steve Rohlfig

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rob Wilkening

OTHERS PRESENT: Nicole Griensewic, Jessica Beyer, Stephanie Hilpipre, Sarah Janovsky, Sam Sharp

There was a quorum.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There was a call from the floor to add agenda item 4c. Election of Officers.

Lilienthal moved to approve the agenda. O'Connor seconded. Motion carried.

4. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Branstad removed Consent Agenda item C, "Election of Officers," for separate discussion.

O'Connor moved to approve the May 14, 2025 Minutes and Financials. Dranttel seconded. Motion carried.

The Board discussed the Election of Officers process and voted as follows:

Slate of Officers:

Vice Chair - Andrea Boettger

Treasurer - Marie Dranttel

Secretary – Jim Branstad

O'Connor moved to approve the Slate of Officers. Schafer seconded. Motion carried.

5. ACTION ITEMS

Tom Polich will present on Food Recovery at the NADO Annual Training Conference. NADO will cover his conference registration fee.

Branstad moved to approve the Out-of-State Travel Requests for the NADO Fly-In and the NADO Annual Training Conference (two requests). Boettger seconded. Motion carried.

6. INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

Jessica Beyer, Deputy Director, provided an update on the FY2025 Disaster Supplemental Grant Program, noting that all nine counties were included in a federal disaster declaration due to spring and early summer 2024 flooding. She reported that RNDC had worked closely with the federal EDA and local communities to prepare for the grant's June 4 release, conducting outreach, personal communications, and a June 17 workshop with the regional EDA representative. She emphasized the unique scope of the grant, which allows all eligible jurisdictions and multiple entity types to apply, offered an 80/20 funding match (more favorable than typical EDA splits), and \$1.45 billion in available rolling funds. She highlighted several potential projects under development, including watershed mitigation in Waterville, economic resiliency in Martin County, infrastructure in Springfield, and partnerships with Minnesota State University, Mankato, North Mankato, New Richland, and others. She encouraged board members to connect RNDC with potential applicants to maximize funding for the region, noting that early applications were important due to the rolling nature of the program. She clarified that the funding had to tie to economic development but could include certain infrastructure projects. She also noted that RNDC was pursuing additional grants from agencies such as the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, USDA, McKnight, and Bush Foundations. Finally, she credited the strength of RNDC's EDA relationships and the expertise of staff in positioning the region with a high success rate in applications.

Stephanie Hilpipre, Finance Director, reported that an overstatement occurred on the accounts due to the grant, the State Competitiveness Fund. Work valued at \$46,333 was completed in fiscal year 2024, but the deadline to claim the funds, July 15, 2024, was missed. As a result, the amount could not be claimed, though it was recorded as an accounts receivable in the audit. The auditors will make a prior-year adjustment to correct the error.

She also noted that a dividend check alerted her to the fact that RNDC owned shares in Principal Financial, which are currently worth \$282,650. The shares were issued as part of a de-mutualization process in 2001. Since Minnesota State statute prohibits holding publicly traded shares, she will proceed with selling them and depositing the proceeds in cash. Loveall inquired about potential Capital Gains Tax implications, which Hilpipre is still reviewing.

Branstad motioned to direct the Finance Director to sell the Principal Financial shares. Schafer seconded. Motion carried.

Finally, she reported that upon inspection of the off-site storage unit, it was found unlocked, with several boxes improperly placed on the floor. These boxes contained personnel files, RLF fund documentation, and financial records. Padlocks were replaced, and RNDC's insurance company has been notified of the situation. A catalog of all boxes will be created, and future storage options with increased security will be considered.

Chair Laven reported receiving an email from the State Auditor's Office requesting international travel documentation from 2022 to present, including meeting minutes, approvals, budgets, and revenue sources. After consulting Nicole, Laven prioritized addressing more pressing RNDC financial matters first, which the State Auditor's Office approved, allowing flexibility beyond the original August 15th deadline. Sarah was assigned to compile relevant meeting-related documents, and Stephanie to align financials for submission to the State Auditor's Office in the future.

The board discussed changing the annual meeting date from June 10th to June 17th, 2026, to allow an additional week for the budget process. The proposed change would also include the annual bus tour.

Boettger motioned to present a revised date of June 17, 2026, for the Annual Meeting and Bus Tour to be presented for approval by the Commission at the quarterly meeting in October. O'Connor seconded. Motion carried.

Sam Sharp, RNDC Energy and Sustainability Planner presented current outreach efforts and funding opportunities. First, he discussed the EECBG grants, noting RNDC received \$100,000 from the Minnesota Department of Commerce to support eight communities at \$12,250 each for energy efficiency and conservation projects, such as planning, energy audits, and resilience projects for publicly owned buildings. Second, he highlighted a new solar on public buildings program, expanded statewide, covering up to 70% of system costs (up to \$112,000) for publicly owned and operated buildings, requiring applicants to pursue a 48B investment tax credit. Third, he outlined Clean Energy Resource Teams seed grants, aimed at initiating visible, replicable clean energy projects like lighting conversions and efficiency upgrades, encouraging community engagement.

Sabri Fair, RNDC Environment and Sustainability Planner, updated the board on Local Foods Month, now in its fourth year. The program connects local farmers with restaurants to enhance visibility and access to local foods. RNDC supports these partnerships with coordination, marketing, and social media.

This year, the program extended from a week to a month to build stronger relationships, with eight farms and eleven restaurants participating. Midway through, the program is running smoothly despite initial concerns about the extended duration. A follow-up at the end of the month will evaluate how the program went and if participants were satisfied.

Nicole Griensewic provided an update on several initiatives during her Executive Director report. She discussed ongoing efforts to secure a \$180,000 USDA grant for the Regional Food Business Centers by pursuing a follow-up conversation with Congressman Finstad's District Director, Aaron Eberhart. She also noted that funding for the Safe Roads and Streets program is anticipated soon, and that several other grants and funding sources are actively being pursued.

Griensewic explained her decision to decline an invitation to the GMG Inner-City Leadership visit to Wichita, Kansas, citing budget constraints, misalignment with RNDC priorities, and travel fatigue. After seeking input from the Board and receiving no strong objections, she confirmed RNDC would not participate in the visit.

She reported that the Budget and Personnel Committee, led by Jessica Beyer and Committee Chair Nowell, is scheduled to meet on September 3.

Griensewic shared positive feedback from Senator Klobuchar's staff regarding RNDC's Food Rescue program under Tom's leadership. The program has received praise from partners such as Second Harvest, and Tom has been invited to present at the NADO Annual Training Conference with waived registration. In addition, efforts are underway to acquire a refrigerated truck to further support and expand the Food Rescue work.

Finally, she recounted productive networking at Farmfest, including discussions with Governor Walz on RNDC updates and upcoming trade mission. She emphasized funding limitations for rural participation while proposing that the state trade office provide additional support.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Commissioner Updates

Board members shared updates from their communities.

b. Meeting Evaluation

8. ADJOURNMENT

Boettger moved to adjourn. Branstad seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 pm.

Mike Laven, Chair

Jim Branstad, Secretary