

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Rohlfing moved to approve the agenda. Wilkening seconded. Motion carried.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jean Anderson, Jeff Annis, Andrea Boettger, Jim Branstad, Steve Cooling, Marie Dranttel (virtual), Elroy Glidden, Robert Goblirsch, Hunter Jordan, James Kotewa, Brad Krause, Liz Krocak, Lynda Kruse, Mike Laven, Tom Loveall, Mary Milbrath, Bob Nielsen, Shanon Nowell, Patty O'Connor, Matt Peterson, Mike Pfeil, Billeye Rabbe, Rita Rassbach, Gary Richter, Pam Rodewald, Steve Rohlfing, Phil Schafer, Scott Schlueter, Julie Tesch, Luisa Trapero, Rob Wilkening (virtual)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sarah Berry, Dave Borchert, Chris Dalton, Paul Harris, Dawn Kratzke,

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Christian Lilienthal

OTHERS PRESENT: Alejandra Bejarano, Jessica Beyer, Sabri Fair, Nathan George, Joel Hanif, Stephanie Hilpipre, Sarah Janovsky, Mark Plotz, Samuel Sharp, Andrew Haefner

There was a quorum.

5. APPROVAL OF COLLEGE-AGE COMMISSIONER AND INTRODUCTION

Milbrath moved to approve Andrew Haefner as the college-age commissioner. Kruse seconded. Motion carried.

6. APPROVAL OF JANUARY 14, 2026, MEETING MINUTES

O'Connor moved to approve the January 14,2026 Commission meeting minutes. Nowell seconded. Motion carried.

7. APPROVAL OF FINANCIALS

Cooling moved to approve the consent agenda. Trapero seconded. Motion carried.

8. APPROVAL OF THE REVISED FY25/26 BUDGET

Loveall moved to approve the Revised FY26 Budget. Rabbe seconded. Motion carried.

9. NICOLLET COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

Spencer Crawford, Nicollet County Public Health Planner, presented findings from the Nicollet County Community Health Assessment. He discussed listening sessions conducted with diverse community groups and highlighted the top health-related issues, noting their interconnected nature. Priority topics included housing affordability, transportation access, youth mental health, substance use, income inequality, childcare shortages, food access, and dental care. Mr. Crawford provided detailed information on housing cost burden, transportation barriers, and active transportation, emphasizing their impacts on health outcomes. Commissioners asked questions and discussed how these issues were reflected across the Region 9 counties. Mr. Crawford outlined next steps, including development of a Community Health Improvement Plan and opportunities for community involvement.

10. COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) PLANNING OVERVIEW & DISCUSSION

Alejandra Bejarano, RNDC Economic Recovery Planner, provided an overview of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), a required five-year regional plan tied to federal Economic Development Administration funding. She explained the purpose, structure, and importance of the CEDS in positioning the region for federal funding and responding to economic challenges. Ms. Bejarano outlined the planning timeline, engagement opportunities, and the four statewide CEDS framework components. Commissioners were encouraged to participate in surveys, interviews, listening sessions, and a regional housing forum scheduled for June 10, 2026. Questions were asked regarding engagement and survey distribution.

11. COMMITTEE OVERVIEWS & UPDATES

- Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDS) Committee – Alejandra Bejarano: Ms. Bejarano reviewed the role of the CEDS Committee, noting its responsibility for guiding

development of the regional strategy and incorporating commissioner and stakeholder input.

- Legislative & Communications Committee – Chair Andrea Boettger: Chair Boettger summarized recent legislative discussions, including proposed housing legislation and data center-related bills. She emphasized impacts on rural communities and the importance of continued monitoring and coordinated messaging to legislators.
- Budget & Personnel Committee – Chair Shanon Nowell: Chair Nowell reported on committee work since January, including financial oversight, budget review, governance items, leadership transition support, and preparation for the FY27 budget. She acknowledged staff contributions during a period of transition.
- Bylaws Ad-hoc Committee – Jessica Beyer, Interim Executive Director: Ms. Beyer provided an update on the ad hoc bylaws review process, noting committee representation, progress to date, survey feedback from commissioners, and plans to bring revised bylaws to the Commission in June.
- Revolving Loan Fund Committee – Stephanie Hilpipre, Finance Director: Ms. Hilpipre reported on recent loan activity, fund growth, and the need to add one additional commissioner to the committee to meet plan requirements. She highlighted recent loan successes and increased lending activity.
- Transportation Advisory Committee – Joel Hanif: Mr. Hanif discussed the role of the Transportation Advisory Committee, including project scoring, planning review, and recent MnDOT cost participation policy updates that affect local governments.

12. REPORTS

Chair’s Report

Chair Laven referenced ongoing commission and caucus processes and facilitated transitions between agenda items.

Interim Executive Director’s Report

Jessica Beyer summarized key activities since January, including organizational stability efforts, funding and partnership development, staff engagement, and grant activity. She reported recent grant awards and noted that EDA disaster funding applications were not successful. Alternative funding strategies were being pursued.

Finance Director’s Report

Stephanie Hilpipre reported on fiscal year closeout work, upcoming invoicing deadlines, audit preparation, and FY27 budget development.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioners shared updates from their communities, including transportation funding successes, energy efficiency initiatives, food rescue partnerships, and youth civic engagement efforts. Several commissioners highlighted the value of RNDC support in securing grants and technical assistance

12. ADJOURNMENT

Milbrath moved to adjourn. O'Connor seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.