

MN Rural Counties Board of Directors

Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2023

2:30 PM

Alexandria, MN

1. Call to Order

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm.

2. Roll Call

Chairman Johnson took the roll, and a quorum was confirmed.

Delegates: Laurie Westerlund, Aitkin County; Barry Nelson, Becker County; Wade Athey, Big Stone County; Frank Gross, Clay County; Larry Anderson, Cottonwood County; Jerry Rapp, Douglas County; Troy Johnson, Grant County; Leon Olson, Kittson County; David Geray, Mahnommen County; Sharon Bring, Marshall County; Doug Krueger, McLeod County; Steve Schmitt, Meeker County; Neil Peterson, Pennington County; Luke Johnson, Pipestone County; Jerry Jacobson, Polk County; Paul Gerde, Pope County; Randy Kramer, Renville County; Peter Koch, Sibley County; Bob Kopitzke, Stevens County; Bill Stearns, Wadena County; Jim Branstad, Watonwan County; Dennis Larson, Wilkin County; Mike Kaczmarek, Wright County; Kermit Jensen, Roseau County.

Alternates: Doug Krueger, McLeod County; Leigh Lenzmeier, Stearns County; Travis Leiviska, Aitkin County; Bob Van Hee, Redwood County; Stephen Larson, Clay County; Pat Lesmeister Nelson, Stevens County; Ron Noon, Wadena County; Merlyn Kreklau, Wadena County; Glenda Phillippe, Roseau County; David De La Hunt, Hubbard County; Tom Krueger, Hubbard County; Norm Holmen, Cottonwood County; Bill Miller, Watonwan County; Tim Kalina, Douglas County; Shane Schmidt, Douglas County; Charlie Meyer, Douglas County; Doug Nagel, Pipestone County; Dan Wildermuth, Pipestone County; Barb Becker, Todd County; Randy Neumann, Todd County; Darrell Petty, Watonwan County; Daryl Luthens, McLeod County; Nathan Schmalz, McLeod County; Paul Johnson, Meeker County; Joan Lee, Polk County.

Guests: Todd Draper, Lyon County; Gary Crowley, Lyon County; Molly Malone, Murray County; Jackie Meyer, Murray County; Carolyn McDonald, Murray County Administrator; Brian Mueller, Olmsted County; Bruce Anderson, Faribault County; Vanc Stuehrenberg, Blue Earth County; Kersten Kappmeyer, Pope County Administrator; Dave Senjem, Olmsted County; Matt LeBlanc, Morrison County Administrator; Lisa Herges, Renville County Administrator; Brian Braun, Brown County; Raeanne Danielowski, Sherburne County; Tony Berg, Brown County; Scott Windschitl, Brown County; Greg Felber, Sherburne County; Jeff Veerkamp, Brown County; Heather Schlangen, Douglas County Coordinator; DeRon Bremer, Lac qui Parle; Brian Martinson, AMC; Matt Hilgart, AMC; Matt Freeman, AMC; Senator Rob Kupec; Senator Jordan Rasmusson.

Staff: Anne Kilzer, Rob Vanasek, Sam Walseth.

During roll call, each county reported on their top issues of concern.

- County budget process
- HR/Employee regulations (Paid Family Medical, Safe & Sick Time, etc.)
- Staffing shortages
- Child Care needs
- Drainage
- Cannabis implementation
- Infrastructure (i.e., equipment, roads, bridges, dedicated funding, etc.)
- Housing
- Mental Health
- Broadband
- SRO and student restraints
- Demo Landfill regulations
- DNR water permit process
- Health Insurance

3. Approve Agenda

Commissioner Gerde moved approval of the agenda; Commissioner Krueger seconded. Motion carries.

4. MRC Staff Updates, Overview of Upcoming Meetings.

Anne Kilzer gave an overview of the upcoming October Business Meeting, which will be held in Alexandria. Agenda

items will include elections, naming of delegates, 2024 meeting schedule, preparation of the 2024 Legislative Platform, budget. Discussion ensued regarding offering a virtual option; guidance was to prioritize in-person attendance. Anne provided an update on new members and visits completed over the summer. The MRC website was down temporarily but has been restored with the assistance of AMC staff. Finally, Anne noted that the Center for Rural Policy Development has two current openings for County representatives. Anne will follow up with additional information.

Sam Walseth and Rob Vanasek provided a Legislative Update. Issues included School Resource Officers/potential special session; special election to be held in November; lay of the land for the 2024 Legislative Session; Capital Investment Tours; SCORE Funding; Drainage Work Group.

Commissioner Geray moved that MRC draft a letter of support for ruling or law changed regarding use of force, Kaczmarek seconded. Discussion regarding implications for a special session; specific effects/implications of this issue for Rural Counties. Motion carries. Sam Walseth will follow up.

5. Member Requested Discussion/Best Practices

Commissioner Kaczmarek asked for best practices around working with Railroads when there is a proposed or desired project in their right of way. Members provided advice and information.

Members discussed recent Cannabis legislation and implementation implications and strategies.

6. Approval of May 2023, Minutes

Commissioner Kopitzke moved the May 20, 2023 meeting minutes; Commissioner Anderson seconded. Motion carries.

7. Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement

MRC Secretary/Treasurer Sharon Bring presented the Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement which were included in the meeting packet. Commissioner Branstad moved approval of the Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement; Commissioner Peterson seconded. Motion carries.

8. Connecting with Rural Legislators: Senator Rob Kupec and Senator Jordan Rasmusson

Sam Walseth introduced the Senators. Each gave remarks then opened for questions. Both thanked County Commissioners and staff for the work that they do and invited ongoing conversation and communication as preparations continue for the 2024 Legislative Session.

9. Adjourn

Commissioner Branstad moved the meeting adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 5:05 pm.