

MN Rural Counties Board of Directors – APPROVED**Monday, May 6, 2024****10:00 am****ZOOM****Attendance**

Delegate	Aitkin County	Laurie	Westerlund
Delegate	Beltrami County	Joe	Gould
Delegate	Brown County	Jeffrey	Veerkamp
Delegate	Clay County	Frank	Gross
Alternate	Clay County	Jenny	Mongeau
Delegate	Cottonwood County	Larry	Anderson
Delegate	Douglas County	Jerry	Rapp
Alternate	Douglas County	Keith	Englund
Alternate	Douglas County	Tim	Kalina
Alternate	Douglas County	Charlie	Meyer
Delegate	Grant County	Troy	Johnson
Delegate	Hubbard County	Charlene	Christenson
Delegate	Jackson County	Don	Wachal
Delegate	Kittson County	Leon	Olson
Alternate	Kittson County	Theresia	Gillie
Delegate	Lincoln County	Dean	Nielsen
Delegate	Lyon County	Thomas	Andries
Alternate	Lyon County	Gary	Crowley
Alternate	Mahnomen County	David	Geray
Delegate	Marshall County	Sharon	Bring
Delegate	Martin County	Jaime	Bleess
Delegate	McLeod County	Doug	Krueger
Alternate	McLeod County	Daryl	Luthens
Alternate	Meeker County	Paul	Johnson
Delegate	Norman County	Steve	Bommersbach
Delegate	Olmsted County	Brian	Mueller
Delegate	Pennington County	Neil	Peterson
Alternate	Pennington County	Bruce	Lawrence
Delegate	Pipestone County	Luke	Johnson
Delegate	Polk County	Gary	Willhite
Delegate	Pope County	Paul	Gerde
Delegate	Red Lake County	Chuck	Flage
Alternate	Roseau County	Glenda	Phillipe
Delegate	Stearns County	Steve	Notch
Alternate	Stearns County	Jeff	Bertram
Alternate	Stevens County	Patricia	Lesmeister-Nelson
Delegate	Wadena County	Bill	Stearns
Delegate	Waseca County	Doug	Christopherson
Alternate	Waseca County	DeAnne	Malterer

	Waseca County	Brad	Krause
Delegate	Watsonwan County	Jim	Branstad
Delegate	Wilkin County	Dennis	Larson
Delegate	Wright County	Mike	Kaczmarek
Alternate	Wright County	Tina	Diedrick
Alternate	Beltrami County	John	Carlson
Alternate	Redwood County	Bob	Van Hee
Delegate	Renville County	John	Robinson
Alternate	Traverse County	Kayla	Schmidt

Staff: Anne Kilzer, Rob Vanasek, Sam Walseth

Guests: Adam Coe, Kevin Gray, Jackie Bauer, Kersten Kappmeyer, Heather Schlangen

Speakers: Senator John Jasinski, Senator Bill Weber

1. Call to Order

Chair Luke Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

2. Legislative Guests: Senator John Jasinski, Senator Bill Weber

Sam Walseth and Rob Vanasek introduced Senator Jasinski. He outlined his remaining priorities for the 2024 session. In regard to the bonding bill, he said that last year's bill included many appropriations for nonprofit organizations; he would prefer to see a focus on infrastructure- wastewater, clean water, roads and bridges. Each caucus has been allotted \$75m for local projects. Discussed transportation sales tax. Generally speaking, he said GOP members are frustrated this session; he also outlined recent floor and hearing activities regarding Senator Mitchell. Discussion ensued.

Sam and Rob introduced Senator Weber who noted several issues of particular interest to Greater Minnesota Counties. He noted that maintenance language being considered would reduce local control; responsibility at the local level to ensure funding is secure for maintenance of projects. Members commented on various issues of interest.

3. Roll Call

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

4. Approve Agenda

Commissioner Peterson moved approval of the agenda. Second by Commissioner Gerde. Motion adopted.

5. Approve Minutes

Commissioner Krueger moved approval of the April 1, 2024 meeting minutes. Second by Commissioner Nielsen. Motion adopted.

6. Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement

Secretary/Treasurer Sharon Bring provided a report on the current MRC financials. She noted outstanding invoices from AMC and stated the budget reserve is positive. Commissioner Westerlund made a motion to file the Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement. Second by Commissioner Veerkamp. Motion adopted.

7. Legislative Update – Rob Vanasek and Sam Walseth

Rob Vanasek started by discussing MRC priorities. He noted that there is one-time funding for SCORE: we are supporting the Senate position on this. He outlined initiatives regarding electronic waste and packaging, which have traveled through fourteen committees. During discussion of what issues may be "dead" for the session, Rob noted a record number of bills have been heard past deadlines this year.

Sam Walseth said drainage is in good shape, portal has not been included in legislation moving forward to date. He also discussed the status of White Earth land transfer legislation, elk herd management, EMS services funding, Taylor Case and prevailing wage issues related to broadband.

8. Discussion: White Earth Land Transfer, Other?

Discussion regarding White Earth land transfer legislation (Kunesh/Gomez) to transfer state-owned land from the White Earth State Forest to the White Earth nation and give them the right of first refusal on sales of tax-forfeited land. Becker, Norman, Polk counties have been in close communication regarding this. Discussion ensued. Seems unlikely to pass this year, MRC interest in keeping on top of this issue in the future before we can take action and weigh in if needed next year.

Other- it was suggested that MRC keep a list of capital investment/bonding project requests in future years, so that we can collectively advocate for investments in rural Minnesota.

9. Preview of Summer Project: MRC Platform Update- Chair Luke Johnson, MRC Staff

Chair Luke Johnson noted that we have been discussing updating the MRC Platform in preparation for the 2025 Legislative Session. This would involve reviewing the five sections of the existing platform to remove outdated language, add new issues if necessary. MRC staff will assist with subject matter and coordinating logistics for the meetings. Chair Johnson suggested pulling in AMC staff to assist as subject matter experts; Julie Ring has agreed to staff participation as long as the project starts after session and District Meetings have concluded. County staff should be consulted/invited to participate as well.

Commissioner Johnson asked for volunteers for each of the five policy issue areas:

Environment/Natural Resources – Commissioners Neil Peterson, Paul Gerde, Larry Anderson, Steve Notch.

General Government/Taxes – Commissioners Charlene Christenson, Joe Gould, Doug Christopherson, Theresia Gillie.

HHS – Commissioners Troy Johnson, Dennis Larson, Luke Johnson, Gary Crowley.

Public Safety- Commissioners Jaime Bleess, Jim Branstad, Laurie Westerlund.

Transportation/Infrastructure – Commissioners Bob Van Hee, Brian Mueller, Tom Andries, Jeff Veerkamp.

10. Personnel Committee- Chair Luke Johnson

Chair Johnson suggested that the Executive Committee (Commissioners Luke Johnson, Neil Peterson and Sharon Bring) be given authority to negotiate the staffing contract for 2025. Discussion ensued and this was agreed to.

11. Announcements/Other

Commissioner Neil Peterson thanked staff for all of their work during the Legislative session and also extended thanks to all the Commissioners who have testified on behalf of county issues at the Capitol this year.

Rob Vanasek encouraged members to continue to reach out to all Tax Committee members to reiterate that the Senate position regarding SCORE is preferable to the House.

The next MRC meeting will be held on May 20 via Zoom; 1:00 pm.

12. Adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm.