

MN Rural Counties Board of Directors – APPROVED Minutes

January 8, 2024

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Douglas County Board Room

Alexandria, MN

Attendance

Position	County	First Name	Last Name
Delegate	Aitkin County	Laurie	Westerlund
Delegate	Becker County	Barry	Nelson
Alternate	Beltrami County	John	Carlson
Delegate	Big Stone County	Wade	Athey
Delegate	Brown County	Jeffrey	Veerkamp
Delegate	Douglas County	Jerry	Rapp
Alternate	Douglas County	Keith	Englund
Alternate	Douglas County	Shane	Schmidt
Alternate	Douglas County	Tim	Kalina
Alternate	Hubbard County	Charlene	Christenson
Delegate	Kittson County	Leon	Olson
Delegate	Lincoln County	Dean	Nielsen
Alternate	Lyon County	Gary	Crowley
Alternate	Lyon County	Thomas	Andries
Delegate	Marshall County	Sharon	Bring
Alternate	McLeod County	Daryl	Luthens
Delegate	McLeod County	Doug	Krueger
Alternate	Meeker County	Paul	Johnson
Delegate	Pennington County	Neil	Peterson
Delegate	Pipestone County	Luke	Johnson
Delegate	Pope County	Paul	Gerde
Delegate	Red Lake County	Chuck	Flage
Alternate	Renville County	John	Robinson
Delegate	Renville County	Randy	Kramer
Delegate	Roseau County	Kermit	Jensen
Delegate	Stearns County	Steve	Notch
Alternate	Stevens County	Patricia	Lesmeister-Nelson
Alternate	Traverse County	Kayla	Schmidt
Alternate	Wadena County	Mike	Weyer
Delegate	Wilkin County	Dennis	Larson

Staff: Anne Kilzer, Rob Vanasek. *Guests:* Kevin Gray, Patrick Veraguth and Kory Thurnau.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:05 am. Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Johnson confirmed a Quorum was in attendance.

Approve Agenda. Commissioner Krueger requested that the Minnesota State Flag and seal be added as an action item to the agenda. Commissioner Rapp seconded. Discussion occurred both in favor and against the motion. Commissioner Krueger called the question. Eleven in favor, twelve against. Motion fails. Commissioner Gerde moved approval of the agenda; Commissioner Peterson seconded. Motion passes.

Approve Minutes of December 3, 2023 Meeting. Commissioner Peterson moved approval of the December 3, 2023 minutes, Commissioner Nelson seconded minutes. Motion passes.

Treasurer's Report. Secretary/Treasurer Commissioner Bring noted the fund balance remains the same. Two bills to approve - AMC and Capitol Hill Associates. Capitol Hill Associates 2024 invoice included first quarter staff expenses and reimbursements of last quarter. Commissioner Rapp moved approval of the Treasurer's Report, Commissioner Westerlund seconded. Motion passes.

Commissioner Krueger moved a suspension of the rules to speak regarding the state seal and flag issue; Commissioner Rapp seconded. Chair Johnson suggested this item be added to the agenda under the discussion section. Motion to suspend the rules withdrawn.

Member Recruitment Updates. Anne Kilzer reported two counties joined in 2023 and seven new counties have joined thus far in 2024. Three additional counties have requested information or visits. Anne asked new members in attendance to introduce themselves. Anne noted the website has been updated to include new members. Invoices will be sent out from AMC next week. Anne will send the updated member list to all.

Drainage Work Group Updates. Commissioners Kruger, Peterson and Kramer provided an update. Unclear on the path forward to bring all parties to the table. Report to the Legislature is due shortly. Commissioner Peterson encouraged MRC members to talk with Legislators. Commissioner Kramer noted that the report will likely not be a consensus report. Question as to the effect of this discussion on One Watershed, One Plan. Members gave an overview of the areas of agreement and disagreement within the work group and noted that staff have done a good job of keeping members informed.

Legislative Priorities. Rob Vanasek gave an overview of work done to date on the Legislative Priorities document. A draft language presented in December; shortened version here for discussion. Rob walked through the document.

Rob noted that there is a surplus projected that Legislators could spend, but that would leave a deficit in the tails of future biennia. If they don't spend dollars this year, it is anticipated there will be a small surplus in the next biennium. Legislative leaders and the Governor have stated the intent to save dollars for future years; therefore, policy is more likely to be prioritized overspending.

Rob walked through Solid Waste portion of the priorities document - discussion ensued. Rob walked through the Drainage portion of the priorities document- closely mirrors AMC platform/priorities language. No changes made to the 2024 Legislative Priorities document. Anne will format and include contact information to finalize.

2024 MRC Legislative Platform. Rob noted we will take a deep dive over the interim in preparation of Annual Meeting in October 2024; a Work Group will be appointed to do this. Rob walked through the platform with members to correct obsolete or incorrect language.

Monumentation Corner Restoration. Patrick Veraguth and Kory Thurnau provided information regarding the grant program in place as funded by the Legislature. No match required; seeking permanent funding. Would like every county to apply. Looking for contacts in Counties that don't currently have one listed and passed around a sign up sheet.

Discussion/Sharing/Best Practices

Public Defender Salaries, County Engineers- problems retaining staff due to competing salary opportunities.

Flag issue- Commissioner Krueger stated he would have liked a resolution from MRC to Legislators and Governor regarding moving forward with a new state flag and seal; expressed disappointment this was not adopted as a potential action item on today's agenda. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Schmidt noted Representative Bjorn Olson has requested Counties who oppose the new flag and seal contact him.

Adjourn. Commissioner Peterson moved the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Kramer seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 12:54 pm.