

MN Rural Counties Board of Directors – APPROVED Minutes

February 20, 2024

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Intercontinental Hotel, Saint Paul

Attendees:

	County	First Name	Last Name
Delegate	Aitkin County	Laurie	Westerlund
Delegate	Brown County	Jeffrey	Veerkamp
Alternate	Brown County	Anton	Berg
Alternate	Brown County	Brian	Braun
Alternate	Brown County	Scott	Windschitl
Delegate	Clay County	Frank	Gross
Delegate	Douglas County	Jerry	Rapp
Alternate	Douglas County	Tim	Kalina
Delegate	Jackson County	Don	Wachal
Alternate	Kittson County	Theresa	Gillie
Delegate	Lyon County	Thomas	Andries
Alternate	Lyon County	Rick	Anderson
Alternate	Lyon County	Gary	Crowley
Delgate	Mahnomen County	David	Geray
Delegate	Marshall County	Sharon	Bring
Alternate	Martin County	Kathy	Smith
Delegate	Meeker County	Steve	Schmitt
Alternate	Meeker County	Paul	Johnson
Delegate	Nobles County	Gene	Metz
Delegate	Pipestone County	Luke	Johnson
Delegate	Pope County	Paul	Gerde
Alternate	Pope County	Larry	Lindor
Alternate	Pope County	Gordy	Wagner
Alternate	Redwood County	Bob	Van Hee
Delegate	Renville County	John	Robinson
Alternate	Renville County	Randy	Kramer
Delegate	Roseau County	Kermit	Jensen
Delegate	Saint Louis County	Paul	McDonald
Delegate	Sibley County	Peter	Koch
Alternate	Stearns County	Jeff	Bertram
Alternate	Wadena County	Murlyn	Krekla
Alternate	Wadena County	Ron	Noon
Alternate	Wadena County	Mike	Weyer
Delegate	Waseca County	Doug	Christopherson
Alternate	Waseca County	DeAnne	Malterer
Delegate	Watonwan County	Jim	Branstad
Alternate	Watonwan County	Bill	Miller
Delegate	Wright County	Mike	Kaczmarek

Guests: Matt Hilgart, Brian Martinson, Bill Berg, Tami Jo Lieberg, Marv Bodie, Jeff Cadwell, Senator Grant Hauschild, Senator Tou Xiong.

MRC Staff: Anne Kilzer, Rob Vanasek, Sam Walseth

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call. Chair Johnson called the roll. A quorum was in attendance. Chair Johnson welcomed participants from our new member counties, Olmsted and Waseca.

Approve Minutes of January 8, 2024 Meeting. Chair Johnson noted some corrections to the January 8 minutes. Commissioner Bombersbach moved to approve the January 8, 2024 minutes as amended; Commissioner Veerkamp seconded. Motion passes.

Treasurer's Report. Secretary/Treasurer Commissioner Bring reviewed the financial reports and noted outstanding expenses. She also reported that the MRC balance is currently the highest that it has been due to onboarding of new members with expenses remaining steady relative to previous years. Commissioner Jensen moved approval of the Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement; Commissioner Gerde seconded. Motion passes.

Review of Priorities and Introduction of Legislative Speakers. Rob Vanasek and Sam Walseth gave updates on recent activities at the Legislature. Rob gave specific updates regarding MRC's 2024 Legislative Priorities. Significant activity going on in environment and natural resources committees. Sam also touched on Drainage legislation.

Sam introduced our Legislative Speakers, Senator Grant Hauschild and Senator Tou Xiong. Senator Xiong spoke to the issues that are in front of his committee, including reports from the Drainage Work Group. He noted that it is imperative that metro members work with rural members and understand greater Minnesota issues. He invited Commissioners to reach out, even if they are not his constituents. Senator Hauschild shared his perspective as a Rural member of the DFL Caucus and outlined legislation he is promoting this session. Discussion ensued, with the Senators taking questions from MRC Members.

Legislative Update, Continued. Rob and Sam gave further updates on bills that are moving forward that are of interest to Rural Counties. In particular, the County Administered Rural Medical Assistance (CARMA) bill is moving forward. Bill authors of that initiative will be invited to speak at the next MRC meeting. Anne noted that this may also be discussed at the upcoming AMC Health and Human Services Policy Committee.

Discussion/Sharing/Best Practices

MRC Members were provided the opportunity to raise any issues of importance or concern. A discussion was held regarding the proposed North Star sanctuary state legislation. Rob and Sam provided perspective based on legislative leadership's public statements that the bill will not move forward, which was also stated by Senator Hauschild earlier in the meeting. Counties also discussed how they are handling implementation of the new Minnesota flag and seal and the Drainage Work Group and related legislation.

Other

Rob noted that Britta Torkelson is on a leave of absence and that Anne, Sam and Rob are all available to assist MRC in any way needed. Anne reminded members to sign in for attendance purposes. The next MRC meeting will be held on March 4 via Zoom.

Adjourn. Commissioner Johnson moved the meeting adjourn at 7:28 pm.