

Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
Full Commission
MINUTES

Wednesday, January 26, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
Plato Community Hall

Members Present: Commissioners Robert Anderson, Kevin Crowley, Doug Erickson, Kathy Grochow, Jon Hawkinson, Jill Hoff, Doug Krueger, Tom McDonnell, Maureen Melgaard-Schneider, Robert Moller, Tracy Montgomery, Rollie Nissen, Lorallen Schmeling, Steve Schmitt, Dave Sebesta, Paul Simonsen, DuWayne Underthun.

Members Absent: Commissioners Jeff Benson, Rick Fagerlie, Sue Hilgert, Shawn Mueske, Chris Rowan, Berit Spors, and Jeff Vetsch.

Staff Present: Executive Director Eric Day, Finance Director Sue Gimse, Finance & Office Manager Darla Bajari, Community Planner Ben Dolan, Economic Development Professionals Michelle Marotzke and Nate Reuss, Transportation Planner Kyle Ten Napel, Transportation Resource Coordinator Terry Smith, and Communications Specialist Ben Carlson.

Guests: None

Call to Order

Chairperson Crowley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introductions

Commissioners and all other staff provided introductions. Executive Director Day provided a special introduction to the MMDC's newest staff, Darla Bajari and Ben Dolan. Bajari joins as MMDC's new Finance & Office Manager. She is learning the role from Finance Director Sue Gimse, until which time Gimse retires, likely during the 2nd quarter of 2022. Dolan joins as MMDC's Community Planner. He fills the vacancy left after the departure of Planner Justice Walker.

Approval of Agenda

Chairperson Crowley asked for any additions or corrections to the agenda. Executive Director Day requested one addition – a new item “G” under “New Business”: CEDS Approval and Resolution. Commissioner Nissen made a motion to approve the agenda, with the additional item from Director Day. Commissioner Krueger Seconded the motion, which carried with no dissenting votes.

Approval of December 1, 2021, Full Commission Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Schmeling moved to approve the minutes of the December 1, 2021, MMDC Commission meeting, as presented. Commissioner Simonsen seconded the motion, which carried with no dissenting votes.

Treasurer's Report

Commissioner Erickson provided an overview of the Treasurer's Report. MMDC's checkbook balance, as of January 15, 2022, is \$1,273.05. Bills approved totaled \$347,740.07 (payroll \$81,233.22; vendors \$64,738.41; transfer to savings \$201,768.44). The Treasurer's Report, provided with the meeting materials packet and referred to by Commissioner Erickson, also indicated a savings account balance of \$498,662.72; Long Term Savings were \$583,695.74; and the 4M balance was \$92.06.

Commissioner Erickson made a motion to approve the treasurer's report. Commissioner Schmitt seconded the motion, which carried with no dissenting votes.

Consent Agenda

The consent agenda consisted of notes/minutes from the following recent committee meetings:

MMRTCC Subcommittee – November 23, 2021

Commissioner Melgaard-Schneider moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Sebesta seconded the motion, which carried without dissent.

Correspondence and Announcements

Executive Director Day informed the Commission of three items:

- Day has submitted the legislatively-required MMDC Five Year Assessment document to the State of Minnesota. This document is available on MMDC's website for anyone who would like to review it. Day also circulated two copies around the Commission meeting.
- Day reminded Commissioners that, due to Commissioner Shirley Carter's relocation to another state, the Commission is without someone to represent the Healthcare Sector in the Public Interest. Day asked Commissioners to consider who might be a good fit. Day also informed the Commission that it would be wise to consider people of color who might be a good fit, as the law does require representation of people of color on the Commission. Day stated that, should a person be identified who is not a person of color, he would consider others who might serve as a representative of a non-White population.

- Day reminded the Commission that several Executive Committee positions will be coming open in 2022, including the Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer positions. Day encouraged Commissioners to make Day or Nominating Committee Chair Robert Moller aware if they are interested in one of these positions.

Staff Reports

Chairperson Crowley referred to the written director and staff reports that were provided within the meeting materials packet and asked if there were any questions. There were no questions from the Commission.

Old Business

There was no Old Business.

New Business – Action Items & Commission Business

Community Enhancement Grant Application Decisions: Executive Director Day presented four community enhancement grant applications to the Commission for funding consideration.

1. The Sunburg Ambulance requested \$3,000 to purchase new handheld radios to improve communication during emergency calls. While not required for applications of this type, this grant would be matched with \$2,093 in local funds. Currently, the ambulance company has just one hand-held radio in addition to the radios found within vehicles. They have been relying on their cellular phones to get by but this has been ineffective, due to spotty service, etc. Commissioner Nissen made a motion to approve funding for this application, at the requested \$3,000 amount. Commissioner Moller seconded the motion, which carried without dissent.
2. The City of Willmar Parks and Recreation Department requested \$3,000 to assist with costs associated with the purchase and installation of a fountain which would be placed in a storm-water pond adjacent to Bill Taunton/Baker Field Stadium (Willmar Stingers amateur baseball team's location), which would be matched with \$5,051.76 in local funds. The intent of this project is to create a pleasant environment for positive community interaction (e.g. a place to enjoy lunch, etc.). The project will also have the added benefit of circulating water to reduce mosquito larvae and breeding in summer months. Commissioner McDonnell made a motion to approve funding this application, at the requested \$3,000 amount. Commissioner Underthun seconded the motion, which carried without dissent.
3. ProWorks, Inc., a 501(c)3 that provides supported employment for people with disabilities, requested \$2,802 to purchase an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) unit, 10 first aid kits for their work locations and vehicles, a medication administration testing kit, and CPR/First Aid/AED training services from Ridgewater College's

Customized Training and Continuing Education Department. Commission discussion included the fact that the funds requested training dollars for training that is already required and should be part of the ProWorks, Inc. budget, and that awarding funds for these purposes would, in effect, be supplanting. Commissioner Schmitt made a motion to approve funding this application in the amount of \$1,690, the amount required for the purchase of the AED unit and first aid kits only and with all awarded funds directed toward those purchases. Commissioner Moller seconded the motion, which carried without dissent.

4. Eden Valley Fire and Rescue requested \$3,000 to put toward the purchase of “turnout gear” for their department. The department’s current turnout gear is reaching or has reached its mandatory terms of service (10 years). The cost to replace is \$3,200 per fire fighter. They are working to upgrade each member’s gear to remain compliant with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The department plans to match the \$3,000 requested with \$9,600 in local funds – enough to purchase three additional turnout gear sets this year. Commissioner Moller made a motion to approve funding this application in the amount of \$3,000. Commissioner Grochow seconded the motion, which carried with no dissent and with Commissioner Schmitt abstaining.

Aging Update: Commissioner Melgaard-Schroeder informed the Commission that the Minnesota Board of Aging has a new round of grant funding. The Request for Proposal was released on January 3. The intent is to provide funding on regional and local projects to increase awareness of dementias. MMDC would be an eligible applicant, as would a number of other regional organizations which are also represented by present commissioners. Commissioner Melgaard-Schneider provided a handout that included an overview, timeline, and matching fund requirement for this grant. Submission deadline is March 25, 2022, at 4:00 p.m. Commissioner Melgaard-Schneider reported there may be a tie-in with MMDC’s MMRTCC/Transportation Resource efforts. Awards will be made in amounts up to \$150,000. Commissioner Melgaard-Schneider stated that she intends to keep MMDC informed of new funding opportunities.

Commissioner Melgaard-Schneider provided an update on the Alzheimer’s drug, Aduhelm. She informed that premiums are increasing in-part due to their anticipation of Aduhelm coverage. This drug is not currently approved by Medicare and analysis is currently occurring, as the treatment cost is \$56,000 per year. Effectiveness of this drug is not yet completely known and reports vary. It is unknown how managed care will cover this drug.

Commissioner Erickson noted that he has personal experience trying to help a loved one access this drug, as it is not covered by their insurance provider. He reported that this has been a frustrating process, involving frequent phone calls to the drug company, who may include his family member as part of a trial/study. Commissioner Melgaard-Schneider requested that Commissioner Erickson keep the Commission informed of his progress with the drug company.

Local Human Services – Public Transit Coordination Plan Update: MMDC Transportation-Focused Planner Kyle Ten Napel provided the Commission with a progress report on the “LCP” plan. The plan’s steering committee has met on two occasions, surveys have been distributed and collected, and focus group discussions are underway. A larger, virtual planning event will also be facilitated to inform the plan, which is funded through a separate contract with MnDOT. At the conclusion of the planning event, Kyle will be left to write the plan.

MMRTCC Update: MMDC Transportation Resource Coordinator Terry Smith updated the Commission on recent MMRTCC activities, which have included support of the LCP planning process. Smith reported that MMRTCC staff (Smith, Day, and Communications Specialist Ben Carlson) have been working to keep in the public eye and draw public attention to the need for volunteer drivers. This has included press releases, social media, and more. Smith reported that he and Carlson recently received some assistance from Commissioner Melgaard Schneider with a volunteer driver-focused video. Providers are also cooperating and have been largely receptive to MMDC’s MMRTCC efforts. Smith reported that he has also presented the volunteer driver opportunity to service clubs.

Smith reported that MMDC has been participating in discussions surrounding the potential of a Transportation Management Coordination Center (TMCC) and pointed to information provided in his written report. The TMCC would help riders connect with the providers and the rides they need. Day pointed out that the TMCC would also have the potential to assist transportation providers with their third party billings (for publicly-funded and managed care-funded rides).

Day noted that he has also spent time providing guidance to some transportation providers, to help them improve their job posting adds and help them connect with workers.

Commissioner Krueger reported that Trailblazer Transit is planning to back away from all RTCCs. Their territory falls within three different RTCC regions and they feel pulled in separate directions. He expressed his displeasure with the State. He stated that they have considered starting their own RTCC. Commissioner Krueger also expressed his dissatisfaction that other providers are able to bill directly to the state (for non-emergency medical transportation rides, etc.) but that transit providers have to bill their local county for reimbursement.

Additionally, Commissioner Krueger informed that, recently, Trailblazer Transit attempted to collaborate with Southwest Transit, who was going to run buses out to Trailblazer’s facility, to help local people better connect with the metro area. Krueger reported that the State of Minnesota wouldn’t allow this. Krueger reported that he is in communication with local legislators to try and resolve some of these transportation issues.

Commissioner Krueger then referenced a collaboration with Renville County’s Veteran Services, who were temporarily without drivers due to COVID and medical issues. Krueger reported that the State Department of Transportation would not allow this.

Day informed Commissioner Krueger that it would be helpful to him if Krueger would provide more details on any potential collaborations that were halted by the State. Day also asked that MMRTCC staff be informed when these issues come up so that MMDC and MMRTCC can be of some assistance. Day also emphasized that the MMRTCC will continue to serve McLeod County, regardless of whether Trailblazer Transit continues to be active in its participation.

Economic Development Update: MMDC Economic Development Professional Nate Reuss updated the board on a recent Rural Child Care Innovation Program technical assistance grant application that has been submitted to First Children's Finance. MMDC has not yet received word as to if the grant has been awarded. A group of local childcare focused, economic development, and other professionals has been assembled and Reuss said that the group will likely move forward to find ways to support, maintain, and increase the number of childcare providers in McLeod County.

MMDC Economic Development Professional Michelle Marotzke referred to the work highlighted in her staff report. Marotzke informed the commission that the Multi-lingual Journalism program with which she has been involved will kick off on February 25, with curriculum developed by Ridgewater College. Recruiting for this program continues. Commissioners were encouraged to refer more bilingual candidates for this opportunity.

Marotzke summarized her involvement with RCCIP efforts. There has been some discussion about bringing the Kandiyohi RCCIP group back together. She has taken a supporting role in Meeker County but is assisting with leadership of the effort in Renville County. This group has had good discussion and work surrounding creation of a childcare pod facility in Fairfax. They are now putting together marketing materials for a fundraising project related to this facility.

Marotzke reported that she has been assisting the City of Willmar with an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) EDA Tourism/Travel Grant. This grant application is nearly complete. Some information gleaned from an EDA call earlier today will be incorporated and it will be submitted soon.

Revolving Loan Fund Updates: Marotzke provided a brief update of funds available in MMDC's two RLFs. As of January 26, MMDC's defederalized Legacy RLF has an available balance of \$150,166. This balance has increased significantly due to two recent loan payoffs. The CARES RLF has a current available balance of \$25,892. So, in total MMDC has about \$176,000 available for lending. Marotzke reported that two applications are in the pipeline and indicated her expectation that at least one of the applications will go to the loan committee within a week to two weeks. She also reported that there have been additional inquiries.

Marotzke reported that while MMDC has not yet heard back from the EDA as to whether or not MMDC's application for the third, ARPA RLF has been approved and awarded. However, MMDC has learned that the EDA was impressed with MMDC's application and has

recommended that other entities review it when considering their own RLF-focused ARPA applications.

Marotzke informed the Commission that the Willmar Child Care facility is for sale (currently listed at \$1.2 million). MMDC is third in line for payoff. This loan was already written off, so funds collected would be considered recovery. Southwest Initiative Foundation is moving forward with collection action. While they are pursuing their own interests, their attorneys will have everything in place should MMDC want to move forward with collection action. Day indicated that, while the asking price of \$1.2 million is likely too high, the building has been appraised and is valued at more than the Willmar Child Care Center owes. The original MMDC loan amount was \$50,000.

Day encouraged Commissioners to put prospective borrowers interested in starting or expanding business operations in touch with MMDC. Day reminded the Commission that MMDC always prefers to have lending partners but asked Commissioners to connect their contacts regardless of this.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS): Marotzke informed that the public comment period for the prepared CEDS document was December 14, 2021, through January 14, 2022. Just a couple of comments were received. These were incorporated. Marotzke also expressed appreciation to Commissioner Melgaard-Schneider, who joined Marotzke in conversation and a comprehensive review. This conversation included wordsmithing and formatting suggestions which were quite valuable. Day reminded Commissioners that the CEDS document was sent to each of them during the comment period, for their review.

CEDS Approval and Resolution: Day provided each present Commissioner a copy of the following resolution:

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Resolution

WHEREAS, the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) is committed to supporting economic health and achievement by creating an atmosphere of innovation and resilience, in which a wide array of businesses can flourish, our diverse workforce can achieve, and families can thrive, and

WHEREAS, the MMDC Region was previously designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), as an Economic Development District, and

WHEREAS, the MMDC's current economic development efforts are guided by a U.S. EDA-approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and

WHEREAS, the U.S. EDA requires approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies to be revised every five years, and

WHEREAS, the MMDC has appointed a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee, composed of economic development professionals and various economic sector representatives from throughout the District, to oversee the CEDS revision process, and

WHEREAS, a revised Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy has been developed, incorporating input from the public and including goals and strategies for the years 2022-2026, and

WHEREAS, this revised Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy has been developed with guidance from the District's aforementioned Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee and in accordance with U.S. EDA guidelines, and

WHEREAS, this revised Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is part of a continuous planning process.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission adopts the newly-revised Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and endorses its submission to the U.S. Economic Development Administration for their consideration and approval, and

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED, that the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission formally requests the U.S. Economic Development Administration's continued designation of the MMDC Region (four Minnesota Counties of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville) as an Economic Development District.

Attest:

Kevin Crowley, MMDC Chairperson

Date

Eric Day, MMDC Executive Director

Date

Commissioner Melgaard Schneider made a motion to adopt the resolution, as prepared, and to submit the CEDS document to the U.S. EDA. Commissioner Simonsen seconded the motion, which unanimously carried, by rollcall vote.

Other: Commissioner Robert Anderson informed the Board of Commissioners that this meeting would be his last, as he will be retiring in the near future. Commissioner Anderson reported that service on the MMDC's Board of Commissioners has been interesting and reported that it has been a pleasure to serve.

Day informed that he will connect with Commissioner Anderson to see if he has a recommendation to fill his seat and represent McLeod County Townships.

Day reported that the next Board of Commissioners meeting will be held on April 6 and that while the specific location of the meeting is not yet determined, he recalls that, at the December 1, 2021, Commission meeting, Commissioners expressed a desire to rotate the meeting to locations throughout the region. Therefore, the April 6 meeting will likely be held in either Meeker or Renville County.

Adjournment: With no further business, Commissioner Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Moller seconded the motion, which carried without dissent.

Chairperson Crowley adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eric Day, Acting Secretary

Kevin Crowley, Chairperson

Suzanne Hilgert, Secretary