

## **MN Rural Counties Caucus**

Monday, May 6, 2019

The meeting was conducted on the GoToMeeting electronic platform

Attendees: Paul Gerde, MRC Chairman, Pope Co; Sharon Bring, MRC Sec/Treas., Marshall Co; Russell Walker, Roseau Co; Don Niemi, Aitkin Co; Barry Nelson, Becker Co; Frank Gross, Clay Co; Larry Anderson, Cottonwood Co; Jerry Rapp, Douglas Co; Troy Johnson, Grant Co; Leon Olson, Kittson Co; Wayne Skoe, Koochiching Co; Doug Krueger, McLeod Co; Joe Teheny, Meeker Co; Don Jensen and Neil Peterson, Pennington Co; Jerry Jacobson, Polk Co; Chuck Flage, Red Lake Co; Bobby Harder, Sibley Co; Dave Salberg, Traverse Co; Bill Stearns, Wadena Co; Dennis Larson, Wilkin Co; Charlie Borrell, Wright Co; Dan Larson, MRC Executive Director.

1) Approve Agenda; 2) Approve Minutes (April 15, 2019); 3) Treasurers Report; 4) Legislative Update / Dan Larson; 5) Select June 3 Board Meeting Location; 6) Other MRC Business; 7) Adjourn.

1) Approve Agenda: Don Jensen made a motion to adopt the agenda. Second by Dave Salberg. Motion adopted.

2) Approve Minutes: Dennis Larson made a motion to adopt minutes. Second by Russ Walker. Motion adopted.

3) Treasurers Report: Sharon Bring gave the treasurer's report. Frank Gross made a motion to adopt the report. Second by Larry Anderson. Motion Adopted.

4) Legislative Update: Dan Larson gave an update on MRC priorities and final messages for the 2019 Legislative Session:

**Broadband Funding:** *Support the House and Rural Broadband Coalition recommended \$70 million appropriation to the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program.*

**MRC Media:** MRC is conducting the media outreach campaign for the MN Rural Broadband Coalition. The program consists of a commentary piece by MRBC chairwomen Nancy Hoffman and letters to the editor that rural broadband supporters can submit to their local papers.

The commentary piece ran last week in the Austin, Fergus Falls, Grand Rapids, Int'l Falls and Winona papers to date. The Alexandria paper has committed to running it and others are still considering. The letters to the editor have not yet turned up in any papers we track through Google Alerts, though they were distributed to both MRC and MRBC membership on April 18th. A follow-up of sample broadband letters to the editor was distributed to membership following the meeting and members were again urged to pick one out and submit local papers.

Coordinators and Administrators were also requested to forward county media lists to MRC.

**Transportation Funding:** MRC supports transportation funding that is distributed through the Highway User Tax Distribution Fund.

**Taxes:** MRC Message: Support the House position on CPA and the Valuation method of state-assessed property report.

Other key tax related issues to rural counties include Indian Child Welfare Act mandates and PILT payments. MRC worked with AMC on messaging for these issues and included them in the message to legislators.

MRC focus is CPA, Relief from Enbridge Settlement and buffer compensation. Buffer compensation is not in either bill. House bill provides ag relief on the school bond levy (from 40% to 70%) Ag groups preferred levy relief to buffer compensation.

**Enbridge settlement** – The House bill directs MDR to produce a report on the valuation method of state-assessed property as a placeholder in the event a settlement is reached.

**CPA:** House provides relief but Senate does not. MRC prepared a commentary piece on CPA that ran in several newspapers around the state.

**Small County Relief from 2020 Requirement for Trained Chemical Assessors:**

MRC is working with MACCSA as the lead organization on this issue. MRC will follow up with MACCSA lobbyists this week for any recommended action and update MRC members.

**Health Care Access Fund / Provider Tax:** MRC supports maintaining the state's provider tax to sustain the Health Care Access Fund (HCAF). The board directed that MRC support and amplify the AMC message on HCAF.

**County Based Purchasing:** MRC Message: County Based Purchasing (CBP) is an essential, successful, local model an increasing number of rural counties are using to provide dependable access to quality, cost-effective care for those enrolled in Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP). For 37 years, CBP has been an important, cost-effective solution for rural Minnesotans in need and the counties that serve them. As we enter the final rounds of this Legislative Session, we urge you to support our rural counties and County-Based Purchasing (CBP) by working with us to "first do no harm" to this important and successful model.

**Capitol Investments:** MRC supports the following provisions in the House Capitol Investment bill and encourages the Senate to introduce a bill that include these provisions.

- Local Road Improvement Fund Grants / \$100M
- Local Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation / \$100M
- Local Road Wetland Replacement Program / \$10M
- Greater MN Child Care Facility Capitol Grant Program \$10M
- County and Local Preservation Grants / \$75,000

**Greater Minnesota Community Design Program:** MRC supports the Greater MN Community Design Program provision in the House Omnibus Jobs Finance bill.

**Allowing Counties to Maintain Ditches Under County Authority:** The board directed MRC staff to continue to pursue this issue throughout the session and over the interim.

5) Select June 3 Board Meeting Location. Chairman Gerde suggested Grant Co., host the meeting. The board agreed by consensus to hold the meeting in Elbow Lake.

6) Other MRC Business: Next meeting will take place June 3<sup>rd</sup> in Elbow Lake.

7) Adjourn: Dennis Larson made a motion to adjourn. Second by Jerry Jacobsen. Motion adopted.

Minutes Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Sec / Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_