

**Minutes of the MN Rural Counties Board of Directors  
Annual Business Meeting  
Monday, October 18, 2021  
830 a.m. - 10 a.m.  
Broadway Ballroom  
Alexandria, MN**

**Call to Order:**

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and led the pledge of allegiance. He welcomed members to the annual business meeting and recapped his year as chairman before directing Dan Larson to take the roll.

Attendees: Luke Johnson, MRC Chairman, Pipestone Co.; Jerry Rapp, MRC Vice-Chair, Douglas Co; Sharon Bring, MRC Sec/Treas., Marshall Co; Don Niemi, Aitkin Co; Frank Gross, Clay Co; Larry Anderson, Cottonwood Co; Tim Kalina, Keith Englund, Charlie Meyer and Heather Larson, Douglas Co; Troy Johnson, Grant Co; Dave De La Hunt and Char Christenson, Hubbard Co; Wayne Skoe, Koochiching Co; Leon Olson, Kittson Co; Doug Krueger, McLeod Co; Steve Schmitt, Meeker Co; Roger Tellinghuisen, Mille Lacs Co; Jeff Baldus, Mower Co; Dennis Welgraven, Murray Co; Steve Bommersbach, Norman Co; Neil Peterson, Pennington Co; Steve Hallan Pine Co; Jerry Jacobson, Polk Co; Paul Gerde, Pope Co; Chuck Flage, Red Lake Co; Russ Walker, Roseau Co; Bob Kopitzke, Stevens Co; Dave Kircher, Todd Co; Dave Salberg, Traverse Co; Bill Stearns, Wadena Co; Jim Branstad, Watonwan Co; Dennis Larson, Wilkin Co; Mike Kaczmarek, Wright Co. Dan Larson, MRC Executive Director.

A quorum was announced.

Chairman Johnson called for a motion to combine action on the agenda, minutes and treasurer's report. The motion was approved by consensus.

**1) Approve Agenda:**

1) Approve agenda; 2) Approve Minutes (Sept. 15, 2021); 3) Treasurers Report; 4) Select MRC Officers for 2022; 5) Review / Approve MRC Budget 2022; 6) Review / Approve AMC / MRC Memorandum of Understanding 2022; 7) Review / Approve Executive Director Contract 2022; 8) Review MRC Policy; 9) MRC 2022 Issue Priority / Discuss; 10) Other Business; 11) Adjourn to Annual Membership Program.

**2) Approve September 15, 2021 Minutes:**

**3) Treasurer's Report:**

Sharon Bring gave the treasurer's report.

Bob Kopitzke made a motion to approve the agenda and Sept. 15, minutes, and approve the treasurer's report. Second by Paul Gerde. Dan Larson took the roll, Motion passed.

**4) Select MRC Officers for 2022:**

Dan Larson led the board through this agenda item, opening the floor to nominations for MRC Chairperson. Tim Kalina nominated the 2021 officer slate of Luke Johnson, Chairperson, Jerry Rapp, Vice-Chairperson and Sharon Bring, Secretary-Treasurer to remain in place for 2022. Second by Doug Kruger. Larry Anderson made a motion for unanimous consent. Second by Bill Stearns. Motion adopted.

**5) Review / Approve MRC Budget 2022:**

Sharon Bring presented the proposed MRC 2022 budget. Bob Kopitzke made a motion to approve \$500 to the Rural Broadband Coalition if the group asks MRC for the contribution, and to adopt the budget as proposed. Second by Jerry Jacobson. Motion adopted.

**6) Review / Approve AMC / MRC Memorandum of Understanding 2022:**

Dan Larson presented the proposed AMC/MRC Memorandum of Understanding to the board noting there were no changes outside of dates, and asked for a motion to support. Paul Gerde made a motion to support. Second by Troy Johnson. Motion adopted.

**7) Review / Approve Executive Director Contract 2022:**

Dan Larson presented the executive director contract, explaining it contained a 3% cost of living increase. Dave Kircher made a motion to increase the meal allowance to \$35 per day when on MRC related business and approve the contract. Second by Larry Anderson. Motion adopted.

**8) Review MRC Policy:**

Dan Larson asked members to review the current policy and send suggested amendments to him ahead of the December 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**9) MRC 2022 Issue Priority / Discuss:**

Bill Stearns presented information on amounts local governments spend annually for lobbying purposes, as reported to the state auditor, noting a number of other city and county organizations spent more than MRC in this area. He suggested MRC may want to increase the resources it puts toward lobbying and mentioned individual counties may want to look to MCIT reimbursements as a potential revenue source. The board put a lobby work group together consisting of Chairman Johnson, Dave Kircher and Steve Schmitt, with direction to come to the December meeting with options for the board to consider.

The board reviewed the slate of proposed priorities from the list released initially at the Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> meeting which included support for transportation funding, county-based purchasing, rural broadband funding, emergency readiness grants, an energy policy for Greater MN that recognizes reliability, affordability and flexibility are the most important components to any new plan and that any new plan must address transmission needs, support for Greater MN hospitals, preserving tax base funding, support county drainage authority on maintenance and repair.

**Introduced at the meeting were the following:**

- Support Higher Bar on Executive Powers for Calling Special Sessions - Hubbard
- Support Need for State Support to Retain County Mental Health Workers - Cottonwood
- Support Greater Funding for Indian Child Welfare Act – Mille Lacs
- Support Funding to Replace Antiquated State HHS Computer System – Pipestone
- Support Increased Funding for Payment-in-lieu-of Taxes – Aitkin
- Support Community Mental Health Services – Cottonwood

**10) Other Business:**

Next meeting is December 5<sup>th</sup>, DoubleTree Hotel, Bloomington.

**14) Adjourn to Annual Membership Program:**

Paul Gerde made a motion to adjourn. Second by Dave Salberg. Motion adopted.

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

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