Board Meeting Minutes of the Martin County EDA
August 3, 2026

The meeting of the Martin County Economic Development Authority was called to order by President Tim Terfehr at 5:15pm. Those present were: Richard Koons, Billeye Rabbe, James Kloeckner, and Elizabeth Miller. Also present were Danielle Hayter-Johnson, Scott Higgins, Dave Schmidt, Amber Patten, and Fairmont Sentinel.

Agenda
Motion by Kloeckner, and seconded by Elizabeth to approve the agenda.
Carried unanimously

Minutes
Motion by Koons, and seconded by Kloeckner to approve the minutes of the August 3, 2026 meeting.
Carried unanimously

New Business
SMIF - Regional Economic Development Report
Staff participated in the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) Regional Economic Development Study, which gathered input from economic development professionals across the foundation's 20-county service area. The study identified common strengths, challenges, and opportunities affecting communities throughout the region.
Key findings:

- Build a regional entrepreneur readiness pipeline through training, mentorship, and coordinated business support.
- Expand flexible and accessible funding opportunities, including microgrants and simplified funding processes.
- Invest in shared regional capacity, such as grant writing assistance, shared economic development staffing, and common tools and systems.
- Strengthen the connection between housing and workforce development through coordinated planning and investment.
- Simplify access to economic development resources by creating centralized information, navigation assistance, and practical toolkits.
- Expand regional collaboration through stronger partnerships, peer learning, and coordinated advocacy.
- Increase local engagement by maintaining a visible presence in communities, building relationships, and providing responsive programming.

Staff will continue to work with regional partners to identify opportunities to implement applicable recommendations and strengthen economic development efforts throughout Martin County. Staff will also add this report to our yearly goals.

Federal EDA Grant - Economic Adjustment Assistance
Following discussions with Martin County communities, EDA staff has decided not to pursue the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) Economic Adjustment Assistance application at this time. Staff received feedback from Martin County communities regarding participation in the proposed countywide initiative. Based on those conversations, it became clear that many communities would face challenges committing the staff time needed to support the project.

Motion by Koons, and seconded by Rabbe to approve EDA staff to stop working on the Federal EDA Adjustment Assistance grant.
Carried unanimously

MCIT 2026 Dividend Update
Scott Higgins provided an update regarding MCIT 2026 Dividend. The County will receive $137 in dividends. Discussion ensued.
Motion by Koons, and seconded by Rabbe to approve MCIT 2026 Dividend.

Rail to Trail
Staff presented a Rail to trail project. The City of Alpha has received a grant from MnDOT to create a Rail-to-Trail Transportation Action Plan. The plan will focus on transforming the existing railroad corridor between these cities into a walking, biking, snowmobile, and rolling trail that connects the two counties. The corridor is part of the former Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad (DM&E), now under the parent company Canadian Pacific Railway (CP), with many sections experiencing limited use or partial abandonment. Funding sources for trail construction have not been identified and are not being determined as part of this planning effort. The Action Plan is intended to explore possibilities and establish a long-term vision. If this rail-to-trail corridor is pursued, project partners would evaluate a variety of potential funding sources, which would include regional, state, and federal grants, and private funding opportunities to minimize the cost to local budgets and taxpayers.
Discussion ensued. No action was taken.

EDA Activity Report
Hayter-Johnson reviewed the June and July EDA Monthly Activity Report.
No Board action was taken.

CY2027 Purposed Budget
Scott Higgins presented to the Board the CY2027 Purposed Budget.
Motion by Koons, and seconded by Miller to approve the CY2027 Purposed Budget.
Carried unanimously

Open Discussion
- Patten requested to work from home on Wednesday, August 5, 2026
- Dave Schmidt asked the Board if they have any questions or concerns regarding CEDA to please let him know. Schmidt also mentioned that he sent out review surveys.
- Building Blocks now has the option of charging parents day by day.

Adjournment
With no further business to wit,
Motion by Koons, and a seconded by Miller to adjourn the meeting
Carried unanimously
The board meeting of the Martin County EDA was adjourned at 6:30pm.

Tim Terfehr, Board President

Elizabeth Miller, Secretary/Treasurer