

**Northern Maine Development Commission
Annual Meeting of the Members Meeting Minutes of
June 27, 2024**

PLACE: Best Western – Caribou Inn and Convention Center

DATE: June 27, 2024 12:00 p.m.

Attendance: Chair Sandra Fournier, Tim Goff, Alan Mulherin, Martin Dionne, Norm Fournier, Kelly Garrison, Max Lynds, Suzie Paradis, Steve Pelletier, Bill Dobbins, Patricia Sutherland, Penny Thompson, Lana Voisine, Courtney Boma, Tammy Beaulieu-Fuller, Denise Duperre, Cheryl Clark, Kevin Freeman, Conrad Brown, Chad Kelley, and Gale Albert.

Others Present: Pam Gerow-Congressman Golden’s Office, Leigh Hallett, Guest Speaker Rhiannon Hampson-Maine State Director for USDA Rural Development, Robert Clark, Judy Dinsmore, Brandon McDonald, Dana Delano Jacob Pelkey, Kristen Henry, Neal Haines, Barb Turner, Jared Tapley, Athens Sanchez, Heather, Mladek, Paul Towle, Scott Dionne, Jon Gulliver, Jay Kamm, Josh Nadeau, Craig Lincoln, Nancy Dionne, Jim Gardner, Abby Young, Brian Stoliker, Johanna Johnston, Paul Bouchard, Joan Theriault, and Gene Cronin.

Chair S. Fournier opened the meeting at 10:35 a.m. and introduced the guest speaker, Rhiannon Hampson.

1. Guest Speaker – Rhiannon Hampson, State Director of Maine USDA Rural Development:

Ms. Hampson graduated from the University of Maine at Machias where she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Community Studies. While serving as (ME-01) for Chellie Pingree’s District Representative for Agricultural and Environmental issues, Ms. Hampson had the opportunity to deepen her knowledge of Maine’s heritage industries, and the ways in which USDA uplifts rural communities. She and her family own and operate an organic livestock and dairy farm in Knox County.

Ms. Hampson stated USDA Rural Development offers funding for municipal wastewater utilities, and affordable housing to name a few. NMDC is the top RMAP lender in the entire country.

USDA Rural Development had 70+ programs with \$252 million for FY23. Aroostook County was in the top 5 of investments, business and cooperative programs.

Other programs mentioned were single family housing repair, community facilities, water and environmental, self help housing and TA asset grants.

2. Certification of Quorum:

Chair S. Fournier indicated the quorum requirement for the transaction of business at a meeting of the Members is 25% of the Representatives that are entitled to vote.

There are 80 Member Representatives of which 20 would constitute a quorum. There are 21 Member Representatives present at the meeting today; therefore, a quorum is present that meets the requirements of the By-laws.

3. Approval of June 22, 2023, Annual Meeting Minutes:

MOTION:

Motion made by Ms. Paradis, seconded by Mr. N. Fournier to approve the Annual Meeting of Members minutes of June 22, 2023, as presented.

VOTE:

Motion voted on and passed.

4. Nominating Committee Report:

Chair S. Fournier stated the Nominating Committee nominates the following for:

Executive Board Two Year Terms

Michelle Bernier – St. Agatha

Cheryl Clark – Easton

Kim Denbow – Houlton

Sandra Fournier – Mapleton

Alan Mulherin – Limestone

Suzie Paradis – Fort Kent

Patricia Sutherland – Chapman

Penny Thompson – Caribou

Donna Turner – Washburn

Lana Voisine – Wallagrass

Vann White – Reed Plantation

Executive Board for a One Year Term

Kevin Freeman – Presque Isle

Chair S. Fournier asked for nominations from the floor. There were none.

Chair S. Fournier asked for a motion to elect the slate of nominees for 2-year and 1-year terms.

MOTION:

Motion made by Mr. Dionne, seconded by Mr. Pelletier to elect the slate of nominees for 2-year and 1-year terms as presented.

VOTE:

Motion voted on and passed.

Chair S. Fournier stated the Nominating Committee nominates the following for:

Officers for a One Year Term

Chair: Steve Pelletier – St. John Plantation
Vice-Chair: Michelle Bernier – St. Agatha
Treasurer: Suzie Paradis – Fort Kent
Secretary: Lana Voisine – Wallagrass

Chair S. Fournier asked for nominations from the floor. None noted.

Chair S. Fournier asked for a motion to elect the slate of nominees for the offices indicated as presented.

MOTION:

Motion made by Mr. N. Fournier, seconded by Mr. Lynds to elect the slate of nominees for the offices indicated as presented.

VOTE:

Motion voted on and passed.

5. Annual Report of Activities:

Mr. Gulliver and Mr. McDonald presented the highlights of the 2023-2024 NMDC Annual Report.

APEX Accelerator Program – Advisor Dana Delano

A free training and technical assistance program available statewide to assist businesses in finding, winning, and performing on government contracts.

- 178 Active Clients in Aroostook & Millinocket
- 35 Nonclient Companies Assisted with UEI
- 604 Hours of Advising
- \$32,666,887 in Contract Awards
- 6 Workshops & Webinars

Mr. Delano also participated as a judge in the Top Gun Machias event and attended several outreach events.

Maine SBDC Network – Chase Nelson (Washington County) and Dan Umphrey (Aroostook County)

This network allows access to free technical assistance to individuals looking to start or scale their businesses.

- 115 Clients Served
- 900 Hours of Advising
- \$3,697,930 Capital Raised
- 67 Jobs Retained
- 5 New Business Starts

Other initiatives the SBDC team has participated in include the 2024 Top Gun Cohort.

Business Finance – Dave Spooner, Josh Nadeau, Craig Lincoln, Neal Haines (Aroostook County), and Paul Terrill (Washington County)

Our team has been fortunate to continue to have demand to both grow access to low-interest capital but also expand our financial footprint. By utilizing continued interest revenue growth, we are able to keep our rates low, while continuing to grow our portfolio.

- Our commitment to small businesses doesn't end with advising, our average interest rate across NMDC lending portfolio is 5.25%
- NMDC received its 4th SBA Award and second consecutive award as Maine's Microlender of the year

Economic Development: Center for Business Growth – Advisor Jacob Pelkey

The NMDC Center for Business Growth is our resource for bridging larger investment partners, along with other private and public organizations to allow access to programming in Aroostook & Washington Counties.

- This year we awarded \$1.4 million dollars in the region in brand new grant capital to over 140 businesses through the Maine Hub and CDBG Microenterprise fund.

Top Gun – Paul Terrill, Chase Nelson (Washington County) and Jacob Pelkey (Aroostook County)

The inaugural 2024 Top Gun class brought entrepreneurial resources, professional advisors & cash prizes to a cohort of 14 total businesses in Aroostook and Washington Counties.

- Regional winners were WAVED Medical of Presque Isle, and Nautical Farms of Machias

Youth Entrepreneurship: Upward Bound Summer Pitch Competition – Brandon McDonald

We continue to offer youth entrepreneurship classes to students through the University of Maine's Upward Bound Program. Through their summer curriculum, high school juniors and seniors are matched with expert coaching and guidance, along with gaining valuable leadership experience.

\$13 Million in New Grants to the Region – Jon Gulliver, Kristen Henry and Jay Kamm

We have assisted communities with securing funds to expand and serve their residents. In the past year, over \$13 million in Economic Development Administration and Northern Border Regional Commission investments were recorded in the region including:

- Infrastructure upgrades for Big Rock Mountain
- Fishery Improvements for Mi'kmaq Nation
- Water & sewer improvements for Eagle Lake
- Downtown upgrades for Madawaska
- New aerospace company for Presque Isle

Broadband Initiatives – Advisor Jared Tapley and Crystal Tilley

NMDC hosts two broadband initiative employees on-site, including one through a partnership with the National Digital Equity Center.

- We bridge access to over 30 course topics available, both at physical locations in Aroostook County and taught live online on a monthly basis
- Along with this, municipalities can work directly with our broadband planning team to help them prepare for broadband funding rollouts, and to help their residents become better connected

Planning: Jay Kamm and Kristen Henry

In 2024 we released our Affordable Housing Toolkit to municipal stakeholders, businesses and other interested individuals and organizations to empower their communities to think about the future of housing. This toolkit is designed to:

- Guide conversations about local housing policy and help provide an understanding of how government decisions directly impact housing affordability
- Addresses comprehensive planning, land use regulations and zoning
- And identifies potential funding sources for creating affordable housing

Together with the Aroostook Partnership, we continued this pledge by assisting in organizing the Aroostook County Housing Development Conference in May 2024, bringing partners together to create real solutions to housing shortages.

Village Partnership Initiative – Jay Kamm

In partnership with Maine DOT, Caribou, Presque Isle, Van Buren, Madawaska, and Fort Kent, we are identifying ways to improve safety and accessibility for all forms of transportation infrastructure in downtown regions. This study will not only consider roadway safety and mobility issues but also improve transit in the region. This project allows municipalities to keep their image, while accessing funding and guidance for future improvements to their infrastructure.

Regional Code Enforcement – Jay Kamm

NMDC will partner with Maine Emergency Management Agency and Kennebec Valley Council of Governments to create a pilot program to place a regional Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) into their organizations. This position would be an NMDC employee and provide participating municipalities with the necessary expertise to handle code enforcement, along with working with stakeholders, agencies, and landowners to administer necessary codes, regulations, and statutes. This program

will help communities to create stronger comprehensive plans and allow them to tackle greater issues utilizing this new office hosted at NMDC.

Aroostook County Tourism (ACT) – Jacob Pelkey, Jon Gulliver and Judy Dinsmore
Services of Aroostook County Tourism (ACT) to stakeholders are free of charge. The organization is led by a 13-person volunteer board, along with three part-time program staff members.

This year the Maine Office of Tourism has provided \$250,000 toward marketing Aroostook County, marking a 114% increase in operating budget since 2020. These funds will reframe the way information is shared with visitors and stakeholders to create a unique experience.

- Visitation numbers are up – 17.5% increase in overall visitation
- Visitors have directly spent nearly \$170 million in the region this year, with an economic impact of over \$255 million
- This year we built and launched a new website which will re-engage businesses and stakeholders
- ACT helped plan for the 2024 Eclipse, connecting state and federal resources with municipalities
- Partnered with 6 Aroostook communities and 19 designated eclipse viewing Star Parks, promoting the region as the premiere destination for the 2024 Solar Eclipse, bringing an estimated 20,000 visitors to the region.

Aroostook Partnership – President and CEO Scott Dionne

Scott brings a wealth of knowledge in the world of leadership, construction and collaboration, along with an understanding of the vast resources available to Aroostook County.

- Aroostook Partnership's Housing Committee and several stakeholders and partners hosted the Aroostook Housing Development Summit in March
- Aroostook Partnership partnered with Leadership Aroostook, Husson University and local employers, 13 graduates of the Leadership Aroostook program were recognized in May 2024. These graduates tackled both housing and transportation challenges in the region, creating foundations for government officials and future Leadership Aroostook classes to utilize.

6. Officer and Board of Directors Recognition:

Chair S. Fournier recognized the following for their service on the Executive Board: (Not present today.)

Galen Weibley Alvin Lamb Gary Picard Diane Hines Kevin Bouchard

Chair S. Fournier also recognized Jim Gardner for his service on the Board and his recent retirement as Town Manager of Easton.

7. Employee Recognition:

Chair S. Fournier recognized the following staff member for his years of service.

Jay Kamm, 30 years of service

8. Adjournment:

There being no further business to conduct, Chair S. Fournier adjourned the meeting at 1:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lana Voisine
Secretary

LV/jd