

## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes Thursday, April 10, 2025

This meeting was conducted in-person and by electronic means. The League used Zoom to conduct the virtual option for this meeting.

**Members Present:** Wendy Berry (West St. Paul), Courtney Johnson (Carver), Jenny Max (Nisswa), Sharon Hanson (Marshall), Julie Maas-Kusske (Maple Plain), Scott Neal (Edina), Audrey Nelsen (Willmar), Larry Odebrecht (Stillwater), Clinton Rogers (Janesville), Evan Vogel (Cambridge) and Dan Buchholtz (Metro Cities)

**Members Present Remotely:** John Mulder (Hermantown) and Brian Heck (MAOSC)

**Members Absent:** HwaJeong Kim (St. Paul), Emily Koski (Minneapolis), Justin Miller (Lakeville), Jorge Prince (Bemidji) and Pat Baustain (CGMC)

**Staff Present:** Luke Fischer, Pat Beety, Anne Finn, Dan Greensweig, Mark Ruff, Julie Liew, Lisa Schaefer, Jen Wolf, Ed Cadman, Ted Bengtson, Craig Johnson, Daniel Lightfoot, Tori Kee, Owen Wirth, Pierre Willette, Beth Johnston, Lisa Sova, Annie Coyle, Amber Eisenschenk, Kara Coustry, Ari Lee, Eurel Nwachi, Rachel Walker, Adriana Temali, Katie Davidson, Libby Brandl, Debra Sisneros, Carlie Windom, Mike Marson, Rebecca Schwemmer and Mike DeMorrow

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance (**Roll Call**)  
A quorum was present.

2. Closed Session Action Item (board members only)

The meeting was closed as permitted by the attorney-client privilege to discuss a contract termination.

Rogers made a motion to close the meeting for a confidential discussion with our counsel on legal claims and strategy, Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The meeting was reopened, and the roll call was taken. A quorum was present.

Berry made a motion to authorize the settlement terms negotiated by staff and legal counsel to terminate the League's current contract with Protech, and to authorize staff and legal counsel to memorialize the full and final terms in a written agreement, seconded by Maas-Kusske. Motion carried.

3. Approval of Consent Items

*(All items listed under Consent, unless removed from Agenda in item 3, shall be approved by one motion)*

3.1 February 20, 2025 meeting minutes

3.2 Annual Governance Handbook review

Buchholtz made a motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Rogers. The motion carried.

4. Action Items

4.1 Adoption of the 2025 Board & Officer Nominating Committee Process and Selection Criteria

Fischer provided a brief update on the 2025 Board & Officer Nominating Committee Process and Selection Criteria. The process is consistent with years past with a few minor updates to the guidelines clarifying the factors needed to achieve greater diversity on the nominating committee and the board.

The process begins the last week of April with the solicitation for nominating committee members followed by the solicitation of board applications the following week. President Miller will appoint the members of the committee including two current board members and Past President Max will be the chair. The committee will convene the week of the Annual Conference to develop a slate of nominations to come before membership at the Annual Business Meeting. There are four open director seats. The executive committee will also have an opening for 2<sup>nd</sup> vice president. Board members are asked to reach out to colleagues who might be interested in serving.

Berry shared that she was approached by a former board member about getting involved in the League and applying to be on the board. It's a good way to make sure we are setting up the board for strong leadership in the future.

Odebrecht made a motion to adopt the proposed 2025 Board and Officer Nominating Process and Selection Criteria, seconded by Buchholtz. Motion carried.

5. Discussion Items

5.1 Grant Navigator Funding & Program Updates

Research Manager Amber Eisenschenk gave an update on the Grant Navigator program. The League initially had a running list of grant opportunities on the website, but didn't have any internal expertise on how to help cities understand the grant making process. The pandemic brought about a historical time for Federal funding, offering greater opportunities for cities to be competitive in that space.

We took some actions by hiring a consultant to assist us in developing written resources for cities to understand the full process of applying for and receiving grants. We quickly heard that the process was harder than anticipated and most cities lacked the time and capacity to apply for grants on their own.

After the sale of the Saxon site, the board set aside some money to help support cities with the cost of hiring a grant writer. We were able to solicit additional funds from local foundations. This program has been successful with the distribution of over \$455,000 to help secure \$32.5 million in grant funding for \$98 million in projects.

As we cross the 2-year mark we're approaching 60% of those funds being used, so it's a good time to start thinking about the future of the program.

She talked about the uncertainty of Federal grants and the trickle-down effect it has on getting money to the state and then to cities. The League doesn't have a steady source of funding for this program so we would need to look at outside sources to keep the program sustainable.

We would like to have the boards input on continuing the program.

Maas-Kusske asked about the timeline for deciding. Eisenschenk noted that a decision should be made in the next year or so.

Buchholtz asked about our initial foundation partners and if they were interested in continuing their funding. Eisenschenk commented that these foundations heard about the work we were doing and wanted to partner with us to create additional capacity. We can reach out to them again, but we don't have a guarantee that they will provide additional funds.

Hanson added that in these times of uncertainty it is a program that is needed now more than ever, and we should try to keep it going.

An update on the program will be provided at a future board meeting.

## 6. General Updates

### 6.1 Construction Update

Facilities Manager Mike Marson updated the board on the scope of the remodeling project and the timeline of the four phases. The project is expected to wrap up this October. Many board members toured the construction area after the meeting.

### 6.2 Elected Leaders Institute Executive Summary

Learning Manager Adriana Temali provided an update on the recent Elected Leaders Institute sessions. The sessions were held in February at three locations – Mankato, Plymouth and Alexandria. Between the locations, we saw nearly 534 elected officials. The feedback was very positive. The

Foundational Program had an online component prior to meeting in-person and the content was well received. Participants of the Advanced Program appreciated the connections made with other city officials and gave the content high marks. The Learning team will use the feedback provided to improve topic coverage, networking and add more value for mayors. She thanked the board members and staff for their parts in making this program a success. Some board members stated that they had officials from their city attend the programs and feedback was very positive.

6.3 2025 City Day on the Hill Executive Summary

IGR Administrative Coordinator Ted Bengtson gave a brief update on the recent 2025 City Day on the Hill event. The event had a great turnout. St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter gave the opening speech, and Governor Walz was able to join the event as well. The budget forecast came out during the event, but there was still a good number of legislators and their staff in attendance.

Event Manager Carlie Windom noted that the event had 235 attendees and over half were elected officials. Overall, 88% of the attendees said the event met or exceeded their expectations. A few attendees stated that they would be interested in getting more information on the League's legislative priorities. She also mentioned some issues with the event space being too small and that there weren't enough parking spaces to accommodate a group of that size. Her team will be looking at other venue options and using the feedback provided to improve next year's Day on the Hill event.

6.4 Annual Conference Update

Event Manager Carlie Windom provided a brief update on the League's Annual Conference. The theme this year is "City Fest", in tribute to the many wonderful festivals held annually by communities in the state. The Citizen's League will hold a session on their recent report about strengthening public service. There will be workshops for mayors, mobile tours and this year the exhibit hall will have a space showcasing public works vehicles and machinery. There are currently 318 registered people, and 106 exhibit booths have been sold.

6.5 IGR Legislative Update

The IGR team provided an update on the current legislative session. The third deadline of the session is approaching, and budget targets have been set by both bodies but no agreement has been reached between the two. The budget forecast of \$456 million came out last month, which is \$160 million lower than prior estimates.

So far, 6,459 bills have been introduced. IGR staff have testified 86 times this session and there are 39 days left. Anne Finn, IGR Director, thanked the board members for their support and willingness to testify or reach out to their legislators on issues relating to local control.

Updates were given on the following issues: Cannabis, Local Sales Tax, Housing, Bonding, ESST and Newspaper Publication Requirements.

Max asked if the moratorium on local sales tax would be lifted or extended? Johnston replied that it should be lifted.

#### 6.6 LMCIT

Deputy Administrator Jen Wolf gave the LMCIT update to the board. She acknowledged the incoming Insurance Trust Board members: Laurie Hokkanen, Phil Kern and Audrey Nelsen and Jorge Prince (LMC appointee). The four were able to attend the board retreat in February and it was a good introduction for them.

The AGRiP Governance Conference was held last month in Las Vegas. Dan accepted his leadership award and staff presented on the Benchmark project.

There is an Insurance Trust Board meeting next week and Alison Zelms is the new Chair and Jake Benson is the Co-Chair. Staff are busy with Loss Control Workshops, the Benchmark project, and figuring out re-insurance rates and investments.

#### 6.7 Legal

General Counsel Beety gave an update on two cases that we have been participating in. The first case being McNitt vs. MNIT. The MN Supreme Court is looking at the criminal rehabilitation statute in the context of a hiring by the State. The State made a conditional offer to an employee for a technical position that would be working with the Department of Education. After the background check the offer was rescinded as the individual had been convicted of child pornography on a personal computer.

The position of the State was that they had sufficient basis and were not in violation of the statute. The Court of Appeals disagreed and held that the state violated the statute because the applicant went through the list of requirements showing rehabilitation. The Supreme Court has taken review. We have filed a brief in support of the State to make sure we have a voice as public employers. There's a good policy behind the statute involving better employment opportunities for rehabilitated offenders but in certain circumstances a public employer must have discretion where public safety and welfare concerns warrant

The second case is Moline versus City of Duluth. We will be filing a brief on this case in the next couple of weeks. This is a class action suit filed by a group of business owners who are challenging the calculation and collection of stormwater fees by the city. This suit could also have a broader impact on other fee structures such as building permits or other things where they must be proportional. We have filed a request to participate and address important policy issues for our members.

Beety also mentioned the pending cases involving the PTSD presumption in workers comp statutes in which the League has participated as an amicus curiae. She will continue to follow all of these cases and update the board on developments.

7. Affiliate Organization Updates

7.1 Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities  
No update was given

7.2 Minnesota Association of Small Cities  
No update was given

7.3 Metro Cities  
Buchholtz mentioned that Metro Cities is preparing for its annual meeting on April 23<sup>rd</sup> in Roseville. Steve Grove, CEO and Publisher of the Star Tribune is the guest speaker. The group will also be electing his successor who will take office in July. They have also been busy working with the League and other city partners advocating for good public policy for cities.

8. Executive Director Update and Adjournment

Fischer gave an extra push to board members to encourage people to apply for the board and sign up for the conference.

Respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Fischer', written in a cursive style.

Luke Fischer, Executive Director