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**MINUTES of the REGULAR MEETING of the BOARD  
THURSDAY, April 16, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.  
MEETING #03/26**

- PRESENT (in person):** Andrew Hallikas, Town of Fort Frances (Vice Chair)  
Wade Desserre, Rainy River West  
Telford Advent, Township of Morley  
Don Canfield, Rainy River Central
- PRESENT (virtual):** Debbie Ewald, Town of Rainy River (Chair)  
Brendan Hyatt, Township of La Vallee  
James Gibson, Township of Chapple  
Lisa Teeple, Township of Emo  
Mike Ford, Township of Alberton  
Robert Ferguson, Town of Atikokan  
Bill Langner, Township of Dawson  
Robert Burns, Rainy River East
- ABSENT:** Colleen Fadden, Township of Lake of the Woods
- ADMINISTRATION:** Charene Gillies, CAO  
Leanne Gurski, Director of Finance & Infrastructure  
Faisal Anwar, Direct of Community Services  
Heather Latter, Communications Advisor  
Tanis Fretter, Children's Service & Income Support Manager

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- 1. Call to Order**  
The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
  - 2. Land Acknowledgement**
  - 3. Attendance & Declaration of Conflict of Interest**  
There were no regrets or declarations of Conflict of Interest.
  - 4. Approval of Agenda**  
Resolution #18/26 MOVED BY B. Hyatt and SECONDED BY B. Langner:

**RESOLVED THAT** the District of Rainy River Services Board (DRRSB) approve the agenda of April 16, 2026 as presented.

**Carried.**

- 5. Approval of Minutes**  
Resolution #19/26 MOVED BY A. Hallikas and SECONDED BY B. Burns:

**RESOLVED THAT** the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of the District of Rainy River Services Board held Thursday, April 16, 2026 be approved as presented.

**Carried.**

## 6. Administration Reports

**6.1. Finance Reports:** The Director of Finance & Infrastructure, Leanne Gurski, presented the Quarter 1 Financial Statements, in addition to the Quarter 1 Investment Report and the Quarter 1 Maintenance Report. She noted that at the end of the first quarter, we are aligned with budget expectations. Given normal timing differences early in the year, variances are not material at this stage and do not indicate structural budget concerns. Salaries and benefits remain the primary cost driver across all programs, which is consistent with the Board's service delivery model. Working capital trends remain stable, though we are carrying significant amounts owing to the province. This reflects reimbursement-based funding models and timing of provincial recoveries with the province being behind in recovering funding.

**6.2. Infrastructure & Community Services Report:** CAO Charene Gillies noted that the report is provided to set context and prepare the Board for more detailed information expected next month related to the Fifth & Frenette property in Fort Frances. Director of Community Services, Faisal Anwar, gave a summary of the report, explaining that feasibility work is being done on two parallel tracks: assessing the vacant land for potential housing development as part of broader NOSDA-led portfolio project work, and assessing the existing building for potential child care expansion, including its suitability to support new licensed child care spaces tied to provincial CWELCC targets. Work underway is to better understand technical viability, financial implications, and strategic fit before any recommendations are brought forward for Board consideration.

Questions arose about the design of the potential housing units, and some concerns were voiced over municipal contributions that might be needed to fund the projects. It was also noted there is a need to look for ways to mitigate funding concerns recognizing there remains a need for more affordable housing in the district.

**6.3. CAO Report:** CAO Charene Gillies shared highlights from this past month:

- Work through NOSDA continues to focus on advancing a northern portfolio approach to enable the building of new affordable housing. As part of that work, a recent discussion with Minister Rickford's office reinforced the importance of federal and provincial government funding to support the project recognizing the fiscal pressures faced by many small communities across the Kenora and Rainy River Districts.
- At a local level, partnership work has continued with health and Indigenous partners, including through the Rainy River District Ontario Health Team and Grand Council Treaty #3. These efforts are focused on improving coordination related to housing, addiction response, and primary care attachment, with an emphasis on better data and shared understanding to inform future planning.
- Internally, the quarterly all-management meeting cycle is continuing, with a focus on cross-program coordination, corporate planning, and preparation for upcoming reporting, including the Annual Report.

- Administration assessed the potential purchase of the former NorthStar school property in Atikokan after being advised it was available for sale. While due diligence investigation of the property was initiated, administration is not bringing forward a recommendation to submit a bid given existing DRRSB capital commitments, operating pressures, and the need to prioritize required repairs and make best use of existing DRRSB assets.

## 7. Business Arising

There was no business arising.

## 8. New Business

- 8.1. TWOMO 2026 Election Overview: CAO Charene Gillies provided information on early planning work for the 2026 TWOMO elections. At this stage, the focus is assessing delivery options and preparing a public notice/communications plan. In 2022, the RRDSAB were able to contract with the School Board who was ready to run an election, however none was needed. Administration plans to return to the Board in May or June to seek approval of a recommended election delivery model and contingency process. MCCSS has provided approximately \$40,000 to support the work with the ability to request additional resources if required.

A short discussion was had about electronic voting and it was suggested that perhaps district libraries could be used to assist people with electronic voting if that is the method selected.

- 8.2. Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digital Tools Policies: Two foundational policies that set clear expectations and guardrails for how digital tools and AI are used across the organization were presented. The digital tools policy replaces several older, fragmented policies with a single framework that clarifies approved use, information protection, security, and accountability. One point about prohibiting the connection of personal USB storage-capable devices to DRRSB equipment was added to the digital tools policy provided in the board package. The AI policy is new. The use of AI as a tool has grown dramatically in the last several years including in the DRRSB. The policy makes it clear that AI does not replace human judgment, cannot be used as the sole basis for decisions affecting people, and cannot be used with confidential or sensitive information unless an approved, secure process exists.

Resolution #20/26 MOVED BY W. Desserre and SECONDED R. Ferguson:

**RESOLVED THAT** the District of Rainy River Services Board (DRRSB) approve:

Policy C-1.0 Responsible Use of Digital Tools, as amended, effective April 16, 2026.

Policy C-1.1 Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) effective April 16, 2026

**Carried.**

**9. Information Items**

- 9.1. MNEDG ROMA Response March 25 2026
- 9.2. NOSDA Provincial Matching Funding for Build Canada Homes 2026-03-24
- 9.3. NOSDA Community Housing 2026-04-09
- 9.4. OMSSA Letter to MMAH RE – Service Manager Review
- 9.5. NOSDA \_Bill 10\_ Submission
- 9.6. NOSDA Northern Strategy Community Paramedicine

**10. Next Meeting**

The next Regular Board Meeting of the District of Rainy River Services Board will be held in person on May 21, 2026 starting at 10:00 a.m.

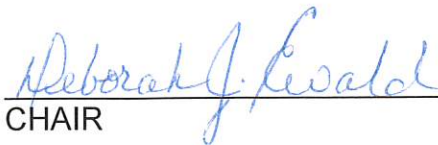
**11. Adjournment**

Resolution #21/26 MOVED BY J. Gibson and SECONDED B. Hyatt:

**RESOLVED THAT** the District of Rainy River Services Board (DRRSB) meeting be adjourned.

**Carried.**

**Meeting adjourned.**

  
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 CHAIR

  
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 SECRETARY-TREASURER (CAO)

May 21, 2026  
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 DATE APPROVED