



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

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*James Kuhn, Cashton, WI
Chairman*
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Vice Chairman*
*Vicki Burke, Onalaska, WI
Secretary & Treasurer*
*Greg Flogstad, Onalaska, WI
Director*

MINUTES

**MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRRPC)
BIMONTHLY MEETING**

**10:00 a.m., October 14, 2015
Best Western Riverfront Hotel, 1835 Rose Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin**

Call to Order

Vice-Chairman Baecker called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and asked for the roll call. A quorum was present. The attendance roster is attached. Mr. Flogstad said we have several guests in attendance: Tony Kurtz representing U.S. Senator Ron Johnson; John Medinger representing U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin; and Cameron Carey, MRRPC Intern.

Minutes of August 12, 2015 Bimonthly Meeting

Vice-Chairman Baecker asked for a motion on the August 12, 2015 bimonthly minutes. Commissioner Burke made a motion to approve the August 12, 2015 meeting minutes and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Ehram. Vice-Chairman Baecker asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report

Secretary-Treasurer Burke gave the treasurers report. Ms. Burke said the July 31, 2015 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$246,222.39 and the August 31, 2015 ending balance was \$244,718.31. She reported the beginning balance in August, 2015 was \$244,718.31 and September 30, 2015 ending balance was \$241,762.49.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund (BCF) began with a July 31, 2015 balance of \$153,504.60. Activity from August 1, 2015 through September 30, 2015 included loan repayments of \$11,290.88 and interest earned of \$52.85 leaving a September 30, 2015 balance on hand of \$164,848.33. The BCF Sequester Account began with an August 1, 2015 balance of \$426,694.08. Activity in this account from August 1, 2015 to September 30, 2015 included interest earned of 161.36 leaving a balance of \$426,855.44.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 began with a July 31, 2015 balance of \$25,266.57. Activity from July 31, 2015 through September 30, 2015 included loan repayments of \$1,480.00 and interest earned of \$8.72 leaving a September 30, 2015 balance of \$26,755.29. Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 Sequester Account began with an August 1, 2015 balance of \$160,562.65. Activity in this account from August 1, 2015 through September 30, 2015 included an interest payment of \$60.72 leaving a balance of \$160,623.37.

Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund began with an August 1, 2015 balance of \$42,610.02. Activity from August 1, 2015 through September 30, 2015 included loan repayments of \$518.50, interest earned of \$7.07, a deposit of \$60,000 from CMV Sequester Account, and a \$60,000 loan drawdown for Child Care Center in Viroqua leaving a September 30, 2015 balance of \$43,135.59. Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund Sequester Account began with an August 1, 2015 balance of \$164,066.45. Activity from August 1, 2015 through September 30, 2015 included interest earned of \$20.24 and a transfer of \$60,000 into the CMV Growth Development Fund leaving a September 30, 2015 balance of \$104,086.69.

Providing Planning and Economic Development Services to Improve the Environment, Economy and Quality of Life!

***•Land Use Planning and Zoning Assistance •Transportation Planning •Economic Development Planning •Recreation Planning •Business Lending
•Grant Writing • Economic Data Dissemination •Assisting Local Interests in Responding to State, Federal and Private Programs •Advisory
Services on Planning and Development Issues • Coordinator for Programs and Activities •Advocate on Issues Affecting the Region***

The La Crosse County Business Fund began with an August 1, 2015 balance of \$49,058.43. Activity from August 1, 2015 through September 30, 2015 included loan repayments of \$3,941.71, interest earned of \$15.24, a deposit of \$65,000 from the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund, administrative fees for the MRRPC of \$450, and a \$75,000 loan drawdown to a brewery in La Crosse leaving a September 30, 2015 balance of \$42,565.38. Ms. Burke said the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Sequester Account began with an August 1, 2015 balance of \$87,456.33. Activity in this account from August 1, 2015 through September 30, 2015 included interest earned of \$12.98 and a transfer of \$65,000 to the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund leaving a September 30, 2015 balance of \$22,469.51.

Vice-Chairman Baecker asked for a motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the treasurer's reports. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Savage and approved unanimously.

Vice-Chairman Baecker asked if there was any new information on the revolving loan funds. Mr. Flogstad said a \$75,000 loan was recently made to a brewery and another \$75,000 loan could be made to that same business in another six months depending on sales and operating costs. A \$60,000 loan was also made to a Day Care Center in Viroqua.

Discussion on Costs and Benefits of Meeting Mailings and Communications to Commissioners by Electronic Means via Tablets

Director Flogstad commented about the length time it takes commissioners to receive their mailing packets by U.S. mail now. At the last meeting it was reported that it took a week for one commissioner to receive the meeting packet. He asked commissioners when they received their bimonthly meeting packets in the mail for this meeting. Commissioner Borreson responded that he just received his packet yesterday. Mr. Flogstad said due to this persistent problem he has been researching the costs and benefits of using electronic means such as tablets for receiving meeting mailings and to communicate with Commissioners. He said that purchasing Kindle Fires for each Commissioner would result in close to a complete cost recovery in just over a year. Mr. Bonifas said you can also use the webinar apps on a Kindle like Google Hangout and Skype etc. Commissioner Jaekel said tablets require Wi Fi and work a lot like a Smart Phone. Cameron Carey, MRRPC Intern said the tablets would allow for more efficiency. He said you could make notes ahead of time and old files would be easily accessible. He also mentioned that if a Commissioner was unable to attend a meeting there would be the option of using an app such as Skype or Google Hangout. Mr. Flogstad said Consumer Reports rate Kindles high for handling basic documents and reading etc. Commissioner Baecker asked if using the Kindles would be mandatory. Mr. Flogstad commented that he would like to try and get as many commissioners as possible to make it cost effective as possible but it wouldn't be mandatory. Commissioner Murray said right now Kindles are selling for \$50 each and if you buy 5 you get one free. Commissioner Jaekel asked about reading books on the Kindles and personal use? Mr. Flogstad asked Commissioner Burke how La Crosse County handles this with laptops for each county supervisor. She said personal use of the laptops provided to La Crosse County Supervisors is allowed. Mr. Medinger commented that everything on the device is a public record. There was then some discussion on the legalities of using the Kindles for personal use. Commissioner Borreson mentioned the issue of public meeting notices. Mr. Flogstad said public notices would be handled as they have always been with notices sent to the County Courthouses and media. Commissioner Jaekel said everything is coming to electronic communication so we should get started and asked about training. Mr. Flogstad said if the Commission goes ahead and purchases the Kindles, there would be a training session at a bimonthly meeting. There was discussion on having conversations via internet services like Skype. Mr. Medinger mentioned the open meetings law and said that business cannot be done when the public isn't aware it's taking place. Discussion occurred on the number to purchase. Mr. Flogstad stated one should be purchased for each commissioner and staff. Commissioner Purdy stated a few extra should be purchased as well. Commissioner Borreson made a motion to purchase of 35 Kindle tablets. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Murray and unanimously approved. (This purchase will be within the 2015 equipment budget).

Discussion on Status of Commissioner Appointments to the MRRPC

Director Flogstad said he recently sent official correspondence to the Appointments Director at the Office of the Governor regarding six appointments to the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. Mr. Flogstad then reviewed the status of some of these appointments. He said that Commissioner Krachey has sent an application requesting reappointment. Commissioner Ehrsam also sent an application requesting reappointment. Mr. Flogstad said Commissioner Schnitzler's application for reappointment is under consideration.

Endorsement of Executive Committee Action on Resolution Applying for Federal Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Grant Program for Buffalo County to Prepare an Economic Development Strategy in Response to the Alma Coal Power Plant Closure

Mr. Flogstad said a MRRPC Executive and Administration Teleconference Committee Meeting was held on September 24, 2015 for the purpose of approving Resolution 09242015 authorizing \$15,000 of in-kind and cash local match for a \$50,222 federal technical assistance grant to prepare an economic development strategy for Buffalo County. Mr. Flogstad said Resolution 09242015 was approved by the Executive and Administration Committee authorizing \$15,000 in in-kind and local match but he thought it appropriate for the full Commission to endorse this action. Mr. Flogstad then reviewed the budget for the project. Commissioner Purdy made a motion approving the action of the Executive and Administration Committee in approving Resolution 09242015 committing \$15,000 in cash and in-kind funding as the non-Federal matching share for the Buffalo County Economic Recovery Planning Strategy project. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McMillan Urell. The motion was unanimously approved.

Report on Results of Tabletop Exercise Involving Response and Recovery from an Oil Train derailment and Spill in the City of La Crosse

Mr. Bonifas reported on the results of a tabletop exercise involving response and recovery from an oil train derailment and spill in the City of La Crosse. He explained that fracking has significantly increased the volume of domestic rail shipments carrying unconventional (high vapor pressure/low flashpoint) crude oil resulting in an elevated risk of a train derailment or crash resulting in an oil spill, fire, and/or explosion. Mr. Bonifas said an array of partners initiated the Operation Safe Delivery Exercise Series in order to support communities examining core capabilities needed to mitigate, respond to, and recover from the consequences of oil transportation incidents. The series consisted of three exercises: 1) Jersey City, NJ – March 2015 (Urban); 2) La Crosse, WI – June 2015 (Rural); and 3) Great Falls, MT – September, 2015 (Tribal). From these series of exercises a toolkit will be developed to guide future whole community preparedness efforts for similar oil transportation incidents.

Mr. Bonifas said on June 10th and 11th, ninety-eight (98) local, state, federal, private industry, and non-governmental representatives engaged in discussions about incident challenges, hazards associated with such a derailment, and potential solutions. The exercise was a hypothetical derailment resulting in an oil spill, fire, and explosion and centered on issues related to mitigation, response, and recovery. A goal that came out of the discussion was “To support community preparedness and resilience by examining and validating capabilities needed to reduce risk, mitigate potential consequences from, and ensure capacity to respond to and recover from transportation incidents, including those involving hazardous substances.” Mr. Bonifas gave an overview of the hypothetical scenario: At 2:00 p.m. on a weekday in La Crosse, several tank cars carrying hundreds of thousands of gallons of high vapor pressure/low flash point crude oil derail. One tank car explodes and a large pool fire ensues resulting in 12 fatalities, 60 injuries, and displaces more than 2,000 residents. He then displayed a map of the hypothetical incident showing distance and human injury and structural damage. He said anyone or anything located within the perimeter of 79 feet of the incident is subject to a high fatality rate or structural damage. He continued by showing the different perimeters shown on the map and the estimates for fatalities and structural damage.

Mr. Bonifas reviewed the schedule of the scenario that was carried out and discussed events and situations that could occur, the command structure, communication, and response efforts etc. He said the first 24 hours are directed toward response. Who is going to be affected, what road closures are needed, who is going to be involved? After that the focus is on recovery and then mitigation. He said a lot of response should be focused on command structure – is there a unified command structure people or agencies can go to and get the same information. He emphasized a unified command structure is critical. Mr. Bonifas went over the key findings. 1) Recovery plans and strategies must support continuity of unified command through response and recovery. Due to the diversity of whole community partners involved, establishing unified command is critical to ensuring a coordinated response for such incidents. 2) Incident command and decision-making during oil transportation incidents must involve close coordination with the responsible party (i.e. the railroad operator). 3) Planning for oil transportation incidents must emphasize recovery requirements. 4) Primary mitigation strategies must focus on cargo, trains, and rails rather than on land use or the built environment. Current community development patterns will not change widely or quickly and rails and surrounding infrastructure cannot be easily repositioned so the focus should be placed on cargo, trains, and rails themselves. 5) Public messaging for these incidents must be coordinated, targeted, resourced, and consistently implemented. 6) Training and exercises for oil transportation incident preparedness should be collaborative and incorporate a broad range of whole community stakeholders. Mr. Bonifas said oil transportation incidents engage a wide variety of whole community partners in all elements of response and recovery so to ensure effective response and recovery, private rail operators, recovery stakeholders, and environmental health and safety organizations should participate in more collaborative, integrated training activities and exercises. Mr. Bonifas listed workshop participants. He said there was a good representation from private, local, state, and federal agencies.

Commissioner Ross asked about the conclusion at the end of the Tabletop exercise. Mr. Bonifas said that during this event the fire departments would be first on the scene and the Emergency Management Director would take over fairly soon and be there as long as needed and there was no clear indication when that would end. Mr. Medinger said there are State Statutes dictating response. Mr. Medinger said elected officials have to be involved, and Mr. Bonifas concurred. Commissioner Ross said in a situation such as this a tabletop exercise should come to a conclusion. Mr. Bonifas said usually in the first four hours it is going to be the locals that are involved and they have to set up their command. State agencies such as Wisconsin Emergency Management are on the other side of the state and cannot provide immediate response. Commissioner McMillan Urell commented that agencies at the state level etc. should be notified. Commissioner Russell said the fire department would probably be on the scene first and as soon as the Emergency Manager gets there he takes over the responsibility and contacts the mayor, EPA, the railroad etc. There was more discussion on the command structure in the response. Vice-Chairman Baecker asked if this type of event was included in the County Hazard Mitigation Plans. Mr. Bonifas explained Hazard Mitigation Plans do not include the response; mitigation plans outline things that can be done prior to an event to mitigate loss. Commissioner Jaekel asked if a work plan was going to be made from this tabletop exercise and distributed to all communities. Mr. Bonifas said the tabletop exercise was done to develop guidance. The Federal government is in charge of this, the tabletop exercise carried out in La Crosse was just to show what would happen during the scenario. Commissioner Borreson mentioned that the exercise was carried out during the week and that resources become much less on a weekend. There was some discussion on how there are not a lot of plans on how to recover from an event such as this. Mr. Bonifas said our region has been through several floods so we have an idea on what to do and how to recover.

Mr. Bonifas said its cost prohibitive to move communities; it is more cost effective to make the rail cargo safer. Communities should not be responsible for something they have no control over. He said keeping the public informed is the primary objective of most agencies. Commissioner McMillan Urell asked what the biggest surprise that came out of this. Mr. Bonifas said all the way through the process the emphasis was on who is in charge and who is getting the information out. Mr. Bonifas said this issue is very important to the MRRPC Region. There was also some discussion about the safety of barges and the hazardous materials they carry. Mr. Bonifas said the only way you know the barges are carrying hazardous material is a red flag on the front of the barge. Commissioner Murray said there are a lot more hazardous things on trains than oil.

Mr. Bonifas said another thing that came out during this process was that the funds usually applied for through Wisconsin Emergency Management after a natural disaster is not available for this type of incident. Mr. Bonifas said there is money and programs available out there but the word is not getting out. Commissioner Jaekel thanked Mr. Bonifas for his informative presentation. She said many of us are worried about the oil being transported on the rail lines. She said oil is also being transported on trucks and barges so it's not just the railroad. She questioned that if the railroad is a private industry and the oil being hauled on the railroad is owned by private companies why do individuals and/or government have to cover for private industry? Commissioner Ross said he has worked closely with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and they have provided training many times. He said it's important to note that all railroads within 12 hours have resources in place to respond to cleanup. He said that during these training exercises trains are literally brought in to walk through the entire exercise. Commissioner Murray said in the last few years railroads have repaired and put more warning and communications systems into tracks to make them safer.

Report on Establishing a Regional Non-Profit to Assist the MRRPC in Accessing Federal, State, Local and Private Funding Resources

Mr. Flogstad said the Mississippi River Regional Development Corporation Inc. is an official non-profit corporation in the State of Wisconsin. He said it does not have 501(3) status yet but everything has been filed.

Approval of Wisconsin DOT Regional Transportation Planning Work Program for 2016

Mr. Fletcher said Draft Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission Transportation Planning Annual Work Program for 2016 was completed and sent to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. He said this work program is required in order to receive Wisconsin (DOT) funding in the amount of \$55,584 annually. He continued by reviewing the work elements included in the work program. He then asked for approval of the work program from the MRRPC Board of Commissioners pending any changes from DOT. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the MRRPC Transportation Planning Annual Work Program for 2016 pending final approval by WiDOT. Commissioner McMillan Urell seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Report on La Crosse County Application to Wisconsin DOT for a Transit Study Involving Service Demand Between La Crosse and Trempealeau County and La Crosse and Monroe County

Mr. Fletcher reported that La Crosse County applied for a grant to prepare a transit study involving service demand between La Crosse and Trempealeau County and La Crosse and Monroe County. He said the grant was approved and La Crosse County is now in the process of preparing a Request for Proposal to hire a consultant for the Study.

Report on New Zoning Ordinance for Buffalo County

Mr. Fletcher reported that in August and September five introductory outreach meetings were held in several townships in Buffalo County. Attendance ranged anywhere from 7 to 28 in attendance. He said there was representation from all the Towns. Mr. Fletcher said staff has met with the zoning committee and will begin preparing the draft ordinance and zoning districts. The first draft of the ordinance should be done by next summer. After completion of the 1st draft, staff will begin the second round of meetings. Commissioner McMillan Urell thanked staff for their work on this project.

Report on Golden Shovel Designated Sites Program for International Business Park II in the City of La Crosse

Mr. Bonifas said a second site in La Crosse County is ready for Golden Shovel ready designation. He said the application for International Business Park II, a 30 acre site, with access from State Highway 16 has been reviewed by MRRPC staff. Mr. Bonifas said the site has no known archeological issues, is zoned, and has utilities. The site does not have sewer or water but it is in the capital budget. The application for Golden Shovel Designation may be ready to approve in the coming weeks. Mr. Bonifas said if the site is approved it will be the second site to receive Golden Shovel designation.

Old and New Business

Mr. Fletcher said there was going to be a conference in Cashton, Wisconsin on November 19th, 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM featuring speakers who will explore local and national best practices for creating vibrant communities with innovative storefronts.

Commissioner Nickelatti asked if ridership on the SMRT bus was still increasing. Mr. Fletcher said ridership increased 5% thus far in 2015 over 2014.

Vice-Chairman Baecker asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Ross and approved unanimously.

Vicki Burke, Secretary-Treasurer