



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

1707 Main Street, Suite 435
La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: (608) 785-9396
Fax: (608) 785-9394
Email: plan@mrrpc.com
Website: mrrpc.com

*James Kuhn, Cashton, WI
Chairman*
*Margaret Baecker, Independence, WI
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., April 8, 2015
Best Western Riverfront Hotel, 1835 Rose Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin**

Call to Order

Chairman Kuhn called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and asked for the roll call. The attendance roster is attached.

Minutes of February 11, 2015 Bimonthly Meeting

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the February 11, 2015 bimonthly minutes. Commissioner Burke made a motion to approve the February 11, 2015 meeting minutes; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickelatti and approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Secretary-Treasurer Burke gave the treasurers report. Ms. Burke said the January 31, 2015 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$253,135.12 and the February 28, 2015 ending balance was \$333,677.83. She reported the beginning balance in February 28, 2015 was \$333,677.83 and March 31, 2015 balance was \$314,705.07.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund (BCF) began with a January 31, 2015 balance of \$253,321.55. Activity from February 1, 2015 through March 31, 2015 included loan repayments of \$35,593.86 and interest earned of \$85.59 leaving a March 31, 2015 balance of \$289,001.00. The BCF Sequester Account began with a February 1, 2015 balance of \$368,880.29. Activity from February 1, 2015 through March 31, 2015 included interest earned of \$136.45 and an interest payment to the U.S. Treasury for \$102.55 leaving a March 31, 2015 balance of \$368,914.19.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 began with a January 31, 2015 balance of \$60,449.45. Activity from February 1, 2015 through March 31, 2015 included loan repayments of \$1,261.62 and interest earned of \$19.77 leaving a March 31, 2015 balance of \$61,730.84. Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 Sequester Account began with a February 1, 2014 balance of \$157,885.61. Activity from February 1, 2015 through March 31, 2015 included interest earned of \$58.40 and an interest payment to the U.S. Treasury for \$54.74 leaving a March 31, 2015 balance of \$157,889.27.

Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund began with a February 1, 2015 balance of \$41,292.84. Activity from February 1, 2015 through March 31, 2015 included loan repayments of \$259.25 and interest earned of \$6.35 leaving a March 31, 2015 balance of \$41,558.84. Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund Sequester Account began with a February 1, 2015 balance of \$164,054.19. Activity from February 1, 2015 through March 31, 2015 included interest earned of \$25.16 and an interest payment to the U.S. Treasury for \$34.76 leaving a March 31, 2015 balance of \$164,044.59.

The La Crosse County Business Fund began with a February 1, 2015 balance of \$49,539.36. Activity from February 1, 2015 through March 31, 2015 included loan repayments of \$3,140 and interest earned of \$16.84 leaving a March 31, 2015 balance of \$52,696.20. Ms. Burke said the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Sequester Account began with a February 1, 2015 balance of \$80,936.22. Activity in this account from February 1, 2015 through March 31, 2015 included interest earned of \$26.15 and an interest payment to the U.S. Treasury for \$34.28 leaving a March 31, 2015 balance of \$80,928.09.

Mr. Flogstad reported that the Business Capital Fund Board will be meeting on April 9th to consider two separate revolving loan fund applications.

Providing Planning and Economic Development Services to Improve the Region's Environment, Economy, and Quality of Life

- ***Land Use Planning*** ▪ ***Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances*** ▪ ***Transportation Planning*** ▪ ***Economic Development Planning***
- ***GIS Mapping*** ▪ ***Recreation Planning*** ▪ ***Revolving Loan Fund Administration*** ▪ ***Grant Writing*** ▪ ***Socioeconomic Data Dissemination***
- ***Assist Local Interests in Responding to State and Federal Programs*** ▪ ***Advisory Service on Local Planning Issues***
- ***Coordinating Agency for Programs and Activities*** ▪ ***Public Advocacy on Issues Affecting Our Region***

Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the treasurer's reports as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baecker and approved unanimously.

Decision on Accepting 2015 Audit

Mike Temp of Tostrud and Temp S.C. said his firm prepared the 2014 Financial Statements and Independent Auditors report for the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC). He said there were no significant findings when preparing the audit and there were no disagreements with management. He referenced the opinion on page 5 of the audit that states "In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the governmental activities, the business-type activities, the aggregate discretely presented component units, each major fund and the aggregate remaining fund information of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission as of December 31, 2014, and the respective changes in financial position, and where applicable, cash flows thereof for the year then ended, in conformance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America". He then referred to Page 7.7, the Management's Discussion and Analysis, a laymen's overview of what happened at the Commission the past year. Mr. Temp then reviewed the 2014 Statement of Net Position, Statement of Activities, the 2014 Balance Sheet, and the Reconciliation for Governmental Funds. He also reviewed the balance sheets for the four revolving loan funds. Mr. Temp said the MRRPC's 2014 Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance shows a decrease in fund balance of \$9,639. Mr. Temp opened the floor for questions. Hearing none, Chairman Kuhn asked for a decision on accepting the 2014 Financial Statements and Independent Auditor's Report.

Commissioner Burke made a motion to accept the 2014 Financial Statement and Independent Auditor's Report; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Schnitzler, and approved unanimously.

Decision on Executive and Administration Committee's Recommendations on 2015 Staff Salary Adjustments and 2016 County Contributions

Secretary Treasurer Burke said the Executive and Administration Committee meeting was held in Alma on March 25, 2015. She said the Executive and Administration Committee recommended that all MRRPC staff receive a 2% salary increase effective July 1, 2015. Commissioner Barr made a motion to approve a 2% salary increase for all MRRPC staff effective July 1, 2015. The motion was seconded by Commission Baecker and approved unanimously. Mr. Burke said the Executive and Administration Committee is also recommending a 2016 county contribution rate of .00065151%, the same as the 2015. This would result in total contributions increasing \$4,339 over 2015 contributions, with some counties paying more and some less based on changes in Real Estate Equalized Values. Commission Schroeder made a motion to approve a 2016 county contribution rate of .00065151%. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Savage and approved unanimously.

Decision on Contract to Prepare a New Zoning Ordinance for Buffalo County

Mr. Fletcher presented a contract between Buffalo County and the MRRPC for the purpose of securing planning services from the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to prepare a zoning ordinance for Buffalo County. Mr. Fletcher said Buffalo County's original ordinance was prepared in 1968. Mr. Fletcher briefly reviewed the contract elements and said Buffalo County had already approved the contract. He said the time frame of the contract is May 1, 2015 through September 30, 2017. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion to approve the proposed contract between Buffalo County and the MRRPC. Commissioner Purdy made a motion to approve the contract between Buffalo County and the MRRPC to prepare a new zoning ordinance. Commissioner Christenson seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Commissioner McMillan Urell from Buffalo County stated the oversight from the MRRPC in preparing Buffalo County's zoning ordinance will be very beneficial for the County.

Presentation by Mark Tallman and Jenny Kuderer on Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's (WEDC) Community and Business Assistance Programs

Jenny Kuderer introduced herself as the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Regional Account Manager for Region 4 that includes Buffalo, Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jackson, La Crosse, Lafayette, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Richland, Trempealeau and Vernon counties. She said her focus is business development and her colleague Mark Tallman, Community Account Manager, is focused on community development issues. Ms. Kuderer said the WEDC was formed to be more responsive to business and community development by aligning resources with needs. She said there are 4 divisions within WEDC. She gave a brief overview of each division and its purpose. Mr. Kuderer then turned the floor over to Mr. Tallman. Mr. Tallman outlined some of the Community Development Programs available. He stressed that information he was providing could be subject to change because of budget considerations. Mr. Tallman reviewed grant criteria for Community Development Investment Grant (CDI) Program and the Idle Sites Redevelopment Programs. He explained CDI grants support economic development efforts with an emphasis on downtown, community driven efforts and the Idle Sites Program supports efforts to stimulate investment and job creation in idle, abandoned and underutilized sites. He said that CDI grants are due April 17, 2015.

The Site Assessment Grant Program (SAG) can assist local governments in conducting initial environmental assessments and demolition activities on eligible abandoned, idle or underutilized industrial or commercial sites. He said SAG grant awards are available for Phase I and Phase II assessments and grant applications are taken throughout the year. Mr. Tallman said the Brownfield Redevelopment Grant Program can assist local governments, individuals, and businesses with assessment and remediation of contaminated abandoned, idle or underused industrial or commercial facilities. He explained a criteria of the Brownfield Redevelopment Grant Program is that a Phase I and II Site Assessment Report be submitted demonstrating the property has soil or groundwater issues that need to be addressed in order for development to occur. Mr. Tallman said the Historic Preservation Tax Credit HPTC is a very popular program that provides a 20% state income tax credit for qualified expenditures on taxable, income-producing properties. He briefly reviewed the program criteria and reiterated this program helps retain important historical properties that once gone, will never come back.

Mr. Tallman said the Connect Communities Program and the Main Street Programs are designed to help local leaders leverage the unique assets of their downtowns and commercial districts. Mr. Tallman said there are 36 designated “Main Street” communities in Wisconsin and 40 “Connect Communities”. Connect Communities program participants have immediate access to experienced WEDC staff and to leaders within the Connect Communities Network. Mr. Tallman said there is a pilot program on board where Monroe and Crawford Counties will be granted quasi “Connect Community” status. Mr. Tallman reiterated that WEDC programs are subject to change and that he is always available for questions.

Ms. Kuderer said that in her role as Regional Account Manager she spends more time out in the field meeting with businesses and serving as a resource to help businesses. Some of the challenges business face is finding a qualified workforce. Other challenges may be financial. Ms. Kuderer said she works with a lot of manufacturing businesses. She said the Business Opportunity Loan Fund provides financing for businesses making investments to expand in or relocate to Wisconsin. Another program, the Economic Development Tax Credits/Jobs Tax Credits is a program that off-sets Wisconsin State Corporate Income Tax for companies. She explained when awarding tax credits the number and quality of jobs are looked at. She said you have to earn the tax credits; they are not awarded immediately. Ms. Kuderer said Job Training Grants are available to eligible businesses to upgrade or improve the job-related skills of businesses’ employees. Another program, Industrial Revenue Bonds, can be issued by a state or local government, the proceeds of which are directed to a private, for-profit manufacturing business. She said there are overarching program requirements and that programs are not intended to replace traditional financing but instead to assist in filling a financial gap in a project. Ms. Kuderer said the Manufacturing and Ag Tax Credit that virtually eliminates the tax on income from manufacturing activity in the state will be fully implemented in 2016.

Ms. Kuderer then reviewed programs available for International Business Development. She said there is a very robust program available to provide technical assistance to businesses looking to export products. She said the state undertakes Trade Ventures and the Governor participates in Trade Missions to grow the state’s exports. Ms. Kuderer discussed Entrepreneurial Programs available to businesses and mentioned some other resources available to businesses and entrepreneurs.

Ms. Kuderer said the Certified Sites Program provides consistent standards for industrial site certification meaning key approvals, documentations, and assessments most commonly required for industrial uses will already be in place to assist businesses quickly locate on a site. She said it’s another marketing tool. Ms. Kuderer said communities should be working to create Shovel Ready sites, sites that are ready for development. She said Golden Shovel Ready Sites aren’t meant to replace or compete with the State Certified Sites Program but is a scaled down alternative for smaller sites etc. Commissioner Borreson questioned why a local company recently turned down tax credits that were awarded. Commissioner Burke also questioned a movement to combine WEDC and WHEDA. Ms. Kuderer said people are working hard to make this change a fluid transition and the purpose of combining these agencies is to combine resources, and talents that in turn help elevate the economy. Commissioner Burke stated WEDC has had some issues in the past and questioned the rationale of combining the agencies.

Decision on 2015 Update to the 2012-2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Mr. Flogstad said annually the MRRPC staff is required to prepare an update to their 2012-2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy in order to maintain community, business, and institution eligibility for U.S. Department of Commerce-Economic Development Administration funding. He said the CEDS Update outlines past year activities and analyzes the region’s economy. He reviewed some of the findings of the CEDS. He said between 2000 and 2014 population in the region grew by 7.9% and housing increased by 12.7%. He said the region is older than the state and nation. Concerning unemployment, the region’s unemployment rate is typically below the state and nation. He also stated that the region, state and nation total employment levels are still not at levels

before the recession started in December 2007. It was pointed out that the region's per capita income is lower than state and nation but growing at a faster rate. He provided an evaluation of the top employment sectors in the region as well as a traded cluster analysis. Mr. Flogstad asked if anyone had any questions on the CEDS. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion to approve the CEDS. Commissioner Burke made a motion to approve the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission 2015 Annual Update to the 2012-2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickelatti and approved unanimously.

Report on Golden Shovel Ready Business Site Program

Mr. Flogstad said the Golden Shovel Ready Business Site Program is less stringent than the certified sites program discussed earlier. He explained the "Golden Shovel" program revolves around identifying business sites in the region that can be closed on quickly and if a site is designated as a "Golden Shovel" site, 7 Rivers Alliance will market the site. Working in collaboration with the 7 Rivers Alliance to qualify "Golden Shovel" designation requests the MRRPC has been requested to do the check off on "Golden Shovel" designation requests.

Report on League of Municipalities Partnership for Prosperity Legislative Proposal

Mr. Bonifas reported on the League of Municipalities Partnership for Prosperity Legislative Proposal. He said the legislative proposal involves targeting 1/3 of shared revenue to the State's economic regions based on percentage growth of new jobs and 2/3 based on a per-capita basis to cities, villages and towns that levy at least 1 mill, then each municipalities population share would be further adjusted based on an average of per capita property value and per capita adjusted gross income. It recommends having tax levy limits limited to the rate of inflation not net new construction as is the present requirement; Changing the levy limit to percentage increase in equalized value as opposed to net new construction; Exempted from levy limits would be the amount a municipality spends on economic development; Increase from 50% to 85% of the value increment of a terminated TID as net new construction and added to a municipalities allowable levy; and Hold down spending by increasing funding for the Expenditure Restraint Program that is set aside as a bonus for only those communities that limit their general fund increase to an established percentage (e.g.5%). Mr. Fletcher said the proposal asks to restore \$30 million to State Budget for General Transportation Aids and eliminate the rate per mile formula to share of cost basis formula; Rework the Local Road Improvement Program formula funding so more funding goes to cities and villages where the majority of economic development activities occur; and Enact Regional Transportation Authority Enabling Legislation allowing RTAs the ability to levy a sales tax to raise funds to finance road and transit costs and operations. There was some discussion on the proposal and whether or not it would go through. Commissioner Borreson asked if this was in the budget. Mr. Flogstad said there was no Bill yet on this. Commissioner Baecker said a Bill would need a sponsor and co-sponsor.

Discussion on MRRPC Forming a Regional Non-Profit to Increase MRRPC's Access to Federal, State, Local, and Private Funding Sources

Mr. Flogstad said at the last bimonthly meeting we discussed the MRRPC forming a regional non-profit to increase MRRPC's access to federal, state, local and private funding sources. He said many funding organizations solicit applications from non-profits and the MRRPC not being a non-profit makes us ineligible in some cases or requires us to provide an extensive narrative who we are and/or get an attorney's opinion that we legally exist in order to apply for funds. He said he was looking for a way to form a regional nonprofit in the most efficient and easy way as possible and still benefit the MRRPC. Mr. Flogstad reviewed the draft bylaws and said the Regional Non-Profit would be governed by the persons that are also Commissioners. He said he wanted the Regional Non-Profit to be as easy to administer as possible with meeting dates following MRRPC meetings and similar officers and terms on the Board. Commissioner Purdy asked if we had looked at someone else who had done this as a model. Mr. Flogstad said he talked to the UW-La Crosse's Foundation for advice. He said this foundation supports the University's mission through funding. School districts also often have private nonprofits supporting them as well. Commissioner Purdy said it was transparent that this is the same organization with a different mission. Commissioner Ehram asked about the cost to set up a private non-profit corporation. Mr. Flogstad said there would be attorney costs. Commissioner Leys questioned making loans to private business as 501(c) (3) non-profit status is for charitable organizations. There was some discussion on this. Mr. Flogstad said he was aware of other 501(c)(3) organizations making loans to businesses and the mission of the nonprofit he is proposing is to benefit both the MRRPC as an organization and make the work the MRRPC does go further.

Old and New Business

Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any old business or any new business. He asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Schroeder made a motion to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Christenson and approved unanimously.