



**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., December 14, 2016
Americinn (formerly 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. A quorum was present. The attendance roster is attached. There were several guests in attendance: Sue Noble, Director Vernon Economic Development Association, Brian Fukuda Community Development Specialist – La Crosse County, Steve Peterson, Monroe Economic Development Coordinator, Jenny Kuderer WEDC, John Medinger Representing Senator Tammy Baldwin, and Karrie Jackelen Representing Congressman Ron Kind

Minutes of August, 10, 2016 Bimonthly Meeting

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the October 12, 2016 bimonthly minutes. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the October 12, 2016 meeting minutes and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Ross. Chairman Kuhn 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 September 30, 2016 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$276,731.91 and the October 31, 2016 ending balance was \$250,174.18. She reported the beginning balance in November 2016 was \$250,174.18 and November 30, 2016 ending balance was \$239,821.70.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund (BCF) began with a September 30, 2016 balance of \$258,455.50. Activity from October 1, 2016 through November 30, 2016 included loan repayments of \$9,493.28, interest earned of \$83.72, \$25,464.45 transferred to the sequester account, and administration expenses of \$5443.63 leaving a November 30, 2016 balance on hand of \$242,024.42. The BCF Sequester Account began with an October 1, 2016 balance of \$428,670.33. Activity in this account from October 1, 2016 to November 30, 2016 included interest earned of \$163.45, \$25,464.45 transfer into the account, and \$241.61 paid to EDA leaving a balance on hand of \$454,056.62.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 began with a September 30, 2016 balance of \$34,822.72. Activity from October 1, 2016 through November 30, 2016 included loan repayments of \$1,480.00, interest earned of \$11.84, and administration expenses of \$473.00 leaving a November 30, 2016 balance of \$35,841.56. Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 Sequester Account began with a September 30, 2016 balance of \$160,591.98. Activity in this account from October 1, 2016 to November 30, 2016 included interest earned of \$60.07, and \$111.13 paid to EDA leaving a balance on hand of \$160,591.98.

Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund began with a September 30, 2016 balance of \$47,821.15. Activity from September 1, 2016 through November 30, 2016 included loan repayments of \$1,711.91 and interest earned of \$7.52 leaving a November 30, 2016 balance of \$49,540.58. Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund Sequester Account began with a September 30, 2016 balance of \$104,081.02. Activity from October 1, 2016 through November 30, 2016 included interest earned of \$15.96 and \$44.10 paid to EDA leaving a balance of \$104,052.88.

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 Economic Development Fund began with a September 30, 2016 balance of \$11.84. Activity from October 1, 2016 through November 30, 2016 included loan repayments of \$2,384.84, interest earned of \$0.18, sequester account transfer of \$3.03, \$12.84 paid to EDA, and bank fees of \$30.00 leaving a November 30, 2016 balance of \$2,357.05. Ms. Burke said the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Sequester Account began with a September 30, 2016 balance of -\$11.97. Activity in this account from October 1, 2016 through November 30, 2016 included a bank fee refund of \$15.00 and transfer of the \$3.03 remaining funds to the regular account leaving the account with a \$0.00 balance and the account was then closed.

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented. Commissioner Krachey made a motion to approve the treasurer's report. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Twidt. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the treasurer's report was unanimously approved.

Mr. Flogstad commented that staff and commissioners have been working on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy since June and at each bimonthly meeting since then we set aside time for presentations from economic development organizations in the region to report on economic development happenings and needs in the region. Thus far presentations were heard from Paul Schwebach, Pierce County Economic Development Corporation; Lisa Herr, 7 Rivers Alliance; Jenny Kuderer, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation; Steve Petersen, Monroe County Economic Development program; Carol Wetuski USDA Rural Development Administration and James Hill, La Crosse Area Development Corporation. Mr Flogstad continued by saying that today we are going to continue this process by hearing from Sue Noble with Vernon Economic Development Association and Brian Fukuda with La Crosse County.

Sue Noble, Director of Vernon Economic Development Association Presentation

Ms. Noble provided an overview of the economic development projects that the Vernon Economic Development Association (VEDA) is involved with in Vernon County. Vernon County along with a few other areas in Wisconsin were highlighted in the magazine, Business in Focus, in its November 2016 issue. It is a publication that circulates throughout the United States and Canada. To be included there isn't a fee but your organization needs to provide the magazine with 25 businesses that would potentially place an ad in the publication. Organic Valley, an area business, did place an ad. The article can be found online at <http://www.businessinfocusmagazine.com/category/in-focus/2016/november-2016/#>.

Ms. Noble then shared information about the Wisconsin Local Food Summit which will be held January 12-13, 2017, at the La Crosse Radisson Hotel sponsored by the Wisconsin Local Food Network.

Ms. Noble discussed the history of the NCR building in Viroqua where VEDA is located and owns. NCR employed 80 people in the area and when they closed the building all the employees lost their jobs. VEDA was formed and took over the building and has since used it to create jobs and grow businesses. This area is very agricultural in nature and lends itself to food industries. Their Food Enterprise Center currently has 16 tenants providing 60 jobs. One of their tenants is Kickapoo Coffee which employs 14 people and grosses \$1.5 million a year. This center allows startup businesses to form cooperatives which allows them to move into bigger institutional markets. VEDA also facilitates the Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club which meets the second Wednesday of each month and has resulted in 12 businesses and 40 jobs being created as well as providing important networking to new startups.

Ms. Noble discussed the Village of Ontario revitalization project that VEDA was involved in and that VEDA had earned the Wisconsin Top Rural Development Initiative Award for partnerships and collaborations in creating positive community impacts.

Ms. Noble shared some housing projects that were happening in Vernon County and the Viroqua area. A new assisted living center called Creamery Creek was being built in Viroqua and should be completed in 2017. There is also a Rock Avenue LLC 44-unit apartment building of 1-2 bedroom apartments being built in Viroqua which will be completed in 2017.

Ms. Noble discussed the results of their research in forming a Healthcare/Home Care Cooperative. Area businesses and agencies in the Viroqua area: ADRC, Vernon County, Scenic Bluffs, Vernon County Health Department, Center Point Counseling, Bethel Home, Vernon Memorial, Gundersen, Coulee Cap, and Western Technical College researched the feasibility during 2013 -2015 of forming a Health Care Cooperative. They took an inventory of services, looked at business plans, and business projections. Some positives to forming a cooperative across agencies is the opportunity of shared training, pooling labor hours across the cooperative in order to create a more stable workforce to reduce turnover and the ability to offer benefits and increase wages. Western Technical College found that there were many 50 year olds taking care of 80 year olds and that there was a need to energize the younger workforce to be committed to this

type of work. They looked at creating a career ladder for Home Health Care and to make the curriculum training available to elevate the status of this career. Ms. Noble said that there is a need to form this type of cooperative but someone is needed to spearhead the project.

Ms. Noble discussed the types of businesses to recruit to the area. She said that food recovery or food waste, beverage or food processing, and recreational equipment businesses would all do well in the area. An example of a food recovery business would be a composting business. Currently VEDA is working with the Community Hunger Project which buys seconds of fruits and vegetables that would be tossed due to imperfections and brings them to local food pantries. This program is currently funded through grants.

La Crosse County Neighborhood Revitalization Acquisition and Demolition Grant Program

Mr. Brian Fukuda discussed their grant program aimed at revitalizing neighborhoods with deteriorating housing stock. This deteriorating housing stock has potential to redevelop as workforce housing that is near many employment opportunities. The infrastructure is already in place, as are public services. He said that some barriers are poverty and crime. This program is designed to leverage private investment in these areas with a competitive grant program. The county and La Crosse city planning staff studied challenging trends in the cycle of neighborhood revitalization. They found that there is a cost gap of \$35,000 for rebuilding a house in the distressed neighborhoods versus building on a vacant lot in areas where most new subdivisions developed. The County's grant program is designed to cover this gap so developers will look to do their business in these distressed neighborhoods with existing public infrastructure and public services in place versus in a surrounding subdivision where public infrastructure or public services may not be in place. Their research showed and has now been verified that there will also be a quick return on the grant in the form of property taxes from the increase in property values in these neighborhoods. The name of the program is the La Crosse County Neighborhood Revitalization Acquisition and Demolition Grant Program. La Crosse County provided \$200,000 in their 2015 budget and carried over \$80,000 for 2016 for a total of \$280,000. Mr. Fukuda stated that 17 housing units have been built from this program. Two single family owner-occupied homes, 8-unit multi-family rental, and 7-unit multi-family owner-occupied units, townhouse style. This added \$2.1 million in new tax base and leveraged \$1.5 million in private investment. This added tax base and private investment was all leveraged from the county \$280,000 grant program. The County also provides solid waste grants where tipping fees for disposing of demolition debris from developers fixing up homes in the targeted distressed neighborhoods are waived at the County Landfill. The County home revitalization efforts also coordinate their efforts with the City, Gundersen and Mayo that provide their employees with housing assistance. The County also coordinates with La Crosse Promise, a nonprofit that provides education scholarships up to \$50,000 to those families with children who build a home in those areas targeted for neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy – CEDS Committee Appointments and Commissioner and staff input on economic development strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, threats, and strategies for inclusion in the 2017-2022 CEDS

Mr. Flogstad discussed the Comprehensive Development Strategy (CEDS) completion process. The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission has completed a CEDS report every five years since 1977. The CEDS as its name suggests is a economic development strategy for the region that analyzes the region's economy and provides goals and actions on how to grow it. The CEDS and its maintenance also maintains the region as an Economic Development District of the U.S. Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration and makes the region eligible for their grants and business loan programs. Mr Flogstad continued by saying that over the years' millions of federal funds have been awarded in the region for industrial parks, revolving loan funds, water towers, a commercial kitchen, a business incubator, a mercantile center, convention center and flood protection projects to protect businesses. All were economic development projects that involved saving or creating jobs and maintaining or growing private investment in the region's communities. The CEDS report also benefits communities, nonprofits and education institutions in our area to gain extra points when applying for grants to the U.S.D.A. Rural Development Administration if their project is consistent with the CEDS.

Mr. Flogstad reviewed the timeline for the project, the outline of the study, and regional strengths and weaknesses. He asked that the commissioners read their respective county's economic overviews for the region that is in their packets before the next meeting to help them provide input into the plan. Mr. Flogstad shared a list of commissioners to serve on the CEDS committee. There was a representative from each county listed with a special knowledge set based on the regional economy. Commissioner Burke made a motion to appoint the CEDS committee as listed and Commissioner Krachey seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Decision on Resolution 12.14.2016 Authorizing the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to apply to the U.S. Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration for their Partnership Planning grant program.

Mr. Flogstad discussed that our present three-year planning grant from the United States Department of Commerce – EDA will end in March of 2017. He stated that this resolution authorizes the MRRPC to again apply for another three-year grant totaling \$210,000 or \$70,000 a year. The resolution also authorizes the MRRPC to provide a \$210,000 match to this grant, with \$70,000 of local funds being

applied to it each year. The resolution also authorizes, the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary Treasurer or the Director to sign all the necessary documents needed to secure this grant for the MRRPC. Commissioner Schnitzler made a motion to pass Resolution 12.14.2016 authorizing the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to apply to the U.S. Department of Commerce – Economic development Administration – EDA for a Partnership Planning grant, Commissioner Purdy seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Presentation on Wisconsin Public Safety Broadband Project to integrate with FirstNet the nationwide cellular broadband network for public safety

Mr. Bonifas discussed the Wisconsin Public Safety Broadband project to alleviate First Responders and EMTs from being in areas where there is no broadband service. Mr. Bonifas gave some background information about FirstNet. He stated that FirstNet was created to provide a nationwide network for safety. Congress allocated \$7 billion to create FirstNet. Mr. Bonifas said that the next step is for each state to collect data to submit to FirstNet. FirstNet will take the data and give each state a plan. The States will decide if they will opt in or opt out of the program. Each State is responsible for submitting their data. The difference between FirstNet and a shared commercial network is that First Responders have priority on FirstNet. The Wisconsin Public Safety Broadband (WiPSB) sent out a web survey as part of coverage review of critical facilities or service areas which would include areas where large groups of people gather or event sites. For example, fairs, campsites, rail lines carrying oil, nuclear power plant, Fort McCoy. Each Sheriff's Department was surveyed on loss of coverage areas. This information was inventoried and forwarded on to FirstNet. With this information FirstNet will respond with a plan and a cost. Each Governor will then decide whether their state will opt in or out of the program.

Old, Business, New Business and Adjourn

Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any old business. Hearing none Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any new business.

Steve Peterson, the Monroe County Economic Development Coordinator, gave some information about the upcoming Monroe County Economic Development Conference being held at the Three Bears Resort in Warrens, WI. The conference will be held February 22-23, 2017. February 22, Wednesday will be a half day and February 23, Thursday will be a full day. Registration will be \$25 for Wednesday and \$40 for Thursday. The cost for both days will be \$50. There will be a Market Place featuring over 50 booths featuring agencies, products, services, and more. After Mr. Peterson's presentation, a motion was made to adjourn by Commissioner Burke and seconded by Commissioner Twidt. The motion was unanimously approved.

Vicki Burke, Secretary-Treasurer