



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**
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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., December 9, 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. 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; and Cameron Carey, MRRPC Intern.

Minutes of October 14, 2015 Bimonthly Meeting

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the October 14, 2015 bimonthly minutes. Commissioner Leys made a motion to approve the October 14, 2015 meeting minutes and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Barr. 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, 2015 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$241,762.49 and the October 31, 2015 ending balance was \$252,262.71. She reported the beginning balance in November 2015 was \$252,262.71 and November 30, 2015 ending balance was \$243,149.28.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund (BCF) began with a September 30, 2015 balance of \$164,848.33. Activity from October 1, 2015 through November 30, 2015 included loan repayments of \$11,287.77, interest earned of \$56.58, and administrative fees of \$2,332.10 leaving a November 30, 2015 balance on hand of \$173,860.58. The BCF Sequester Account began with an October 1, 2015 balance of \$426,855.44. Activity in this account from October 1, 2015 to November 30, 2015 included interest earned of \$159.64 and an interest payment of \$234.67 to the U.S. Treasury leaving a balance of \$426,780.41.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 began with a September 30, 2015 balance of \$26,755.29. Activity from September 30, 2015 through November 30, 2015 included loan repayments of \$1,480.00, interest earned of \$9.16, and administrative fees of \$545 leaving a November 30, 2015 balance of \$27,699.45. Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 Sequester Account began with an October 1, 2015 balance of \$160,623.37. Activity in this account from October 1, 2015 through November 30, 2015 included interest of \$60.07, and a \$110.77 interest payment to the U.S. Treasury leaving a balance of \$160,572.67.

Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund began with an October 1, 2015 balance of \$43,135.59. Activity from October 1, 2015 through November 30, 2015 included loan repayments of \$860.90, interest earned of \$7.52, and administrative fees of \$100 leaving a November 30, 2015 balance of \$43,904.01. Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund Sequester Account began with an October 1, 2015 balance of \$104,086.69. Activity from October 1, 2015 through November 30, 2015 included interest earned of \$17.96 and a \$65.33 interest payment to the U.S. Treasury leaving a balance of \$104,039.32.

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 October 1, 2015 balance of \$42,565.38. Activity from October 1, 2015 through November 30, 2015 included loan repayments of \$1,737.71, and interest earned of \$11.27 leaving a November 30, 2015 balance of \$44,314.36. Ms. Burke said the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Sequester Account began with an October 1, 2015 balance of \$22,469.51. Activity in this account from October 1, 2015 through November 30, 2015 included interest earned of \$5.62 and a \$60.26 interest payment to the U.S. Treasury leaving a balance of \$22,414.87.

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

Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any new information on the revolving loan funds. Mr. Flogstad said the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Board recently approved a \$200,000 loan to S&S Cycle Inc. for a proposed expansion project that should create about 100 new jobs. The board also approved a micro-loan of \$20,000 to help 4 Sisters Catering set up a new business at the former Consumers Bakery site in downtown La Crosse.

Presentation on the Small Business Development Services in Western Wisconsin Available Through Growth Coach

Director Flogstad introduced Jon G. Fields, PhD and owner of "*The Growth Coach*". Mr. Flogstad said often technical assistance is not available to business owners. Mr. Flogstad said Mr. Fields provides a unique service to help small businesses. Mr. Fields passed out a booklet describing the services he provides. He said the services he provides are available to all counties represented by the Commission.

Mr. Fields said he works with several companies. He said Growth Coach is the primary or pilot company and the other company is a company Mr. Fields started himself. He provided some background information about himself. He is a three-time business owner, has a Masters and Doctorate degree from Purdue University and a BS from UW-Stout. Mr. Fields said he has real world experience; and he has 15+ years of university teaching experience. Mr. Fields gave an overview of speaking events he has participated in.

Mr. Fields said he was raised in Clark County in Greenwood, Wisconsin, a small community of about 1,000. He said there are many empty storefronts in that community today. Mr. Fields said he has a passion for economic development and growth. Mr. Fields said he has seen what has happened in our rural towns and how regional and international competition has eaten away at local businesses. He said when he thinks of economic development he thinks of it as being a three-legged stool. The first leg is startup businesses. Start-ups are great but also have the greatest opportunity to fail. The second leg is where we try to get businesses to move in or expand. He said economic development agencies can work with a business for several years before they can actually get them to move in. The third leg is we already have businesses here; what can we do to make the existing businesses that are already here more successful? Mr. Fields said his passion is working with existing businesses to help them be more successful and grow which leads to more stable economic growth and sustainability.

Mr. Fields said some businesses struggle with business strategy and are struggling with ideas of how to move forward. He said success starts with a plan, but a plan does not bring success unless there is a follow through or an action plan. Mr. Fields said what the Growth Coach and Effective Business Practices does is help businesses put together a strategy or plan that is appropriate for their business. We also assist them with the actual implementation and follow through of their plan. We hold the business accountable. All too often businesses don't do the planning required to grow a successful business. Mr. Fields said another issue for business is when they are planning to sell their business. He said when a business is planning to sell out they should start planning about 10 years before hand. He said the business will need operations manuals, marketing strategies, sales strategies etc. The business needs to show it's a good solid business so the prospective buyer has success in obtaining bank financing. The bank may also look at the buyer and evaluate if the buyer is capable of running the business. It will help the buyer if the business has a good track record and also has procedure manuals in place etc. With these manuals, they have a blueprint for success today and in the future. He said all of this ties in with business strategy in various forms.

He said a lot of business owners are looking for loans and grants but are unsuccessful. Mr. Fields said he hoped that the MRRPC could help fill this gap by helping business owners find grants for business development and training. He said there is funding out there for capital improvements but very few resources for people to get professional development training. Mr. Fields said he thinks this is one of the big things holding businesses back. He said if there was a way to open up funding to business owners for professional development and training, we could grow our economy much better. Mr. Fields said businesses don't run themselves, people run businesses. Business owners should engage in professional development for themselves and key employees. Mr. Fields mentioned the skills gap of having highly trained individuals; their chair is filled, but they are lacking the necessary skills. He mentioned a book entitled "*What Got*

You There, Won't Get You Here". He said a lot of professions require continuing education. He said he wonders how much better our business environment would be if we required continuing business education.

Mr. Fields reviewed his booklet on Business Improvement and Growth Processes. He said that he offers many free services that are available to all nine counties in the MRRPC Region. The services include business related workshops through sponsoring organizations. Mr. Fields said his booklet includes some business self-evaluation tools that can help identify gaps. Mr. Fields discussed programs available through Growth Coach and Effective Business Practices, LLC to help businesses. Mr. Fields said the only thing that produces profits for a business is the sales process, everything else is an expense. All too often the most critical of business processes, the selling process, is left to informal on-the-job training. It is estimated that 40-60% of revenue/profit opportunities are lost because of ineffective or outdated sales processes. He mentioned the R.E.A.D. sales process: "R" establish the relationship; "E" establish the need; "A" advance the tailored solution; and "D" decide on what's the next logical step. He then briefly discussed the S.P.I.N. discovery process. He said a business needs a track record of success in order to qualify for loans for expansion etc. He said the processes mentioned give sales personnel a structure and a plan. Economic development begins with effective marketing and sales processes. Mr. Fields his company guarantees the value of their coaching services and if you are not fully satisfied with the initial coaching sessions, simply return the material, provide feedback, and receive a full refund. Mr. Fields said he is looking for loans and grants that are available for professional development purposes that he could share with businesses. He asked if the MRRPC had any leads or references for these types of loans or grants.

Mr. Fields said that ISO 9001:2008 Certification shows your clients that your business is a serious contender in the marketplace. He said this is especially true in the manufacturing sector. He said some of the processes provided by the Growth Coach can help a company become ISO certified. Mr. Fields concluded his presentation and he opened the floor for questions. Commissioner Christenson mentioned his background as an engineer and how important continuing education is; it's important to keep up to date. Commissioner Baecker concurred, with her background in education. Commissioner Borreson asked what in Mr. Fields resume, background, and strategies are being used in our Greenwoods of America, especially in West Central Wisconsin where we have a lot of small towns. What kinds of experiences and successes have you had working with these demographically depleted areas? Mr. Fields said the challenges with these areas is that some of these businesses have gotten so low in their success they can't see themselves investing in something intangible as professional development. A lot of small businesses don't have the money to invest in professional development training. This is one of the struggles. Mr. Fields said he has had businesses that have invested in the sales mastery training through his company that have increased their sales by 30% over the previous year. Commissioner Borreson asked Mr. Fields if he gets a lot of calls. Mr. Fields explained he doesn't get a lot of calls because businesses aren't aware of his services yet, but he contacts businesses directly and also gets clients through the free workshops he offers to counties. Mr. Fields said more funds need to be made available to small business owners for professional development. Mr. Fields said he wasn't sure if the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation had any grants available for professional development. He said business success starts with a business strategy. Commissioner Schroeder mentioned one problem small businesses have is all the regulations. He said this is a big issue. He said one of the problems with the MRRPC 's revolving loan funds is you still have to have a bank participating to get businesses qualified for loans. Mr. Fields said why don't they qualify; is it because they don't have to cash flow, and why don't they have the cash flow. It could be because they didn't have the business development and training, and strategy to put it all in motion. Mr. Fields said that is what he is bringing to the table. Mr. Fields concluded by giving an overview of costs for his services. Chairman Kuhn thanked Mr. Fields for his presentation.

Report on Status of 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 the Power Grant was awarded to Buffalo County for the purpose of preparing an economic strategy in response to the Alma Coal Power Plant Closure. Mr. Flogstad said the MRRPC will be working with Buffalo County, UW-Extension in Madison, and a UW professor from Madison on this project. He said a conference call was held to discuss the project. Right now UW-Extension Madison is developing a draft study design of what the final plan could look like. Commissioner Leys asked if the whole operation was closing in Alma. Mr. Flogstad said the oldest plant, the Alma Station was closing. John P. Madgett was still operating. Commissioner Barr said it makes sense because that plant has become obsolete with efficiencies.

Discussion on Status of Commissioner Appointments to the MRRPC

Director Flogstad said he talked to the Appointments Director at the Office of the Governor this morning regarding several appointments to the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. Mr. Flogstad reviewed the status of some of the appointments and said the appointments director in Madison expects an announcement this week regarding some of these appointments.

Report on MRRPC being Excluded from Pepin County Budget

Mr. Flogstad said the MRPPC membership dues were excluded from Pepin County's 2016 budget. He said a resolution has been drawn up to bring before the Pepin County Board to provide funds for 2016 MRRPC membership dues. Commissioners Murray and Smith both indicated that have talked to the Pepin County Board regarding this matter and assured funding would be provided. Mr. Flogstad stated he was going up to a county board meeting on December 16th.

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

Director Flogstad said everything has been approved for the Regional Non-Profit. The Mississippi River Regional Development Corporation has been established as a 501(3) non-profit corporation. Mr. Flogstad said we will now be looking for funding opportunities for the newly formed regional non-profit.

Old and New Business

Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any old business. He asked if there was any new business. He asked for a motion to adjourn. Chairman Kuhn said with adjournment of the meeting, commissioner and staff "Amazon Fire" tablet training would follow. A motion was made to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Schroeder and unanimously approved.

Vicki Burke, Secretary-Treasurer