



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
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**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., February 10, 2016**  
**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: John Medinger representing U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin; Karrie Jackelen representing U.S. Congressman Ron Kind; Tim Schlangenhaf, Audubon Minnesota; and Beau Rath, MRRPC Intern.

**Minutes of December 9, 2015 Bimonthly Meeting**

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the December 9, 2015 bimonthly minutes. Commissioner Krachey made a motion to approve the December 9, 2015 meeting minutes and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Purdy. 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 November 30, 2015 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$243,149.28 and the November 30, 2015 ending balance was \$214,339.80. She reported the beginning balance in January 2016 was \$214,339.80 and January 31, 2016 ending balance was \$268,343.88.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund (BCF) began with a November 30, 2015 balance of \$173,860.58. Activity from December 1, 2015 through January 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$49,925.38 and interest earned of \$69.34 leaving a January 31, 2016 balance on hand of \$223,855.30. The BCF Sequester Account began with a December 1, 2015 balance of \$426,780.41. There was no activity in this account from December 1, 2015 to January 31, 2016 leaving a balance of \$426,780.41.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 began with a November 30, 2015 balance of \$27,699.45. Activity from November 30, 2015 through January 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$1,172.00 and interest earned of \$9.67 leaving a January 31, 2016 balance of \$28,881.12. Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 Sequester Account began with a December 1, 2015 balance of \$160,572.67. There was no activity in this account from December 1, 2015 through December 31, 2016 leaving a balance of leaving a balance of \$160,572.67.

Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund began with a December 1, 2015 balance of \$43,904.01. Activity from December 1, 2015 through January 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$719.05 and interest earned of \$7.69 leaving a January 31, 2016 balance of \$44,630.75. Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund Sequester Account began with a December 1, 2015 balance of \$104,039.32. Activity from December 1, 2015 through January 31, 2016 included interest earned of \$17.96 leaving a balance of \$104,057.28.

The La Crosse County Business Fund began with a December 1, 2015 balance of \$44,314.36. Activity from December 1, 2015 through January 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$3,233.13, and interest earned of \$11.26 leaving a January 31, 2016 balance of

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Services on Planning and Development Issues • Coordinator for Programs and Activities •Advocate on Issues Affecting the Region***

\$47,558.75. Ms. Burke said the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Sequester Account began with a December 1, 2015 balance of \$22,414.87. Activity in this account from December 1, 2015 through January 31, 2016 included interest earned of \$5.71 leaving a balance of \$22,420.58.

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

Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any new information on the revolving loan funds. Director Flogstad mentioned that a loan is in the works to a local brewery from the La Crosse County Business Fund.

### **Decision of 2016 MRRPC Budget**

Mr. Flogstad said he would be presenting the MRRPC's 2016 budget. He reviewed the projected revenues for 2016 and reviewed all new contracts that staff would be involved in. Mr. Flogstad stated there were no major changes in the 2016 budget expenses. He mentioned the Administrative Assistant was retiring in June and it's the policy of the Commission to pay retirees 35% of their accumulated sick leave hours. Commissioner Ehrsam asked what the current federal rate was for mileage expense for use of a personal vehicle. There was some discussion on the current mileage rates. Director Flogstad said the Commission uses the state mileage rate which is currently 51¢ a mile. Commissioner Borreson said looking at projected revenues and the contracts the MRRPC will be involved in during 2016, is the staff booked tight and or do you have some latitude? Mr. Flogstad said communities and counties should always ask for help when they need it and Commission staff will make it work. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion to approve the budget. Commissioner Murray made a motion to approve the budget and Commissioner Christenson seconded the motion. Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any further discussion and hearing none the motion was approved unanimously.

### **Presentation of Activities and Partnering Opportunities with the 800 Member Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance to Slow the Growth of Sediment and Nutrients into the Mississippi River**

Tim Schlagenhaft said he was here today to make a presentation on Upper Pool 4 and Lake Pepin habitat restoration. He gave some background on himself. Mr. Schlagenhaft said Total Suspended Solid (TSS) Loads from the Minnesota River Basin will need to decrease by 50 to 60% to meet the site-specific standard for turbidity in the South Metro Mississippi River (32 mg/L). He displayed a map of Pool 4 existing habitat conditions. He said the shallow, windswept, open water areas with high turbidity, little aquatic vegetation, and poor habitat for fish and wildlife are prevalent. He said one million tons of sediment is deposited each year, equivalent to one city block. Eighty to 90% of the sediment comes from the Minnesota River Basin with 65% coming from bluffs, ravines, and streambanks and 35% coming from fields and surface runoff. Mr. Schlagenhaft said the sediment is 10x what it used to be. The Blue Earth River Basin and its sub basins contribute as much as half of the sediment. He displayed a map of potential ravine stabilization sites in the Blue Earth and Le Sueur River Basins and said over 120 critically corrosive ravines were identified, 30 being high priority. A map of potential bluff stabilization sites in the Blue Earth and Le Sueur River Basins was displayed with 39 listed as target sites. Mr. Schlagenhaft showed a quote from Blue Earth County that was very pertinent: "The ability of local government to address these problems is limited due to the scale, magnitude, and complexity of problems and solutions, lack of enough qualified, technical and local staff, and lack of financial resources."

Mr. Schlagenhaft discussed what Minnesota is doing. He asked how can we accomplish this? He said the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies were done. A 32 mg/l standard for total suspended solids (TSS) in Lake Pepin requires a 50% reduction in TSS, including a 50% reduction from internal loading. The Minnesota River Basin Sediment Reduction Strategy would require a 25% reduction in TSS by 2020 and a 50% reduction by 2030 focusing on bluffs, ravines and streambanks. He mentioned Governor Dayton's Buffer initiative that requires 50-foot buffer around lakes, rivers, and streams with a goal to establish an additional 125,000 acres of buffer strips statewide improving water quality and habitat.

Mr. Schlagenhaft said the Alliance has been working on the Minnesota River Basin County scorecard where they conducted local government interviews. He reviewed top drivers for water quality success. He mentioned several issues such as slowing the speed of water flow in rivers and ditches, the willingness of farmers to participate, and the funding and staff to actually do this. He asked what can be done locally? We need to protect existing shorelines, build new islands, and dredge to direct flow, reduce erosion, and create protected areas for migrating birds and fish. There is a challenge of scaling solutions up – and how to translate successes at the local level to the scale that can markedly improve the most impaired watersheds. He said agencies can build islands and create habitat; this is something that can be done at Lake Pepin. We need to improve water clarity and establish vegetation for wildlife. Mr. Schlagenhaft then listed some community objectives: Cottonwood regeneration in the floodplain forest, small boat navigation improved, and dredging to increase water depth in Wacouta Bay and Bay City. He displayed a map showing where islands

could be built in Lake Pepin and where dredging could occur. He said Lake Pepin is globally significant for a bird area providing habitat for Common Mergansers. Mr. Schlagenhaft said this project needs community support, project ideas, funding and patience. Funding is an issue because it's not on federal land so there is a 35% cost share. He opened the floor for questions and comments.

Commissioner Leys said in Crawford County when you drive around you can see fields where manure has been spread on snow covered ground. He mentioned this may be a runoff issue. Commissioner Barr asked how much Wisconsin Rivers were contributing to this water quality issue in Lake Pepin. Mr. Schlagenhaft said Wisconsin Rivers contribute very little because of the abundance of wooded lands and not as much agriculture. Commissioner Ross mentioned the Lake Pepin Legacy First (Upper and Lower River) project where a group of like-minded people formed to work on this issue. Mr. Schlagenhaft said there is an effort to connect with farmers to work on this issue and that right now one focus has been the "Minnesota River Basin County Report Card". The effort to connect the Upper and Lower River isn't as active. Commissioner Schroeder mentioned the Stewardship Program where farmers get points for conservation practices. He said the problem is you have to get people in the right mindset. Mr. Schroeder said Pierce County is way ahead in conservation practices. He said on his own property he has put in conservation dams. He stated that very few farmers spread manure now because most farmers raise crops instead of dairy cattle. He said yet another issue is farmers taking out contour strips. He said there should be some penalties with these conservation programs if you don't follow guidelines. Commissioner Murray mentioned that when the price of corn went up and farmers began farming land that had never been farmed before. Commissioner Russell said education on some of these issues would mean a lot. Commissioner Ross said farmers appreciate dialogue. Chairman Kuhn said this is a collective problem; and some are doing everything they can and others are doing nothing. Mr. Flogstad said there are over 60 impaired waterways in the MRRPC region alone. He said that the MRRPC would follow-up with the education idea in the future.

#### **Report on Status of Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Grant Program for Buffalo County**

Mr. Flogstad gave an overview of the "Power Grant" awarded to Buffalo County. He said the grant would be used to prepare 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. Mr. Flogstad said the Buffalo County Economic Development Committee is in the process of developing a vision statement focusing on helping existing small businesses and sustainability. He said a steering committee has also been formed that will meet every other week via teleconference. He said public meetings will be held inviting surrounding counties. Karrie Jackelen asked about the timeline for the project. Mr. Flogstad said the project would be complete by the end of September. Commissioner Ross asked if the recent Supreme Court ruling would affect this project. Mr. Flogstad said he didn't think so because Dairyland Power has been changing to renewables and the plant that closed was outdated.

#### **Report on new Zoning Ordinance for Buffalo County**

Mr. Fletcher said staff is working with Buffalo County to update their outdated zoning ordinance. He said there have been no updates to the ordinance since 1965. He said five public outreach meetings were held and staff has been meeting monthly with the Zoning Committee. The draft of the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter is complete and now we are at a key stage of developing the actual zoning districts. Once those are approved they are the foundation for the zoning map. Mr. Fletcher said eight districts have been defined: 4 agricultural and natural resource districts (based on housing density), 1 conservation district (federal, state, and county lands etc.), 1 residential district, 1 commercial district and 1 industrial district. Staff will now take this draft menu of districts to the Towns and the Towns will designate districts for their specific Town. Those will then be combined to develop a zoning map. During that time staff will also be working on completing the other chapters of the ordinance in draft form. Mr. Fletcher said the 1<sup>st</sup> draft ordinance should be completed in 6-8 months. After that another round of public meetings will be held soliciting public input. Commissioner McMillan Urell asked when staff would be reaching out to the towns. Mr. Fletcher said hopefully in April.

#### **Report on the formation of The Upper Mississippi River Manufacturing Alliance (TUMMA)**

Mr. Flogstad stated the EMMA board of directors with Western Wisconsin Technical College, Workforce Connections, and the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board researched the concept of forming a manufacturing alliance organization similar to the North East Wisconsin Manufacturing Alliance in Green Bay. The idea was to organize under a manufacturing brand that would include all kinds of manufacturers. In November EMMA voted to change its name and bylaws to TUMMA. Mr. Flogstad went over the objectives of TUMMA. He said TUMMA has a work plan in place and they have hired an Executive Director. He said TUMMA hopefully will be funded by membership dues. He said we will be hearing more about TUMMA in the

future. Karrie Jackelen mentioned the Eleva-Strum school district success story involving students manufacturing and selling products.

### **USDA Rural Development Administration's Grant Evaluation Program Giving Additional Points for Projects that are Consistent with and Help Implement the Regional Comprehensive Plan**

Mr. Bonifas said the USDA Rural Development Administration's interim rule implements Section 6025, Strategic Economic and Community Development, under the Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill). He said unless the Agency provides otherwise, the Agency will reserve up to 10 percent of the funds appropriated to certain Rural Development (RD) programs each fiscal year to fund projects that support the implementation of strategic economic and community development plans across multi-jurisdictional areas such as the MRRPC Regional Plan. The programs from which funds will be reserved are community facility programs, water and waste disposal programs, and rural business and cooperative development programs. The projects must be carried out solely in rural areas. Mr. Bonifas explained the program requirements and said the USDA Rural Development Administration's Grant Evaluation Program gives additional points for projects that are consistent with and help implement the Regional Comprehensive Plan. He said the City of Viroqua and the Village of Viola are the first communities in the MRRPC Region to request additional grant scoring points through this program. He provided a brief overview of the projects. He said both grant applications cite three objectives in the Mississippi River Regional Comprehensive Plan that their projects are helping to implement and that they will get additional "Strategic Economic and Community Development (6025) Priority" grant scoring points for. Mr. Flogstad said a lot of work went into the regional comprehensive plan and its good communities can benefit from this work because of this new way of awarding federal grants.

### **Decision on Job Description for Administrative Assistant**

Mr. Flogstad said the MRRPC Administrative Assistant has decided to retire effective June 9, 2016. He said everyone should have a job description of her position. Mr. Flogstad said it has been the practice in the past for staff to interview potential candidates. He asked if this would be the process to follow again. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on interviewing potential candidates. Commissioner Ross made a motion that staff should interview the candidates for the Administrative Assistant position. Commissioner Nickelatti seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Chairman Kuhn then asked for a motion to approve the Administrative Assistant job description as presented. Commissioner Krachey made a motion to approve the job description and Commissioner Vold seconded the motion. Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any discussion. Commissioner Ross asked the Administrative Assistant if she felt this job description was a clear and concise depiction of her responsibilities. Mr. Buros said it was; she said the biggest thing was all the different software candidates will need to be proficient with. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Flogstad said the new Administrative Assistant's first day of work is planned to be Tuesday May 31, 2016.

### **Discussion on status of commissioner appointments to the MRRPC**

Mr. Flogstad said he contacted the Governor's appointment office and they assured him they are currently reviewing 20 applications for Commissioner appointments.

### **Old and New Business**

Commissioner Folcey said she wanted to mention the Monroe Economic Development Conference coming up and she handed out flyers to all attendees. She said it's an excellent conference with good speakers focusing on transportation issues. Commissioner Purdy said he wanted to bring an idea up before the board about helping small businesses with an opportunity to offer 401k programs to their employees. There should be legislation to better aggregate 401k programs; there should be some way for small businesses collectively to form 401k programs to cost share on administration. There was some discussion on this and current high administrative fees. IRAs and profit sharing were also discussed. Mr. Flogstad stated this was a unique idea and should be shared with economic development organizations in the region. Commissioner Smith mentioned the legislation at the state level today regarding safe crossing of railroads for hunting and fishing and encouraged contacting their representatives to support it. Karrie Jackelen said Congressman Kind is also looking at this issue at the federal level.

With no other old or new business, a motion was made by Commissioner Schroeder and seconded by Commissioner Ross to adjourn. The motion was carried unanimously.