



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
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*Eugene Savage, Black River Falls  
Chairman*  
*Margaret Baecker, Independence  
Vice Chairman*  
*Vicki Burke, Onalaska  
Secretary & Treasurer*  
*Greg Flogstad, Onalaska  
Director*

**MINUTES**  
**MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRRPC)**  
**BIMONTHLY MEETING**  
**10:00 a.m., February 13, 2013**  
**Seasons by the Lake, 910 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North, Onalaska, Wisconsin**

**Call to Order**

Chairman Savage called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and asked for the roll call. Greg Flogstad, Director took the roll and stated a quorum was present. The attendance roster is attached. Guests in attendance: Will Cronin, Monroe County UW-Extension; Margaret Smith, Great River Road Visitor and Prescott Learning Center; Atticus Jaramillo, MRRPC Intern

**Minutes of December 12, 2012 Bimonthly Meeting**

Chairman Savage asked for a motion to approve the December 12, 2012 bimonthly minutes. Commissioner Ehrsam made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Burke to accept the minutes of the December 12, 2012, bimonthly meeting. The motion was carried unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report**

Vicki Burke, MRRPC Secretary/Treasurer presented the treasurers reports. Ms. Burke said the November 30, 2012 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$204,926.31 and the December 31, 2012 ending balance was \$178,365.19. Ms. Burke reported that the beginning balance in December 31, 2012 was \$178,365.19 and the balance in all accounts as of January 31, 2013 was \$280,085.31.

Ms. Burke then presented the financial report for the Business Capital Fund I. The balance in this account as of November 30, 2012 was \$236,607.69. From December 2012 through January 2013 activity in this account included loan repayments of \$14,203.25, account interest of \$103.52, and BCF annual meeting expense of \$250.00 leaving a January 31, 2013 ending balance of \$250,664.46. Ms. Burke reported a balance of \$212,825.88 in the BCF Sequester Account as of January 31, 2013.

Ms. Burke said that as of November 30, 2012, the Business Capital Fund II RLF had a balance of \$61,468.46. She said that from December 1, 2012 through January 31, 2013, activity in this account included interest of \$41.45 and loan repayments of \$49,299.31 leaving a January 31, 2013 balance of \$110,809.22. Ms. Burke reported a balance of \$65,720.71 in the BCF Sequester Account as of January 31, 2013.

The CMV Growth Development Fund began with a November 14, 2012 balance of \$55,401.04. Ms. Burke said from the period of November 15, 2012 through January 9, 2014 interest earned on this account totaled \$12.72 leaving a January 9, 2013 balance of \$55,413.76. Ms. Burke said the balance in the CMV-EDA Sequester Fund as of November 14, 2012 was \$163,420.02. During the period of November 15, 2012 through January 9, 2013 activity in this account consisted of interest earned of \$37.51 and account interest of \$51.39 paid to the U.S. Treasury leaving a January 9, 2013 balance of \$163,406.14.

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***A Nine County Economic Development District Providing Assistance to Local Governments***

- *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*

Ms. Burke said the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund began with a November 13, 2012 balance of \$46,204.19. During the period of November 14, 2012 through January 13, 2013, loan repayments of \$4,000 were made and account interest earned totaled \$15.20 leaving a January 13, 2013 account balance of \$50,219.39. The La Crosse County Business Sequester Account began with a November 30, 2012 balance of \$56,719.94. From December 1, 2012 through January 31, 2013 activity in this account included account interest of \$22.34 and an interest payment of \$16.61 to the U.S. Treasury leaving a January 31, 2013 balance of \$56,725.67.

Commission Christenson asked about the \$13,000 disbursement for EMSI software. Mr. Flogstad explained the \$13,000 was for a one year subscription to EMSI software. He explained the MRRPC was reimbursed by the State for this expense.

Chairman Savage asked for a motion of approval on the treasurers reports presented. Commissioner Schroeder made a motion to approve the treasurer's reports as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ross and approved unanimously.

Mr. Law reported in December the BCF approved a \$40,000 loan for a business located in the City of Arcadia. He said the CMV also recently approved a \$20,000 loan for a new manufacturer in Sparta. He explained the business in Sparta evolved from a manufacturer that was closing but was purchased by an employee. He said the business was able to retain some contracts from the previous owners. Commissioner Jaekel asked about RLF interest rates. Mr. Law said the RLF Boards can approve interest rates as low as 75% of the prime rate as published in the Wall Street Journal.

#### **Decision of Bookkeeper and Auditor for 2013-2016**

Director Flogstad said a Request for Proposal was issued in January 2013 to secure an accounting firm(s) for bookkeeping and payroll service and audit services through 2016. Mr. Flogstad said that everyone should have a recap of the proposals received. He said that Tostrud & Temp S.C. is our auditor right now and Franke and Turnbull, CPAs currently provide bookkeeping and payroll services to the MRRPC. Mr. Flogstad referenced everyone to the references provided on the RFPs. Discussion occurred on the experience and references listed on the RFPs. Commissioner Baecker said that continuity is important when dealing with the financial matters of the Commission. Commissioner Burke made a motion to select Tostrud and Temp for audit services and Franke & Turnbull, CPA's for bookkeeping services. Commissioner Baecker seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

#### **Decision on 2013 Annual Budget**

The 2013 budget was presented by Director Flogstad. He reviewed the income sources and explained new income sources for 2013 include \$3,000 (LaFarge Development Plan); \$5,000 City of Prairie du Chien Regional Transit Program; and \$1,500 (UW-WIs CIAS contract). Mr. Flogstad said a major source of income for 2013 is the MRRPC Regional Comp Plan Contract with the State. Mr. Flogstad continued by reviewing projected expenses for 2013. He said fringe benefits increased due to an increase in Wisconsin Retirement deductions and Workers Compensation. He said the budgeted estimated staff salaries increase 2% salary effective July 1, 2013. Chairman Savage asked if there were any questions on the proposed budget. Hearing none, Commission Ehrsam made a motion to approve the 2013 MRRPC Budget as presented, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Jaekel and approved unanimously. Commissioner Ehrsam asked what the cost of living increase was for 2013. Director Flogstad said he was not sure. Chairman Savage said the cost of living increase for Social Security was 1.7%.

#### **Report on the Committee Selection of Kickapoo Valley Biofuel and Wood Product Feasibility Study Consultant**

Director Flogstad said on January 31, 2013 six consultants were interviewed for the Kickapoo Biofuel and Wood Product Feasibility Study. Mr. Flogstad gave a brief outline of the project and the funding sources and listed the consultants interviewed. He said the interviews were conducted by Commissioners from Monroe, Vernon, and Crawford Counties; Bryan Law and himself, MRRPC staff; Larry Gabrielson, LaFarge Village President; and Paul Bader, Kickapoo Woods Cooperative. Mr. Flogstad said the proposals received were of high quality but ultimately the interviewing committee was recommending SEH be selected as the consultant. Mr. Flogstad said he would like to have the MRRPC Executive Committee meet in the coming weeks to approve the contract with SEH and the Village of LaFarge, because waiting until the MRRPC bimonthly meeting in April would cause to much of a delay in the project timetable set forth in the grants funding this project.

### **Report on the Scenic Mississippi River Regional Transit Bus Service Running in Crawford, Vernon and La Crosse Counties**

Peter Fletcher, MRRPC Transportation Planner reported on the Scenic Mississippi River Regional Transit (SMRT) bus service running in Crawford, Vernon and La Crosse counties. The main purpose of the service is to provide transportation for commuters: getting people to work, elderly and disabled residents, medical, and personal travel. He said the service runs Monday through Friday and began December 3, 2012. Mr. Fletcher said grand openings for the service were held in Viroqua and Prairie du Chien. Mr. Fletcher provided some ridership numbers stating that in January the service had 450 riders. He said ridership has picked up which is very encouraging. Riders include students, professional employees, the Amish, etc. Mr. Fletcher said the right now we are monitoring the service, how it's working, and how the stops are being utilized.

Mr. Fletcher said the fare is \$3 one way with punch cards available offering a \$2.50 one way trip. A monthly pass is also available for \$80 for unlimited trips. Mr. Fletcher outlined some of the goals set for ridership. He explained the southern route hasn't taken off but right now the service is committed to making the route whole. He said it takes about 6 months; the routes will be run as they are right now, and after that adjustments and be considered. The service is continually getting feedback. Mr. Fletcher said the service needs to grow the senior transportation but that should pick up in better weather. Commissioner Leys said he would encourage the service to get the bike racks on earlier than later as that is what people for use for transportation once they get off the bus. Mr. Leys asked if the bus stopped at Amtrak. Mr. Fletcher explained the bus doesn't stop at the Amtrak station but they are working with La Crosse MTU to make that connection. Mr. Leys said he would like to someday go from Prairie du Chien to Seattle on public transportation. Commissioner Carney stated he saw Mr. Fletcher on WXOW local news on a video clip about the SMRT bus service. Mr. Leys stated that Prairie du Chien like many other communities has an aging population that are looking for transportation to commute to La Crosse for medical appointments but right now the commute is too long. Mr. Fletcher responded the service is trying to make that connection but the issue right now is the Red Route is tied to employment hours in Prairie du Chien. Mr. Leys also asked if there was a connection to the Veterans Hospital in Tomah. Mr. Fletcher said there was no service currently. Commissioner Ross said there should be efforts made to let large employers know about the service. Mr. Fletcher said he has met with both Cabela's and 3M in Prairie du Chien. Commissioner Schlesselman asked if the ridership closely followed the feasibility study. Mr. Fletcher said it does; he explained that for right now those numbers were cut in half as a ridership goal during this startup period. Director Flogstad asked Mr. Fletcher to briefly discuss the fund raising for the bus system. Mr. Fletcher said the largest contributors to date are Gundersen Lutheran, Organic Valley, Walmart, Vernon Memorial Hospital, and Dairyland. Mr. Fletcher said he met with Logistics Health last week and will be meeting with Kwik Trip. He said funding is a challenge and he is still work on funding for 2013. He said that the counties and some communities have also helped with funding.

### **Report on Networking Across the Supply Chain: Transportation Innovations in Local and Regional Food Systems Conference**

Mr. Law explained that the MRRPC has a contract with the UW-Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS) to assist them in organizing a conference that would encourage networking among food growers, processors, distributors, wholesalers, retailers, and others along the supply chain from "Food to Fork". He said the purpose is for members of these various sectors to identify shared interests and develop joint ventures and other cooperative solutions to issues they face. He said that the conference is scheduled for February 20-21 in La Crosse at the Radisson. The conference is free to attend with a 100 maximum for attendance. He said the good news there are 98 registered so far with only 2 spots open. Mr. Law said FRAN is very supportive of the conference. He said that all Commissioners should have received a post card about the conference in January. Mr. Law said the planning is going great and he hopes the conference will be a success.

### **Regional Comprehensive Plan Goal Setting Policies and Regional Housing Information Report**

Mr. Fletcher presented a Regional Comprehensive Plan goal development process that would consist of: 1) Review county comprehensive plans in the region and collect/analyze planning goals; 2) Evaluate county goals and tabulate into common themes; 3) Based on common themes develop regional goals; and 4) Review goals and identify any gaps and/or region specific concepts. He said the value of that process is that it uses public input from county planning processes and utilizes county plan goals. It also ensures regional goals are consistent with county goals and initiatives. Commissioner Schroeder said our region is very diverse from Pierce County that is influenced by the Twin Cities and Crawford County influenced by Marquette, Iowa. Mr. Fletcher said the area is diverse but there are broad generalized themes and the diversity can also be reflected in regional goals. Mr. Fletcher said as part of the regional planning process the 14 required State planning goals have to be addressed.

There was some discussion on the regional planning process. Mr. Fletcher said the goals developed define what the region is aiming for, and type of future expected. Commissioner Murray said a regional plan will be useful when counties are applying for federal/state funds etc. Commissioner Smith said the plan should look at overarching/shared goals by counties but there may also be issues counties aren't addressing and the regional plan will bring awareness to those issues. Commissioner Schlesselman said the Buffalo County Plan is not done. Mr. Bonifas said Pepin County's Comp Plan is nearing completion. Commissioner Nickelatti said Vernon County prepared a comp plan but it was never adopted. Mr. Fletcher continued by reviewing some consistent themes on housing in the region. He said major housing issues are: Having a sufficient senior/disabled housing, affordable housing for all income levels and good housing stock that is efficient. He said the location of housing and rural housing are also major issues.

Mr. Fletcher reviewed some of the background data collected on housing in the region. He said home foreclosures in the region leveled off in 2011 after reaching all time high levels in 2008, 2009, and 2010. He said that current trends show Monroe and Pepin counties with the least percentage of home sales in the region. He displayed statistics on housing costs in the region. Pierce County had the highest housing costs and Crawford County had the lowest. Mr. Fletcher said between 1990 and 2010 all counties saw significant increases in their housing unit stock. He said housing projections indicate that Pierce and Monroe counties will incur the most growth in housing through 2035 while Buffalo and Crawford counties will show the least growth. He said the counties with the newest housing stock are Pierce, Monroe, and La Crosse counties. Mr. Fletcher said counties with the most mobile homes are Jackson, Crawford and Vernon counties but these are also the counties with the largest percentage of recreational housing. Mr. Fletcher said it's difficult to compare some date between censuses because the 2010 census did not go into the same detail as prior censuses. We now have to use data from the American Community Survey estimates. Chairman Savage asked what affect the Amish population has on some statistics. Mr. Fletcher said that population is certainly a factor in some of the MRRPC counties. Commissioner Smith said that recreational housing also really affects some of the counties. Commissioner Schroeder said that Pierce County has zoning in place that requires mobile homes to be built on a permanent foundation.

#### **Report on Fort McCoy Joint Land Use Study Results**

Mr. Law reported on the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) for Fort McCoy. He explained the purpose of the JLUS is to assess land uses on both sides of the fence and make sure they are compatible. He said as the Fort and civilian communities develop there are many potential sources of land use conflict. He said presently there are no major land-use conflicts, but the potential is there in the future. Mr. Law said the JLUS can help maintain a healthy coexistence. He said the objective of the JLUS is to identify sources of potential conflict and allow both parties to avoid them as they make plans for future development. Mr. Law said collaboration between military installations and surrounding communities is important. Mr. Law said the JLUS is a forward looking document to assist in the collaboration process.

Mr. Law discussed the economic impact of the Fort on the Region. He said that in 2011 dollars returned to the economy due to the Fort's presence exceeded \$409 million but the mission at Fort McCoy is changing and its economic impact may return to levels prior to 911 as fewer troops are trained at the Fort. Mr. Law said some of the benefits of the JLUS are it shows a commitment of local communities to the installation and demonstrates good working relationship between military and civilian entities. The JLUS can also set Fort McCoy apart from other installations during the BRAC process. He said dealing with issues prior to a BRAC is favorable.

Each element of the JLUS report was reviewed by Mr. Law. He explained the planning area of the JLUS includes Ft. McCoy, six surrounding towns in Monroe County (Adrian, Angelo, Grant, Greenfield, Lafayette, New Lyme), and two towns in Jackson County (Manchester and Millston) that are primarily state forest land. Mr. Law outlined the planning process and public participation process. He said a Policy Committee was formed consisting of local governments, business, military and various other stakeholders. A technical advisory group was also formed as part of the planning process. He said during the planning process five public meetings were held and in November 2012 the JLUS was approved by the Policy Committee. It will now go before Monroe County and the towns.

Mr. Law discussed the existing conditions at the Fort and operational impacts. He said with the winding down of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, Ft. McCoy's mission is changing. It will still be a four-season training facility, and artillery is still planned to be part of the training regimen but forces trained will likely be there for longer periods of time, and also likely to be smaller. Mr. Law said civilian land use around the Fort are mainly open lands, forests, wetlands, and agricultural lands and because of their low population density, these land uses are considered compatible with the military mission at Ft. McCoy. He added the more these

lands become higher-density residential, however, they begin to pose the threat of incompatibility. Mr. Law said artillery training is an activity at Ft. McCoy with potential to disturb neighbors. Mr. Law said in the land use analysis of the JLUS the topics of concern identified were: continued growth of residential properties, urban growth in Sparta and Tomah, lack of tax base in towns surrounding Fort that could in turn increase pressure to develop open lands, Ft. McCoy noise could disturb neighbors, and light pollution in surrounding towns and cities could negatively impact night-vision training at Ft. McCoy. Mr. Bonifas presented a series of maps included in the JLUS Plan. The maps included an existing land use map, population and housing density maps, a map of environmentally sensitive areas, and a map showing ranking of incompatibility by Town. There was some discussion on the decibel levels of noise produced by Fort McCoy. Mr. Bonifas reviewed the impacts of noise at certain decibels and said there may be noise from artillery training but it's not something that occurs daily. He said the areas surrounding the Fort at the higher decibel levels are very minimal. Commissioner Leys said if a high percentage of people at the Fort live off the base won't the decrease in activity at the Fort could create vacant housing. He added that having a military base can be a double edged sword as some residents don't want to put up with noise etc. Commissioner Kuhn explained that a lot of emergency and rental housing was used during the increase of troop levels at the Fort and there was no additional building so vacant housing shouldn't be an issue. Mr. Law reviewed the mitigation efforts identified in the plan. Mr. Law said upon completion of the JLUS the Monroe County Sanitation, Planning & Zoning and Dog Control Committee will take the effort of implementing JLUS recommendations forward.

### **Old Business and New Business**

Chairman Savage asked if there was any old business. He then asked if there was any new business. Hearing none a motion was made to adjourn.

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the February 13, 2013, bimonthly meeting minutes approved on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of April 2013.

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Vicki Burke, Secretary-Treasurer