



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

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Chairman  
James Scholmeier, Fountain  
City, WI  
Vice Chairman  
Vicki Burke, Onalaska, WI  
Secretary & Treasurer  
Greg Flogstad, Onalaska, WI  
Director*

**MINUTES**

**MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRRPC)  
BIMONTHLY MEETING**

10:30 a.m., February 8, 2012

Midway Hotel La Crosse "River Jacks", 1835 Rose Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin

**Call to Order**

Chairman Savage called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and asked for the roll call. Greg Flogstad, Director of the MRRPC took roll and said a quorum was present. The attendance roster is attached.

Guests in attendance: Sherry Quamme, Wisconsin MRPC; Paul Wydeven, WisDOT Project Planner; Tom Faella, Executive Director, LAPC; Bob Fisher, Wisconsin MRPC Technical Committee Member

**Minutes of December 14, 2011 Bimonthly Meeting**

Commissioner Kuhn made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Ehram to accept the minutes of the December 14, 2011, bimonthly meeting. Approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report**

Vicki Burke, MRRPC Secretary/Treasurer presented the treasurers reports. Ms. Burke said the December 1, 2011 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$185,192.55 and the December 30, 2011 ending balance was \$163,990.09. Ms. Burke reported that the beginning balance in January 2012 was \$163,990.09 and the balance in all accounts at month's end was \$297,567.09.

Ms. Burke then presented the financial report for the Business Capital Fund. The balance in this account as of November 30, 2011 was \$341,855.85. From December 2011 through January 2012 activity in this account included loan repayments of \$17,519.39 and account interest of \$238.99 leaving a January 31, 2012 ending balance of \$359,614.23. Ms. Burke said that as of November 30, 2011, the Business Capital Fund II RLF had a balance of \$104,071.57. She said that from December 2011 through January 2012 interest on this account totaled \$71.66 and loan repayments were made totaling \$3,818.63 leaving a January 31, 2012 balance of \$107,961.86.

The CMV Growth Development Fund began with a November 9, 2011, balance of \$55,737.09. Ms. Burke said from the period of November 10, 2011 through January 11, 2012 interest earned on this account totaled \$14.55, and loan payments made totaled \$805.02 leaving a January 11, 2012 balance of \$56,556.66. Ms. Burke said the balance in the CMV-EDA Sequestered Fund as of November 9, 2011 was \$158,695.23. During the period of November 10, 2011 through January 11, 2012 activity in this account consisted of interest earned of \$41.06 and a payment to the U.S. Treasury of \$53.58 leaving a January 11, 2012 balance of \$158,682.71.

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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, 2011 balance of \$70,387.06. During the period of November 14, 2011 through January 16, 2012, loan repayments of \$3,140.00 were made and interest earned totaled \$31.43. The ending account balance as of January 16, 2012 was \$73,558.49. Chairman Savage asked for a motion of approval on the treasurers reports presented. Commissioner Scholmeier made a motion to approve the treasurer's reports as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ehrsam, and approved unanimously.

Mr. Law reported he continues his outreach efforts by attending Inventors and Entrepreneur Clubs to promote the revolving loan funds. Mr. Law reported all of the revolving loan funds have funds available for lending.

### **Decision on MRRPC 2012 Budget**

Director Flogstad presented the 2012 budget. He reviewed all of the income categories. He said there are some new contracts for 2012; the Jackson and La Crosse County Multi Hazard Mitigation Plans and the Kickapoo Bio-Fuel and Wood Products Study. He continued by reviewing the expense categories for 2012. He said there were no major changes with the exception of funds budgeted for a consultant as part of the Kickapoo Valley Bio-Fuel and Wood Products Study. Mr. Flogstad asked if anyone had any questions on the MRRPC 2012 budget. Chairman Savage asked for a motion on the budget. Commissioner Ehrsam made a motion to approve the MRRPC 2012 budget as presented and Commissioner Schroeder seconded the motion. Chairman Savage asked if there was any further discussion and hearing none the MRRPC 2012 budget was approved unanimously.

### **Discussion with Mississippi River Parkway Commission – Great River Road Commissioners on Partnership Initiatives**

Sherry Quamme of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission provided some background on the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC). She said the MRPC was created by Congress in 1938 to create a parkway on both sides of the river from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. She said there are 10 individual state commissions: Arkansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Mississippi, Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana and Wisconsin. Ms. Quamme outlined the vision and goals of the MRPC. She said the Wisconsin MRPC's Vision Statement is: "The Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission exists to preserve, protect, promote and enhance the scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, natural and archeological resources of the Wisconsin Mississippi River Valley; to foster tourism in the Great River Road (GRR) Corridor; and to develop and enhance the National Scenic Byway known as the Great River Road." Ms. Quamme said the Great River Road is Wisconsin's only nationally designated scenic byway. She said the Wisconsin GRR is 250 miles in length and travels through 8 counties along Wisconsin's western border as well as 33 cities and villages. Ms. Quamme said travelers on the GRR spent an estimated \$487 million in 2010 supporting over 12,000 full time jobs.

Ms. Quamme reviewed some of the MRPC's projects and accomplishments. Ms. Quamme said indicated funding could be eliminated for the National Scenic Byway Program by the federal government in the next budget. She asked that people contact their Congressman, Senators and the Department of Tourism if they want the National Scenic Byway Program to continue.

Ms. Quamme said the MRPC is interested in forming a closer working relationship with the Mississippi River Regional Planning. She said the MRPC has already formed partnerships with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Lower Wisconsin Riverway. Mr. Flogstad said the MRPC could assist by helping educate people on what the MRPC does. It was decided a Memorandum and Understanding between the MRPC and the MRRPC will be will be drawn up and presented at the next bimonthly meeting. Commissioner Leys said we need to help each other as much as we can.

### **Discussion on Commissioners Survey Responses to Economic Emphasis Survey**

Mr. Flogstad presented the results of the Economic Development Emphasis Survey. He said survey results indicated that Manufacturing, Agriculture, Tourism, Health Care and Transportation were the industries to emphasize to create the greatest contribution to sustainable economic growth over the next 10 years. Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, Mississippi River and its Tributaries, Promote Regional Attribute of Quality Secondary and Post Secondary Educational Systems, Small Community Charm and Amenities, and Natural Scenic Landscape of Driftless Area were selected by survey respondents as the Quality of Place Assets to emphasize. The third area of emphasis, Business Support Services, survey results showed emphasis should be placed on Secondary Education – High School, Post Secondary Education – 1 & 2 year College, More Affordable Financing for Business, Public and Private Partnering to Support Clusters of Similar Industries, and Improving the Business Regulatory Environment. Mr. Flogstad opened the floor for comments. Chairman Savage mentioned that interest in Frac Sand mining has increased in the region. Commissioner Leys said he is glad to see emphasis on manufacturing. There was some discussion on the emphasis of Secondary Education and Post Secondary Education – 1 & 2 year colleges. Mr. Flogstad said high schools play a key role in developing a skilled workforce. Mr. Leys said a skilled workforce is essential in a

manufacturing environment. Commissioner Burke added we have quality technical colleges in the region and it's important to strengthen our technical colleges so we can have the skilled workforce needed.

### **Decision on 2012-2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

Bryan Law said Commissioners should have received a copy of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2012-2017. He reviewed some of the highlights of the CEDS. He said population in the region increased 6.7% since 2000. Mr. Law said most of the Region's population growth from came from natural increase, people come to region and they stayed. He said the region has a higher median age than the State or Nation. Mr. Law said major employment sectors in the region in 2009 in terms of number of employees were: 1) Government and Government Enterprises, 2) Manufacturing, 3) Retail Trade, 4) Health Care and Social Assistance, and 5) Farm Employment. Major employment sectors in the region in terms of average compensation per employee in 2009 were: 1) Utilities, 2) Management of Companies and Enterprises, 3) Manufacturing, 4) Wholesale Trade, and 5) Government and Government Enterprises. Mr. Law said the region's natural strengths such as forestry and agriculture are good for cluster development.

Mr. Law said the Region's estimated 2010 poverty rate is higher than the State but lower than the Nation. He said per capita incomes are increasing at a faster rate in the region than the State or Nation. Mr. Law then discussed some employment trends. He said the 21<sup>st</sup> century worker tends to search out a place to live first and then seeks out a job so quality of place is very important to the region. Mr. Law added the 21<sup>st</sup> century is highly reliant on people with technical knowhow so a highly skilled and trained workforce is an important facet of the region's comprehensive economic development strategy.

Mr. Law the reviewed the goals and strategies defined for the 2012-2017 CEDS. Major goals were: 1) Form economic development partnerships and encourage industry cluster networks as a catalyst for innovation, global competitiveness and regional economic growth; 2) Encourage increased local consumption of products made in the region and further develop the Region's export economy; 3) Protect natural resources, improve recreation opportunities and mitigate losses from disasters to enhance the Region's attractiveness and quality of life; 4) Increase entrepreneurship, business and workforce growth through collaborative networks of innovation; and 5) Further develop the Region's transportation, telecommunication, renewable energy, and public facility infrastructure.

Mr. Leys said CEDS strategy is encouraging but he was concerned with our large aging population and fewer young people locating to the region. There was some discussion on the challenge of keeping young people in the region after they graduate. Mr. Fisher said it's important to make the area attractive to young people and mentioned areas such like the Twin Cities and Seattle Washington. He said the region needs to be aesthetically pleasing to attract young entrepreneurial types. Mr. Law said the region has a much more affordable cost of living than many areas. He added that if high speed Internet is available a business can start almost anywhere. He said statistics show the current recession hasn't dampened that thinking.

Commissioner Kuhn said he just read an article and Wisconsin was listed as one of the worst 10 states to retire due to several factors. Higher taxes and cold weather are a few of the reasons. Commissioner Leys commented on some of the great work the Corps of Engineers has done on the river. He said because of their work 25,000 swans spent quite a bit of time on Pools 8 and 9 on the Mississippi River recently. Commissioner Smith commented that the recent boom in Frac Sand is scary. He said there are few jobs created for what Frac Sand mining can do to the environment. Chairman Savage asked for a motion on the CEDS. Commissioner Leys made a motion to approve the 2012-2017 CEDS. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Purdy. Chairman Savage asked if there was any further discussion.

Director Flogstad said he wanted to add the following addition to the CEDS document under Health Care: "Encourage programs and policies that lead to more healthy lifestyles". He said he met with the Health Science Consortium yesterday and discussion occurred on the importance of policies and programs promoting healthy life styles which in turn can impact health care costs in the region, state and nation. Chairman Savage asked for an amendment to the motion adding this. Commissioner Kuhn made an amendment to the motion to approve adding "Encourage programs and policies that lead to more healthy lifestyles" in the CEDS document; the motion to amend the motion was seconded by Commissioner Smith. The motion on the amendment carried. Chairman Savage then asked for a vote on the original motion as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

**Decision on Process to Contract With a Consultant to Conduct Kickapoo Valley Biofuel and Wood Product Feasibility Study**

Mr. Flogstad discussed the process for hiring a consultant to conduct the Kickapoo Valley Biofuel and Wood Product Feasibility Study. He requested the decision making process for hiring a consultant be delegated to Commissioners in Vernon, Monroe and Crawford counties. Mr. Flogstad suggested that the President of the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative also be included. Commissioner Leys asked about carbon emissions from the biofuels compared to natural gas. Mr. Flogstad said that would be addressed in the study. Mr. Flogstad said Commissioner assistance would be needed in selecting a consultant and suggested the Commissioners from Crawford, Vernon and Monroe Counties. Commissioner Semb made a motion to delegate the decision of selecting a consultant for the Kickapoo Biofuel and Wood Product Feasibility Study to six Commissioners from Crawford, Monroe and Vernon Counties. Commissioner Christenson seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

**Decision on Contract with La Crosse Area Planning Committee to Conduct Regional Transportation Public Visioning Project**

Mr. Fletcher said the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) has received grant funds for a transportation envisioning project in La Crosse County. He said the LAPC is seeking out potential consultants through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Mr. Fletcher said he was asking the Commission Board for approval to respond to the RFP for the LAPC envisioning project. Tom Faella, Executive Director of the LAPC provided a description of the project. He said an envisioning process is done every 5 years. He said this envisioning process will be an effort to get all stakeholders involved in looking out 20 years at transportation and land use issues and opportunities. Commissioner made a motion that MRRPC staff respond to the RFP from the LAPC for the Regional Transportation Public Visioning Project. Commissioner Ehram seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

**Decision on Contracts to Update Jackson County and La Crosse County Multi Hazard Mitigation Plans**

Director Flogstad presented the contracts to update the Jackson County and La Crosse County Mitigation Plans. Chairman Savage asked for a motion to approve both contracts. Commissioner Scholmeier made a motion to approve the contracts to update Jackson and La Crosse County Multi Hazard Mitigation Plans. Commissioner Schnitzler seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

**Report on Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's Revolving Loan Fund Regionalization Initiative**

Mr. Law said the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation is encouraging regional revolving loan funds as a part of their strategic plan in advancing economic development. Mr. Law said three regions have established regional RLFs to date, the Northwest, West Central and Central Areas. Some discussion occurred on the pros and cons of the regional RLFs. Commissioner Jaekel asked if you could opt out of the regional RLF. Mr. Law said that is an option but the State may not look favorably on a community for future funds if they opt out. Commissioners Jaekel and Nickelatti from Vernon County indicated their fund has been very active. They were concerned about the combining of funds into a regional fund that could hurt the more rural counties such as Vernon County. More discussion occurred and Commissioner Kuhn requested that at next meeting the MRRPC have a list of all revolving loan funds in the region. Commissioner Schnitzler also suggested the MRRPC have someone from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation come to a MRRPC bimonthly meeting. Mr. Flogstad said one advantage of the regional RLFs is that all federal strings would be cut to increase flexibility of financing for a business. He said that a fair funding formula could also be worked out. He said he would request someone from Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) at the next bimonthly meeting to answer questions.

**Old Business and New Business**

Chairman Savage asked if there was any old business. Hearing none, Chairman Savage then asked if there was any new business. Mr. Law said he will be participating in a regional conference on February 23, 2012 at the Three Bears Lodge in Warrens Wisconsin. The conference will focus on exploring regional economic opportunities. Some discussion occurred on an analyst report of the Region prepared by Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. The report contained demographic and economic information for the entire MRRPC region.

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the February 8, 2012, bimonthly meeting minutes approved on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of April 2012.

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Vicki Burke, Secretary-Treasurer