



**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., April 13, 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. There were several guests in attendance: Jenny Kuderer, Regional Account Manager, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation; and Mike Temp, President, Tostrud and Temp S.C.

Minutes of February 10, 2016 Bimonthly Meeting

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the February 10, 2016 bimonthly minutes. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the February 10, 2016 meeting minutes and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Ehram. 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 January 31, 2016 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$268,343.88 and the February 29, 2016 ending balance was \$293,551.83. She reported the beginning balance in March 2016 was \$293,551.83 and March 31, 2016 ending balance was \$305,820.35.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund (BCF) began with a January 31, 2016 balance of \$223,855.30. Activity from February 1, 2016 through March 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$10,793.24 and interest earned of \$75.45 leaving a March 31, 2016 balance on hand of \$234,723.99. The BCF Sequester Account began with a February 1, 2016 balance of \$426,780.41. Activity in this account from February 1, 2016 to March 31, 2016 included interest earned of \$159.63 leaving a balance of \$426,940.04.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 began with a January 31, 2016 balance of \$28,881.12. Activity from January 31, 2016 through March 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$1,788.00 and interest earned of \$9.84 leaving a March 31, 2016 balance of \$30,678.96. Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 Sequester Account began with a February 1, 2016 balance of \$160,572.67. Activity in this account from February 1, 2016 through March 31, 2016 included interest earned of \$60.06 leaving a balance of \$160,632.73.

Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund began with a February 1, 2016 balance of \$44,630.75. Activity from February 1, 2016 through March 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$1,178.85 and interest earned of \$6.98 leaving a March 31, 2016 balance of \$45,816.58. Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund Sequester Account began with a February 1, 2016 balance of \$104,057.28. Activity from February 1, 2016 through March 31, 2016 included interest earned of \$15.96 leaving a balance of \$104,073.24.

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The La Crosse County Economic Development Fund began with a February 1, 2016 balance of \$47,558.75. Activity from February 1, 2016 through March 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$3,126.30, and interest earned of \$12.29 leaving a March 31, 2016 balance of \$50,697.34. Ms. Burke said the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Sequester Account began with a February 1, 2016 balance of \$22,420.58. Activity in this account from February 1, 2016 through March 31, 2016 included interest earned of \$5.51 leaving a balance of \$22,426.09.

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 Schroeder and approved unanimously.

Commissioner Borreson asked if all loan payments were current in the revolving loan funds. Mr. Flogstad said yes, loan payments are current. The Administrative Assistant said one loan is two months in arrears in the CMV Growth Development Fund. Mr. Flogstad said this loan has been in arrears before but has always caught up on payments.

Decision on Acceptance of 2015 Audit

Chairman Kuhn introduced Mike Temp of Tostrud and Temp S.C. Mr. Temp said his firm prepared the 2015 Financial Statements and Independent Auditor's Report for the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. He referred to Page 5 and said the MRRPC was given an unqualified opinion on the financial statements, which is what you want. He made reference to Pages 7.1 through 7.7 of the Audit, the MRRPC Management's Discussion and Analysis. Mr. Temp said pages 9 and 10 of the audit provide an overall picture of the MRRPC including the Revolving Loan Funds (RLFs) the MRRPC administers. He said the statements on these pages were prepared using a business type accounting. The statements show the MRRPC and the RLFS recorded more revenues than expenses in 2015. He said the statement on Page 11, the MRRPC balance sheet, was prepared using governmental accounting. Page 13 shows \$359,565 in revenues and \$346,160 in expenses for the MRRPC in 2015. Mr. Temp said Page 15 shows the net position of the revolving loans funds as of 2015. Mr. Temp said Pages 17-35 are foot notes to the audit.

Mr. Temp explained there was a new accounting announcement that affected the MRRPC which involves pension and retirement benefits are accounted for. He said since the Commission is in the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS), the WRS has to determine if it has enough assets to meet its obligations to retirees. An actuarial study is done to determine if they have enough assets, too many assets, not enough assets etc. He explained that right now the current study determined the WRS has excess funding so the Commission has a pension asset on its books. He said if this changes, instead of showing an asset the Commission could show a liability. Mr. Temp said its confusing but right now the report says the WRS is in good shape. He said the WRS will conduct this study every few years so the numbers on the MRRPC's financial statements will be affected every few years.

Commissioner Borreson asked where this came from. Mr. Temp said the accounting powers to be determined this was a problem where there were a lot of liabilities sitting out there not being reported on balance sheets. Mr. Temp said the net pension asset is shown on page 9 of the Audit. Mr. Temp said actuarial studies have to make a lot of assumptions, including rates of return on investments etc. and obviously it's impossible to predict what the stock markets going to do. Commissioner Borreson asked who pays for the study? Mr. Temp said the cost for the actuarial study probably comes out of WRS funds unless the State kicks in some money. Mr. Temp referred to pages 55 and 56, the report on compliance and on internal control and said no deficiencies were found. He said there were no difficulties in performing the audit. Mr. Temp said he want to thank Barb Buros, the Administrative Assistant. He said for a number of years, she has made it very easy for us to come in and conduct the audit. Mr. Temp asked if there were any more questions. Chairman Kuhn said with the way the Wisconsin Retirement System WRS operates the WRS should not have a problem with an unfunded liability for pensions etc. There was some discussion on this. Mr. Temp said the WRS is one of the top pension systems in the country.

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion approving the 2015 MRRPC financial statements. Commissioner Borreson made a motion to approve the 2015 Financial Statements and Independent Auditor's Report for the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. Commissioner Ehram seconded the motion and is was approved unanimously.

Decision on Recommendations of Executive and Administration Committee on 2016 Staff Salary Adjustments and 2017 County Contributions and Contract with the Village of Oakdale

Commissioner Baecker reported that the Executive and Administration Committee met at the Buffalo County Courthouse on March 31, 2016. She said the committee went into closed session to discuss wage adjustments for the MRRPC staff. She said a motion was made and seconded recommending a 1.5% increase for the Community Development Planner, Transportation Planner, and Director effective July 1, 2016. She said another motion was made and seconded to amend the motion to also include a 50 cent an hour raise for the Community Development Planner and Transportation Planner effective July 1, 2016. This motion was made for the reason of

having these positions' wages come closer to what similar positions in the region were paying. That motion to amend the motion was passed unanimously. Ms. Baecker reported that a motion was made to amend the amended motion to allow an increase for the Director's hourly rate based on the Chairman's recommendation after his review of the Executive Committee evaluations of the Director. Ms. Baecker stated that the original motion as twice amended was unanimously approved.

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on staff salary adjustments. Chairman Ehram made a motion to approve the Executive and Administration Committee's recommendation to approve a 1.5% salary increase for the Community Development Planner, Transportation Planner, and Director effective July 1, 2016 plus a 50 cent per hour increase for the Community Development Planner and Transportation Planner effective July 1, 2016. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Vold. It was reported that the MRRPC planners are paid in the 25th percentile when compared to other similar positions in the region. Chairman Kuhn said that after reviewing the Executive Committee evaluations for the Director he was also recommending an additional 50 cents an hour increase for the Director. Commissioner Schroeder made a motion to amend the original motion to also add a 50 cent an hour increase for the Director. Commissioner Baecker seconded that motion and it was approved unanimously. Chairman Kuhn then asked for a motion on the original motion as amended authorizing a 1.5% increase plus an additional 50 cents an hour increase for the Community Development Planner, Transportation Planner, and Director effective July 1, 2016. The motion was approved unanimously.

2017 County Contributions

Commissioner Baecker said the Executive and Administration Committee was recommending the same amount (\$138,860) for funding from counties for 2017 as in 2016 resulting in a county contribution rate of .00066266% based on 2015 real property equalized values. Commissioner Schroeder made a motion to approve 2017 county contributions totaling \$138,860. Commissioner Nickelatti seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Contract with Oakdale

Ms. Baecker said the Executive and Administration Committee recommended approval of a \$6,000 contract with the Village of Oakdale to administer their State Community Development Block Grant Planning Grant Award. Commissioner Schroeder made a motion to approve the contract between MRRPC and the Village of Oakdale; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Borreson and approved unanimously.

Presentation by Angie Dickison, PSC State Broadband Director on State's Broadband Grant Program

Chairman Kuhn introduced Angie Dickison, State Broadband Director of the Wisconsin State Broadband office. Ms. Dickison gave a brief overview of her background. She explained broadband grant applications are due June 16th. She said workshops are available around the state on this grant program. She referred everyone to their web site: PSCStateBroadbandOffice@wisconsin.gov. Ms. Dickison said that even if the broadband map shows you are ineligible, please contact their office. She said the map is just a starting point and there have been some issues with the map. She said the Broadband Grant Program is a competitive program, but don't give up. Jenny Kuderer of Wisconsin EDC mentioned CAF 2 funding (Connect America Funding), a federal subsidy provided to three large carriers in the state: AT & T, Frontier, and Centurylink. This federal funding was accepted to improve broadband in rural communities over the next 6 years. Ms. Dickison said if you are in a Connect America Funding Community, talk to these telecommunication providers. She said that Connect America Funding eligible communities can still apply to the Wisconsin State Broadband Grant Program. Mr. Dickson said they have had a good response to their workshops and that a webinar is also available.

Decision on Approval of 2016 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update

Director Flogstad reported on the 2016 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update. He said since 1976 the MRRPC has cooperated with MRRPC member counties to annually develop the CEDS. He said preparation of this report maintains the region's Economic Development District designation with the U.S. Department of Commerce-Economic Development Administration qualifying the region's communities, institutions, and businesses to be eligible for EDA assistance. He said the CEDS documents the region's conditions, economic challenges and strategies to improve our region's environment, economy and quality of life. The MRRPC region has received millions of dollars from Federal EDA grants through the years funding industrial parks, economic research studies, public facility projects and business loans. Mr. Flogstad briefly reviewed highlights of the CEDS. He said a main issue in the region is a stagnant labor force. Commissioner Russell commented on how seasonal workers are impacting the higher unemployment rates. There was some discussion on how this impacts unemployment benefits. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion to approve the 2016 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Commissioner Krachey made a motion to approve the 2016 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Twidt and approved unanimously.

Decision on Contract with Trempealeau County to Update Town Comprehensive Plans

Mr. Fletcher presented a contract between Trempealeau County and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. The purpose of the contract is for the MRRPC staff to update comprehensive plans for the Towns of Albion, Burnside, Caledonia, Chimney Rock, Dodge, Ettrick, Gale, Hale, Lincoln, Pigeon, Preston, Sumner, and Trempealeau. Mr. Fletcher said the County eliminated a planner position and has been putting funding aside for funding these updates. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion to approve the contract. Commissioner Burke made a motion to approve the contract between Trempealeau County and the MRRPC to update 13 Town Plans. Commissioner Borreson seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Commissioner Borreson said this is a positive project for the County especially with the cuts made to UW-Extension,.

Decision on Contract with La Crosse County to Prepare a Public Transit Feasibility Study for La Crosse, Monroe, and Trempealeau Counties Through a Wisconsin DOT 5304 Planning Grant

Mr. Fletcher presented a contract between La Crosse County and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission for preparing a public transit feasibility study for La Crosse, Monroe, and Trempealeau counties. Mr. Fletcher said that MRRPC staff would administer preparation of the feasibility study. He explained that UW-Extension is undertaking the survey work and the Planning Department and La Crosse Area Planning Committee will be preparing the maps for the study and also gathering demographic data. Mr. Fletcher said MRRPC staff will be overseeing the process and bringing it all together finalizing the study by the end of the year. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the contract. Commissioner Nickelatti made a motion to approve the contract between the MRRPC and La Crosse County to prepare a public transit feasibility study for La Crosse, Monroe and Trempealeau counties. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Twidt and approved unanimously.

Decision on Trempealeau County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan Contract

Mr. Bonifas said MRRPC staff applied on behalf of Trempealeau County for funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for State-Local Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Assistance Planning funds. He said the grant application was successful. Mr. Bonifas presented a contract between Trempealeau County and the MRRPC to secure planning services of the MRRPC to update Trempealeau County's Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan 2012-2016. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the contract. Commissioner Borreson made a motion to approve the contract between the MRRPC and Trempealeau County for the purpose of updating the County's Multi-Hazards Mitigation Plan 2012-2016. Commissioner Vold seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Decision on Crawford County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan Contract

Mr. Bonifas said Crawford County was awarded State-Local Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Assistance funds to update their County Multi Hazard Mitigation Plan 2012-2016. Mr. Bonifas presented a contract between Crawford County and the MRRPC to secure planning services of the MRRPC to update Crawford County's Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan 2012-2016. Mr. Bonifas said staff will be working with Crawford County's new Emergency Management Director to complete this project. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the contract. Commissioner Ehsam made a motion to approve the contract between the MRRPC and Crawford County for the purpose of updating the County's Multi-Hazards Mitigation Plan 2012-2016. Commissioner Baecker seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Mr. Bonifas said he is also working with Vernon County to submit a grant application to update their Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. Commissioner Borreson asked if the MRRPC had the man-power to undertake all these projects. Director Flogstad commented they do.

Decision on Crawford County Land and Water Conservation Plan

Mr. Bonifas explained that every five years Wisconsin counties are required to update their Land and Water Resource Plans. He then presented a contract between the MRRPC and Crawford county to secure the planning services of the MRRPC to update Crawford County's Land and Water Resource Plan. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the contract. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the contract between the MRRPC and Crawford County to update Crawford County's Land and Water Resource Conservation Plan. Commissioner Ehsam seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Report on 2015-2016 SMRT Bus Ridership and New Routes in La Crosse, Vernon and Crawford Counties

Mr. Fletcher reported that the SMRT Bus developed an agreement with Organic Valley to modify some routes to take employees to and from their La Farge facility each day. Mr. Fletcher said that from 2014 to 2015 ridership on the SMRT Bus has increased by 6.2% and for the first three months in 2016 ridership is up 17.5%. He said that a survey is underway for the SMRT Bus and to date the survey has shown that 95% of riders are either very satisfied or satisfied. There was some discussion on a few complaints made on the surveys.

Commissioner Jaekel said you are never going to keep everyone happy. Mr. Fletcher said the SMRT bus has very good drivers and they know their riders, and they are good at solving problems. Mr. Fletcher said currently he is working on a Bremer grant that would provide additional funding for the SMRT Bus. Commissioner Stittleburg asked what the bus fares were. Mr. Fletcher said it's \$3.00 one way.

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 "Power Grant" funds are being used to prepare an in-depth economic strategy in response to the Alma Coal Power Plant Closure. He said this report when done should help a lot of rural communities with economic analysis and forming economic development strategies. Mr. Flogstad said that by 2020, about 30% of Buffalo County's population will be over age 65. He said the county has low unemployment and high income when compared to surrounding counties and the state. Mr. Flogstad said this plan will have research techniques and findings that will be beneficial to the entire region.

Update on Hiring New Administrative Assistant

Mr. Flogstad said we have received 107 applications for the Administrative Assistant position. He said of those applications 48 have technical degrees, 44 have college degrees, and 15 have high school degrees. He said he will be going over the applications in depth next week and setting up some interviews. He said he hoped to have someone hired by the end of May or early June.

Old and New Business

Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any old business. Hearing none, he asked if there was any new business. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Schroeder made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Vicki Burke, Secretary-Treasurer