



**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., June 8, 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: Tom Faella, La Crosse LAPC, Paul Schwebach, Pierce County EDC, Lisa Herr, 7 Rivers Alliance.

Minutes of April 13, 2016 Bimonthly Meeting

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the April 13, 2016 bimonthly minutes. Commissioner Burke made a motion to approve the April 13, 2016 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 March 31, 2016 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$305,820.35 and the April 30, 2016 ending balance was \$360,202.12. She reported the beginning balance in May 2016 was \$360,202.12 and May 31, 2016 ending balance was \$333,160.87.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund (BCF) began with a March 31, 2016 balance of \$234,723.99. Activity from April 1, 2016 through May 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$9,493.28, interest earned of \$79.54, sequester transfer of \$1,647.38, and administration expense of \$3,347.00 leaving a May 31, 2016 balance on hand of \$239,302.43. The BCF Sequester Account began with a March 31, 2016 balance of \$426,940.04. Activity in this account from April 1, 2016 to May 31, 2016 included interest earned of \$161.64, sequester transfer of \$1,647.38, and interest paid to the U.S. Treasury of \$240.77 leaving a balance of \$428,508.29.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 began with an April 1, 2016 balance of \$30,678.96. Activity from April 1, 2016 through May 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$1480.00, interest earned of \$10.46, and administrative expense of \$329.00 leaving a May 31, 2016 balance of \$31,840.42. Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 Sequester Account began with a March 31, 2016 balance of \$160,632.73. Activity in this account from April 1, 2016 through May 31, 2016 included interest earned of \$60.73 and interest paid the U.S. Treasury of \$111.14 leaving a balance of \$160,582.32.

Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund began with an April 1, 2016 balance of \$45,816.58. Activity from April 1, 2016 through May 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$802.20 and interest earned of \$7.08 leaving a May 31, 2016 balance of \$46,625.86. Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund Sequester Account began with an April 1, 2016 balance of \$104,073.24. Activity from April 1, 2016 through May 31, 2016 included interest earned of \$15.96 and interest paid to the U.S. Treasury of \$44.10 leaving a balance of \$104,045.10

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 Economic Development Fund began with an April 1, 2016 balance of \$50,697.34. Activity from April 1, 2016 through May 31, 2016 included loan repayments of \$635.42, interest earned of \$14.46, sequester transfers of \$2,216.01, and administrative expense of \$800.00 leaving a May 31, 2016 balance of \$48,331.21. Ms. Burke said the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Sequester Account began with an April 1, 2016 balance of \$22,426.09. Activity in this account from April 1, 2016 through May 31, 2016 included interest earned of \$5.91, sequester transfer of \$2,216.01, and interest paid to the U.S. Treasury of \$14.31 leaving a balance of \$24,633.70.

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 Nickaletti and approved unanimously.

Mr. Flogstad discussed the need for renewing the signature card at the bank due to new staff being hired. Chairman Kuhn said it would be best to wait until after the election of officers.

Election of Officers

Commissioner Ehrsam from the nominating committee gave the list of nominations from the committee as Jim Kuhn for Chairman, Marge Baecker for Vice-Chairman, and Vicki Burke for Secretary Treasurer. Commissioner Ehrsam asked if there were any other nominations from the board three times. Commissioner Ehrsam made a motion to close the nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for the three officers nominated. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schroeder and approved unanimously.

Signature Card

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion to approve the Resolution for the Bank Signature card. Commissioner Schnitzler made a motion to approve the signatures for the bank signature card to include Greg Flogstad, Director, Sarah Ofte Administrative Assistant and Vicki Burke, Secretary Treasurer. Any two of the above signatures need to be on a check. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ross and approved unanimously.

Paul Schwebach Pierce County Economic Development Presentation and Discussion

Mr. Schwebach provided an overview of the economy and economic development activities in Pierce County. Some of the things he mentioned included: (1) United Natural Foods Inc.'s \$37 million expansion in Prescott that will create over 300 jobs. They are building in Eagle Ridge Business Park that is just one of 13 Certified Sites in Wisconsin. (2) The recently approved \$1.4 million St Croix County Incubator involving a partnership between UW River Falls, City of River Falls, Pierce County Economic Development Corporation, River Falls Economic Development Corporation. Funding was provided through bank loans, and grants from the U.S Department of Commerce-Economic Development Administration and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. (3) Pierce County has a 4% unemployment rate and 40% of its workforce commutes to the Twin Cities. (4) Their economic development plan has four work groups: Prospects, Business Retention, Image Development, and New Business Start-ups. (5) An economic development concern for the county is the need for better broadband access in some areas, this concern culminated in the State PSC Broadband Director being invited to a meeting and talk with service providers. (6) Tourism is an area they are trying to boost. (7) Access to more business financing is a need due to their CDBG RLF funds with the Regional Business Fund not being de-federalized. Commissioner Ross stated that it is not just revenue streams but also what can each region provide and find ways to aid people through websites and other communications to let people know all the resources that exist.

Decision on Partnering with the 7 Rivers Alliance on the Regional Workforce Innovation for a Strong Economy (WISE)

Lisa Herr, Director of the 7 Rivers Alliance commented that she is working on a tri-state initiative that will hopefully lead to a larger and better prepared workforce. She stated employers are having a challenge finding skilled workers. She stated that based on survey results 75% of employers in 2015 were having problems accessing workers needed to fill their job openings. Companies say that don't waste their time in areas if a skilled workforce isn't readily available. The 7 River Alliance over the last 20 months have held forums on talent attraction, housing, small town grocery stores and community wellness. She stated that all of these are areas that can help retain and attract a skilled workforce Ms. Herr stated she is asking the MRRPC to partner with their organization and others in the tri-state region to apply for state and federal planning grants to help us develop a 10-year plan for talent development and retention in the region. She stated there are 7 universities within 1 hour of La Crosse pumping out talent, but they are leaving for the larger metro areas like the Twin Cities. There are 3 phases to the plan. Phase one involves creating a regional leadership team. Phase two looks at sharing information about opportunities and barriers to talent development and Phase three involves developing joint solutions and goals for improving the quantity and quality of talent of the region's workforce. Ms. Herr stated that they want to partner with MRRPC as they move forward. The goal is to have a kickoff in August with the three governors and elected officials. The focus is to not lose more talent. Ms. Herr said that

she would provide quarterly updates. She concluded by stating they are partnering with the River Valley Newspaper Group for recognizing “Rising Stars Under 40” and would like Commissioners to promote this and help them find applicants to celebrate the talents of our younger people in the workforce. The following is a summary of comments that were made about growing and improving the region’s workforce by Commissioners, staff and guests at the meeting. More child care alternatives is a need, more transportation alternatives are needed, some four year degree holders cannot get a job, students and educators must talk about what job opportunities there are, stress the 2+2 tech college - university arrangement because of the high costs of a four year degree, lower salaries and less benefits in this region is contributing to region’s brain drain, some employers are offering signing bonuses to overcome brain drain, encourage immigration, not everyone is college material and a good skill set is needed out of high school, tech colleges are a viable option for people to excel, many cannot pass an employer drug test, some employers are waiving drug tests, employees are having to work double shifts because employers can’t find applicants who can pass a drug test, it’s an employee’ market, need to give and restore dignity and prestige to jobs that don’t require a 4 year degree, need to do a better job of promoting things to do in the region to attract young talent. Commissioner Jaekel made a motion to partner with the 7 Rivers Alliance and other regional organizations in applying for grants and developing a Workforce Innovation for a Strong Economy Plan. The motion seconded by Commissioner McMillan Urell and was unanimously approved.

SMRT Bus Update

Mr. Fletcher presented an update of the SMRT Bus services stating the cost was \$353,000 in 2016, most of the revenue or 56% is grant funds U.S. DOT that is passed to the State. Fare box revenue and organizational sponsorships make up the rest of the revenue stream. The local cost share has leveled off to 15% of service. SMRT Bus ridership continues to increase with 19,223 riders in 2015 up 6.2% from 2014 and the first three months in 2016 are up 17.5% from 2015. He also mentioned that based on a recent survey the majority of users are very satisfied with the service. He assisted the SMRT BUS in applying for a Bremer Bank Grant and requested \$60,000. The interviews on the grants were conducted yesterday. The grant recipients will be notified in August.

Discussion of New Zoning Ordinance for Buffalo County

Mr. Bonifas said that they are assisting Buffalo County in preparing an update to its zoning ordinance. He said that preserving farmland is key in the revisions. He said that towns will create and develop their zoning map and then bring it back to the county. The density based zoning concept is being used to give landowners more flexibility. He said that there will be public hearings will be scheduled soon. Commissioner McMillan Urell said that it is good to have public hearings with the town boards involved. Mr. Bonifas said that during this revision period it gives towns an opportunity to drop out of county zoning and develop their own if they choose.

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, a motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to adjourn.

Vicki Burke, Secretary-Treasurer