



**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*  
*Dave Bonifas, La Crosse, WI  
Director*

**MINUTES**  
**MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRRPC)**  
**BIMONTHLY MEETING**  
**10:00 a.m., August 12, 2020**  
**AmericInn 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. There were two guests in attendance: Jaron McCallum, State Broadband Director, Public Service Commission and Jason Solinger, Operations Data Analyst, Pierce County. The attendance roster is attached.

**Minutes of June 10, 2020 Bimonthly Meeting**

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the June 10, 2020 bimonthly meeting minutes. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the June 10, 2020 bimonthly meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ehrsam. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the minutes were unanimously approved.

**Treasurer's Report**

Secretary/Treasurer Burke reported that the May 31, 2020 balance in all accounts was \$442,018.02 and the June 30, 2020 ending balance was \$408,127.75. She reported the beginning balance July 1, 2020 was \$408,127.75 and July 31, 2020 ending balance was \$442,658.97.

Ms. Burke reported the Business Capital Fund (BCF) began with a May 31, 2020 balance of \$147,350.91. Activity from June 1, 2020 through July 31, 2020 included loan repayments of \$7,683.53, interest earned of \$37.80, and administrative costs of \$750.00 leaving a July 31, 2020 balance on hand of \$154,322.24. The Business Capital Fund (BCF) non-federal account began with a May 31, 2020 balance of \$132,269.67. Activity from June 1, 2020 through July 31, 2020 included interest earned of \$33.16 leaving a balance on hand of \$132,302.83.

Ms. Burke reported the Business Capital Fund 2 began with a May 31, 2020 balance of \$158,748.23. Activity from June 1, 2020 through July 31, 2020 included loan repayments of \$1,030.00 and interest earned of \$39.94 leaving a balance on hand of \$159,818.17.

Ms. Burke reported the CMV Growth Development Fund began with a May 31, 2020 balance of \$40,699.31. Activity from June 1, 2020 through July 31, 2020 included loan repayments of \$1,501.08 and interest earned of \$3.56 leaving a July 31, 2020 balance of \$42,203.95.

Ms. Burke reported the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund began with a May 31, 2020 balance of \$87,369.12. Activity from June 1, 2020 through July 31, 2020 included interest earned of \$3.32 leaving a July 31, 2020 balance of \$87,370.57.

Ms. Burke reported the Microloan Fund began with a May 31, 2020 balance of \$34,364.80. Activity from June 1, 2020 through July 31, 2020 included interest earned of \$3.32 and loan payments of \$16,551.00 leaving a July 31, 2020 balance of \$50,919.12. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented. Mr. Bonifas reported that the businesses with Microloans were given an opportunity to defer their loans for three months due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. He said that thirteen businesses took advantage of the opportunity. Commissioner Borreson made a motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pelock. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments hearing none the Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved.

**Presentation on broadband expansion grants, Jaron McCallum, State Broadband Director, Public Service Commission.**

Jaron McCallum, State Broadband Director of the Public Service Commission, discussed the issues of broadband coverage in the state. He presented the new grants offered by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission during the current 2020-2021 grant cycle to expand the state's broadband coverage. The grant can be found at <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandGrants.aspx>. The grants will be open for applications beginning September 1, 2020 with the applications being due by December 1, 2020.

**Update of the EDA grant to fund economic recovery planning for the communities of Ontario, La Farge, Viola, and Readstown with MRRPC serving as the applicant and grant administrator.**

Mr. Bonifas reported that the MRRPC had previously been awarded \$900,000 to assist the Villages of Ontario, La Farge, Viola, and Readstown located along the Kickapoo River to aid in developing plans for flood recovery. He said that consultants have been selected and the contracts have been signed. The initial meetings for the project have been held. The Villages of Viola and La Farge have both selected Vierbecher and Associates and have held two meetings. Readstown has selected SEH and they held their initial meeting July 28<sup>th</sup>. The Village of Ontario has selected MSA and their initial meeting is scheduled for next week. The consultants are on schedule for the project to be completed on deadline by December 2021. Some of the consultants are anticipating completion of the project by Spring of 2021. He said that we are the administrator of the grant and staff has been attending all the meetings either in person or via Zoom. He said that there is a committee that has been formed which is made up of two people from each community. This committee meets to share ideas with the different communities in order to keep everyone involved informed and to help the communities view the project regionally.

**Update on the City of Westby Industrial Park EDA grant administration.**

Ms. Nicewander reported that the City of Westby Industrial Park grant is a \$4.3 million project funded by EDA grant. She said that the application had been submitted last November and was approved in April of this year. She said that meetings have been held with EDA, officials from the City of Westby, engineers, and MRRPC staff to administer the grant. Currently we are waiting for WI DOT for their approval for the connection from the highway to the industrial park. Approval has been granted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the State Historical Preservation Society. She said that the plan was also sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for them to review the plan for their approval. The quarterly reports have been submitted and the next step is to wait for the approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the WI DOT to proceed.

**Decision on the Town of Holland Comprehensive Plan Update contract.**

Mr. Bonifas reported that the Town of Holland has reached the end of its plan cycle and is due for an update to its Comprehensive Plan. He said that the cost of the plan would be \$12,000 with \$6,000 from the Town and \$6,000 being matched by the Commission. The update would begin in September 2020 and the plan would be completed by June 2021. Commissioner Burke made a motion to approve the contract between the Town of Holland and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to complete the update to the Town of Holland's Comprehensive Plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schroeder. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none the motion was unanimously approved.

**Update and decision on EDA CARES Act RLF Supplemental Funding.**

Mr. Bonifas reported that EDA contacted the Commission and asked the commission to apply for additional funds to recapitalize our Revolving Loan Funds. He said that we currently administer four revolving loan funds that are available to make loans to businesses in the nine counties that the Commission serves. He said that this is a noncompetitive EDA grant that would help re-fund our four existing revolving loan funds and would allow us to waive three loan requirements which are currently required such as offering an interest rate below the prime rate, waiving a turn down letter from a bank, and not requiring a 2:1 private to public financing ratio. Mr. Bonifas said that we have applied for the funds and have been awarded \$1,050,000 to loan out to businesses. He said that the award just needs to be accepted and divided across the region. He said that these funds need to be kept separate from our other revolving loan funds for bookkeeping purposes and will be a completely new fund available to businesses in all nine counties in our service area. The amount that was awarded was based on capitalizing the existing revolving loan funds. He said that the existing revolving loan fund boards would review the new loans for this fund, for example a loan application in the Monroe County area would be reviewed by the CMV Growth Development Fund board which covers Crawford, Monroe, and Vernon Counties and the La Crosse County Board would review applications for La Crosse County and the Business Capital Fund board would review loans in the Pierce, Pepin, Buffalo, Trempealeau, Jackson County area. Mr. Bonifas reported that EDA has given award recipients two years to loan out the money to businesses. After the two years the original loan requirements would go back

into effect. These loans would be in the \$20,000 to \$50,000 range. Mr. Bonifas directed the participants to the handout in their packets. He reviewed the four different options for dividing the funds. The first option would be to use the real estate equalized value of the different loan areas; the second option was to use the existing revolving loan fund capital base from each fund; the third option was to use a base amount of \$250,000 per RLF region and then use the percentage of total RLF Capital base to divide the funds; and the fourth option would be to use a base of \$250,000 per RLF region and then use a percentage of the total real estate equalized value. Commissioner Burke made a motion to accept the 4<sup>th</sup> option presented using a base of \$250,000 per RLF Region and then using percentages of the Total Real Estate Equalized Values allocating \$356,745 to the Business Capital Fund, \$326,662 to the CMV Growth Development Fund, and \$366,592 to the La Crosse County Business Fund and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Pelock. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments on the motion. Commissioner Borreson asked if the member county dues were based on equalized value and Mr. Bonifas replied that they were. Commissioner Borreson replied that if historically we have used real estate equalized value than option #1 would be consistent with what has been done in the past. Commissioner Kees Winkler asked how the county dues were calculated for the member counties and Mr. Bonifas replied that they are determined by each county's real estate equalized value. Commissioner Kees Winkler asked how the RLF options were calculated. Mr. Bonifas replied that this is a unique situation, and the options were created using both real estate equalized value and a set amount to each RLF areas. Commissioner Borreson withdrew his objection to the motion and endorsed option #4. Commissioner Cornell asked if there was any time limit to distributing the funds. Mr. Bonifas replied that it was a two year period and if after 18 months it can be revisited and the funds would be open to other areas that would need the funds. Chairman Kuhn clarified that even though it is a set amount that if one area has a greater need the funds could be redistributed. Commissioner Kees Winkler proposed delaying the vote. Chairman Kuhn asked if there was an amendment to the motion and no amendment was brought forward. Commissioner Burke made a call for the motion and it was approved. The motion passed with 14 ayes and 2 no's the motion was approved.

#### **Update on EDA CARES Act Economic Development Districts Supplemental Funding.**

Mr. Bonifas reported that EDA asked the Commission to apply for additional CARES Act Supplemental funding. He said these awards were Economic Development District (EDD) awards and the commission is one of them. He said that this is a \$400,000 noncompetitive grant which does not require matching funds. The application for the grant application has been submitted and included money for equipment to purchase laptops for staff to allow them to work from home if needed, a marketing plan for the SMRT Bus due to the SMRT Bus was impacted from COVID, a website upgrade for the commission and outreach to small businesses struggling from COVID to help them with their web development, online presence and marketing, software from EMSI to study the impact of COVID, and an anonymous data cellphone data probe from a vendor to help businesses learn about where and how their customers are moving. Mr. Gollnik said that the data is all scrubbed and is anonymous and there is an economic development component and a transportation component to the data sets to use in our other planning work. Mr. Bonifas said that we are awaiting the approval of the grant and if we are awarded the grant, we would have two years to use the funds.

#### **Update on EDA application for the relocation of La Farge's electrical substation.**

Mr. Gollnik reported that in 2019 there was about \$600 million made available through EDA for a disaster recovery supplemental program. He said that we are submitting an application with the Village of La Farge for nearly \$1 million to relocate the substation out of the floodplain due to 124 households and businesses experiencing power outages during the floods of 2018. The application is currently with the village for review and will be submitted after the village's input.

#### **MRRPC Region Payroll Protection Program Summary.**

Ms. Nicewander reported that the Payroll Protection Program was a federal program implemented by the Small Business Association (SBA) to help small businesses with their payroll, rent, and utility expenses to help businesses maintain their staff during COVID. The program operated from May 15<sup>th</sup> to August 8<sup>th</sup>. She said that 53,037 jobs have been retained in the Mississippi River Region through the program.

#### **Old, Business, New Business and Adjourn**

Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any old business hearing none, Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any new business. A motion was made to adjourn by Commissioner Twidt and seconded by Commissioner Schroeder. The motion was unanimously approved.

<b>MRRPC Bimonthly Meeting Attendees</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Del Twidt	Buffalo County
Dennis Pelock	Crawford County
Gerald Krachey	Crawford County
Brad Chown	Jackson County
Ron Carney	Jackson County
Vicki Burke	La Crosse County
James Ehram	La Crosse County
James Kuhn	Monroe County
Cedric Schnitzler	Monroe County
Chris Kees Winkler	Pepin County
Richard Purdy	Pierce County
William Schroeder	Pierce County
Margaret Baecker	Trempealeau County
Ernest Vold	Trempealeau County
Phillip Borreson	Trempealeau County
Herb Cornell	Vernon County
Dave Bonifas	MRRPC Staff
Bob Gollnik	MRRPC Staff
Abbey Nicewander	MRRPC Staff
Sarah Ofte	MRRPC Staff
Josh Solinger	Pierce County
Jaron McCallum	State Broadband Director, Public Service Commission