



**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., October 14, 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 several guests in attendance: Alex Gramovot, Transportation Planner, WI DOT, Greg Wavrunek, Representing Senator Tammy Baldwin, Jackie Eastwood, Transportation Planner, La Crosse Area MPO, Peter Fletcher, Director, La Crosse Area MPO, Roxie Anderson, land Use Planner, Monroe County, Francis Schelfhout, WI DOT, Rebecca Giroux, WHEDA, Joe Folsom, Director Pierce County Economic Development Corporation, Jenny Kuderer-Radcliffe Dairyland Power, Ben Humboldt, UW-L Student, Sophie Sherry, UW-L Student, Brenda Ganser, UW-L Student. The attendance roster is attached.

Minutes of August 12, 2020 Bimonthly Meeting

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the August 12, 2020 bimonthly meeting minutes. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the June 10, 2020 bimonthly meeting minutes. 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 reported that the July 31, 2020 balance in all accounts was \$442,658.97 and the August 31, 2020 ending balance was \$431,968.27. She reported the beginning balance September 1, 2020 was \$431,968.27 and September 30, 2020 ending balance was \$415,133.05.

Ms. Burke reported the Business Capital Fund (BCF) began with a July 31, 2020 balance of \$154,322.24. Activity from August 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020 included loan repayments of \$6,6620.78 and interest earned of \$39.55, leaving a September 30, 2020 balance on hand of \$160,982.57. The Business Capital Fund (BCF) non-federal account began with a July 31, 2020 balance of \$132,302.83. Activity from August 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020 included interest earned of \$33.17 leaving a balance on hand of \$132,336.00.

Ms. Burke reported the Business Capital Fund 2 began with a July 31, 2020 balance of \$159,818.17. Activity from June 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020 included loan repayments of \$1,894.00 and interest earned of \$40.34 leaving a balance on hand of \$161,752.51.

Ms. Burke reported the CMV Growth Development Fund began with a July 31, 2020 balance of \$42,203.95. Activity from August 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020 included loan repayments of \$3,002.16 and interest earned of \$3.64 leaving a September 30, 2020 balance of \$45,209.75.

Ms. Burke reported the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund began with a July 31, 2020 balance of \$87,370.57. Activity from August 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020 included interest earned of \$1.48 leaving a July 31, 2020 balance of \$87,372.05.

Ms. Burke reported the Microloan Fund began with a July 31, 2020 balance of \$50,919.12. Activity from June 1, 2020 through July 31, 2020 included interest earned of \$4.70 and loan payments of \$10,380.00 leaving a September 30, 2020 balance of \$61,303.82. Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented. 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. Mr. Bonifas reported that there had been a Business Capital Fund that had been approved and the funds have not been disbursed yet and there was also another loan application that had been received for review.

Presentation on Connect 2050, Alex Gramovot, Transportation Planner, Wisconsin DOT.

Alex Gramovot, Transportation Planner of the Wisconsin DOT, discussed the Connect 2050 which is a statewide long-range multimodal transportation policy plan. He said that this long-range plan will guide the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's decision-making about changes to and investments in our statewide system for the next roughly 30 years. The plan will impact all types of transportation – from roads to ports to sidewalks – across our entire state. Mr. Gramovot also outlined how residents and stakeholders in the State of Wisconsin can contribute to the plan with their input.

Decision Resolution regarding revised CARES Act RLF Administration Plan Addendum.

Mr. Bonifas reported that at the last bimonthly meeting a resolution to the original revolving loan plan had been approved for the distribution of the new CARES Act RLF funds. He said that the resolution was based on easing three restrictions from the existing RLF plan; interest rate requirements, no turn down letter required from a bank, and no requirement of public to private funds leveraging. He said that EDA supplied a template for the resolution with a specific date and timeframe. He said that EDA recommended changing the language to disbursement phase which is defined as the period of lending activity during which award funds have not been fully dispersed to the EDA recipient instead of using exact dates. He said EDA is recommending we readopt the resolution with this change in wording to allow more flexibility if dates change. A motion was made by Commissioner Schnitzler and seconded by Commissioner Burke to adopt the new addendum to the Revolving Loan Fund Plan by removing the exact dates and changing the wording to disbursement phase. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Bonifas said that there is a Resolution in the meeting packets as well to approve and readopt the Revolving Loan Plan. A motion was made by Commissioner Burke and seconded by Commissioner Pelock to approve Resolution 20201014-3 to adopt the Revolving Loan Fund Plan. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none the motion was unanimously approved.

Decision on CARES Act RLF bank selection, signature card, and funds to open CARES Act RLF bank account.

Mr. Bonifas reported that the Commission had received the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) award to be able to receive and distribute \$1,050,000 in business loans to small businesses for COVID-19 relief. For bookkeeping purposes, he said that a new bank account would need to be established for the new RLF. He said that in order to receive these funds we would need to approve a business loan and then request these funds from EDA and these funds would then be directly deposited into the bank account. He said that a check would then be written from the bank account where the funds have been deposited to the business in the amount of their loan. Since the bank account will be a place where funds are deposited and then immediately disbursed to businesses, there will not be any money in this new account for possibly up to a year until the businesses begin making loan payments. He said that different banks in the area were researched which included Citizens State Bank, Bremer Bank, and State Bank Financial in La Crosse along with their abilities to work with ACH systems and possible ACH charges because of their proximity to the Commission offices. After discussing our needs with these different banks, it was found that Citizens State Bank in La Crosse provided no ACH charges and will hold the account open until payments are being made with a \$1,000 minimum deposit from the Commission while the other banks, State Bank Financial and Bremer Bank, both had ACH fees associated with the account. Mr. Bonifas also said that the commission would also need to approve the persons listed on the signature card. A motion was made by Commissioner Twidt and seconded by Commissioner Vold to approve creating an account with Citizen's Bank for the CARES Act Revolving Loan Fund with a \$1,000 minimum deposit from the commission's general fund which will be repaid to the commission once the revolving loan fund begins receiving loan payments with Dave Bonifas, Director, Vicki Burke, Secretary Treasurer, and Sarah Ofte, Administrative Assistant named on the signature card. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none the motion was unanimously approved.

Update on CARES Act Supplemental Funding.

Mr. Bonifas reported that the Commission had received \$400,000 of CARES Act money which has been used for multiple projects including purchasing equipment such as laptops for staff in case of a need to work from home. He said that the computers have

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been purchased and are all in use. He said that other projects that will be funded through this grant include a SMRT Bus marketing plan for \$25,000 since the SMRT Bus has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic, an upgrade to our website for \$30,000 to make it more user and mobile friendly with the ability to have forms and applications online, and \$45,000 for small business educational webinars of best practices with meetings to be held in each of our member counties to help small businesses pivot their businesses during the COVID-19 Pandemic. He said that other data COVID-19 regional report and purchasing additional mapping software which will allow the staff to do some business analytics and analysis. He said that there will also be money designated for staff time to update the existing Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to include a section on pandemic resiliency and updating each county's Hazard Mitigation Plan pandemic section and not the whole plan. Those plan updates will begin next year.

Mr. Bonifas reported that we have \$1,050,000 to lend out to small businesses with 1-10 employees. He said that these loans would be in the \$10,000 to \$50,000 range that work is being done to shorten the application. The fund will be marketed to the counties and other economic development groups with the applications being submitted to the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission and then being sent to the appropriate revolving loan fund board for review and approval based on the location of the business applying for a loan. Mr. Bonifas said that we have two years to lend out the money.

Decision on structure of Committees for the selection of consultants for: a) SMRT Bus marketing plan; b) website development and small business online marketing assistance; and c) location-based data acquisition projects.

Mr. Bonifas reported that through the CARES Act funds three requests for proposals (RFPs) will need to be spent out 1) for the SMRT Bus marketing plan, 2) the commission website development, and 3) small business development marketing assistance, and location-based data acquisition project. He was asking for input from the commissioners about the structures of committees for the selection of consultants.

For the SMRT Bus Marketing plan Mr. Bonifas recommended that Bob Gollnik as the Transportation planner for the Commission, Peter Fletcher who was our previous Transportation Planner and crucial to the development of the SMRT Bus, Charlie Handy, La Crosse County Planner, and Garth Frable, Planner from the City of Prairie du Chien form the committee since they have the most knowledge about the SMRT and any other commissioner that would like to be part of the committee. Mr. Gollnik added that the SMRT Bus RFP has already been drafted with input from Peter Fletcher, Charlie Handy, Jackie Eastwood, and Garth Frable. Commissioner Hampson volunteered to be on the SMRT Bus RFP committee. A motion was made by Commissioner Krachey and seconded by Commissioner Carney to approve a committee including Bob Gollnik, MRRPC Transportation Planner, Peter Fletcher MPO Executive Director, Charlie Handy, La Crosse County Planner, Garth Frable, City of Prairie de Chien, City Planner, and Sharon Hampson, La Crosse County MRRPC Commissioner to select the consultants for the SMRT Bus marketing plan . Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none the motion was unanimously approved.

For the Website Development and Location-based data acquisition RFPs, Mr. Bonifas recommended that the Executive Committee be the committee to select the consultants for the website development and location-based data acquisition. Mr. Bonifas said that the executive committee does have the authority to make a selection without bringing it back to the whole commission for approval. After discussion and the importance of making the selection of consultants in a timely manner, a motion was made by Commissioner Borreson and seconded by Commissioner Vold to approve the executive committee to select and approve consultants for the Website Development and Location based data acquisition. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Gollnik commented that it is important to expedite the RFPs especially the SMRT Bus marketing plan to help ensure funding for next year and he also stated that there were only three companies that collect and provide location-based data acquisition services which will limit the number of RFPs to review. Mr. Bonifas replied that all RFPs will be reviewed to make sure that they have met all the requirements of the RFP and then they will be presented to the Executive Committee for approval. The motion was unanimously approved.

CARES Act Supplemental Funding

Mr. Gollnik reported that all the RFPs have been drafted and the Website Design RFP has been sent out to area firms.

BUILD Grant.

Mr. Gollnik reported that a proposal was submitted to US DOT for a Regional Freight Plan Strategy which is a combination of a freight plan with implementable steps and we were notified in September that we were one of twelve planning grants awarded throughout the country. The BUILD Grant award was for \$140,000. He said that it will include staff time for himself and consultant assistance. He said that the RFP for the consultant needs to be drafted and that he envisions that an advisory committee would be made up of public and private individuals or the Executive Committee could serve in that capacity as well.

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Decision Resolution regarding the WI DOT 2021 Work Program.

Mr. Gollnik reported that the Draft Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission Transportation Planning Annual Work Program for 2021 was completed and sent to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for their review. The plan is very similar to the plan from last year. He said the work program is required to receive Wisconsin (DOT) funding and the resolution is in the packages to be passed to approve the plan. A motion was made to approve the Resolution 20201014-2 to adopt the 2021 Transportation Work Program by Commissioner Pelock and seconded by Commissioner Burke. The motion was unanimously approved

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 this was the grant that was awarded by EDA to develop recovery plans for these four villages. Each of these communities chose their consultants based on the RFPs that were sent out. The consultants that were chosen include Vierbecher, SEH, and MSA. He said that the grant has been moving along on schedule with informational meetings, kick off meetings, and public meetings being held. He said that existing plans have been reviewed by the consultants and infrastructure work is being evaluated and advisory groups have met two or three times each in the communities. Three of the four stakeholder meetings have been held in the communities with the fourth being planned this week. He said that we have until December 21, 2021 to complete the project. He said that all of the plans will be completed by early spring.

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

Ms. Nicewander reported that the expansion of the City of Westby's Industrial Park is moving along. Since the last meeting, WI DOT has approved the plans, the mayor and the City Council approved the bond issue and are awaiting approval from EDA to go to bid.

Decision on the Town of Hamilton Comprehensive Plan Update contract.

Mr. Bonifas reported that the Town of Hamilton has reached out the commission for us to complete 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 November 2020 and the plan would be completed by August 2021. Mr. Bonifas said that he had met with the Town's committee and they signed the contract at their board meeting. Commissioner Burke made a motion to approve the contract between the Town of Hamilton and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to complete the update to the Town of Hamilton's Comprehensive Plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Krachey. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none the motion was unanimously approved.

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

Mr. Gollnik reported that we are assisting the Village of La Farge with completing a grant application for \$1 million to relocate their electrical substation out of the floodplain. He said that after the last flooding event in 2018 there was a power outage in the village for about ninety hours with over 400 households and downtown businesses being affected. He said that the village has identified two potential sites to relocate the substation. Mr. Bonifas said that there was 2018 EDA grant money left over for flood mitigation with an 80/20 match for the funds. He said that the village's substation supplies power to the village and some surrounding towns, and the application will be submitted soon.

Update on the Town of Campbell and Town of Holland Comprehensive Plan Updates.

Ms. Nicewander reported that the Town of Campbell plan has been in progress since March but meeting times were postponed due to COVID-19 but now the meetings are back on track. She said that she has been meeting with both Town committees. She said that the work is nearing completion on the different elements of the plan and surveys are being distributed in the communities electronically on their Facebook pages and websites. The Town of Holland will begin distributing their surveys next month.

Buffalo County Outdoor Recreation Plan Updates.

Ms. Nicewander reported that Buffalo County is in the process of updating their outdoor recreation plan. She said that they are in a unique situation since their Land Conservationist recently retired and they have not filled the position. She said that a committee is being formed to review the planning updates, but they are needing a little more direction and welcome anyone willing to participate. Mr. Bonifas informed the commissioners that Outdoor Recreation Plans are a service that is provided by the commission to its member counties.

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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. Commissioner Burke extended a welcome to the new La Crosse County Commissioner. A motion was made to adjourn by Commissioner Twidt and seconded by Commissioner Krachey. The motion was unanimously approved.

Vicki Burke, Secretary/ Treasurer

Date

MRRPC Bimonthly Meeting Attendees	
Name	Representing
Del Twidt	Buffalo County
Mary Anne McMillan Urell	Buffalo County
John Schlesselman	Buffalo County
Dennis Pelock	Crawford County
Gerald Krachey	Crawford County
Brad Chown	Jackson County
Ron Carney	Jackson County
Vicki Burke	La Crosse County
Sharon Hampson	La Crosse County
Robin Schmidt	La Crosse County
James Kuhn	Monroe County
Cedric Schnitzler	Monroe County
Sharon Folcey	Monroe County
Chris Kees Winkler	Pepin County
Ernest Vold	Trempealeau County
Phillip Borreson	Trempealeau County
Herb Cornell	Vernon County
Jo Ann Nickelatti	Vernon County
Nancy Jaekel	Vernon County
Dave Bonifas	MRRPC Staff
Bob Gollnik	MRRPC Staff
Abbey Nicewander	MRRPC Staff
Sarah Ofte	MRRPC Staff
Alex Gramovot	WI DOT
Greg Wavrunek	Representing Senior Tammy Baldwin
Jackie Eastwood	Transportation Planner, La Crosse Area MPO
Peter Fletcher	Executive Director, La Crosse Area MPO
Roxie Anderson	Monroe County Land Use Planner
Francis Schelfhout	WI DOT
Rebecca Giroux	WHEDA
Joe Folsom	Pierce County Economic Development Corporation
Jenny Kuderer-Radcliffe	Dairyland Power
Ben Humboldt	UW-La Crosse Student
Sophie Sherry	UW-La Crosse Student
Brenda Ganser	UW-La Crosse Student