



**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., June 9, 2021**  
**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: Peter Fletcher, Executive Director La Crosse Area MPO, Jackie Eastwood, Transportation Planner La Crosse Area MPO, Greg Wavrunek, Representing Senator Tammy Baldwin, Brad Hanson, City of Tomah Administrator, Joe Folsom, Executive Director, Pierce County Economic Development Corporation, Rebecca Giroux, WHEDA, Francis Schelfhout, WI DOT, Chris Hardie, Executive Director, 7 Rivers Alliance, Carol Roth, Executive Director, Driftless Development Inc., Roxie Anderson, Monroe County Planner, and Andrea Trane, City of La Crosse, Director of Planning and Development. The attendance roster is attached. There was a brief moment of silence in memory of Sharon Folcey.

**Minutes of April 14, 2021, Bimonthly Meeting**

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the April 14, 2021, bimonthly meeting minutes. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the April 14, 2021, bimonthly meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cornell. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the minutes were unanimously approved.

**Treasurer's Report**

Secretary Burke reported that the April 30, 2021, balance in all accounts was \$479,340.12 and the May 31, 2021, ending balance was \$433,249.65. She reported the beginning balance on April 1, 2021, in all Revolving Loan Fund accounts was \$576,582.35 and the ending balance on May 31, 2021, was \$602,832.19. Secretary/Treasurer reported that she had reconciled all accounts. Commissioner Borreson made a motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickelatti. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments hearing none the Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved.

**Selection of CEDS Committee Members**

Mr. Bonifas reported that this year the commission will be updating the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). He reported that this document outlines our region's history, fosters regional economic development, and identifies economic challenges and opportunities and is used to outline a list of strategies that our region can use to identify projects within the region. He said that this document is required by the U.S. Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration (EDA) in order for our region to be an Economic Development District (EDD) and our municipalities, institutions, and businesses to be eligible for EDA grants. Mr. Bonifas said that a requirement of the CEDS is to have a committee and in the past, there has been a committee with one representative from each county. After discussion all previous members agreed to be on the committee with two replacements due to those members no longer on the commission. The new CEDS committee includes Mary Anne McMillan Urell, Buffalo County, Gerald Krachey, Crawford County, Brad Chown, Jackson County, Robin Schmidt, La Crosse County, James Kuhn, Monroe County, James Kraft, Pepin County, William Schroeder, Pierce County, Phillip Borreson, Trempealeau County, Nancy Jaekel, Vernon County.

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***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***

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### **SWOT Analysis**

Mr. Bonifas explained that the next steps for the CEDS is to do a SWOT Analysis for our region. This analysis identifies the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. He led the group through the process, and all strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were recorded, and the list of ideas generated was emailed to everyone who attended the commission meeting.

### **Update on MRRPC request to release EDA's federal interest in EDA revolving loan funds.**

Mr. Bonifas reported that EDA initiated a program to defederalize revolving loan funds that have been in existence for 7 years and are in good standing. He said that four of the five revolving loan funds the commission administers fit those criteria. He said that if the revolving loan fund is defederalized, the federal reporting requirement is no longer required, and the federal guidelines can be more flexible when making loans such as the interest rate and leveraging requirements. He said the documentation has been submitted to EDA and the federal interest has been officially released in the four eligible revolving loan funds as of this week.

### **CARES Act Supplemental Funding Website upgrade and Small Business Website Assistance.**

Mr. Bonifas reported that the commission's new website will be going live within the next week and will have the ability for loan applicants to apply online to the CARES Act RLF. He said that the small business webinars will be launching at the end of June. These webinars will help small businesses learn how to create a website and help them to better market their businesses online. The webinars will have offerings at the basic to advanced level to assist business owners at all levels. He said that the webinars will be online with one face-to-face offering in each of our counties. These webinars and face-to-face sessions are being held in conjunction with the Small Business Development Center at UW-La Crosse. At each of the face-to-face workshops, the Small Business Development Center will be offering one-on-one consulting assistance to small business owners after the website assistance workshops. Information about the upcoming webinars is posted on our website and being sent to different economic development contacts in our region. Mr. Bonifas said that a kickoff meeting with area economic development partners is planned for this month to help market the program.

### **CARES Act Supplemental Funding – Location based data acquisition project.**

Mr. Gollnik reported that the cellphone probe data and dashboard are almost ready. He said that he is waiting for the 2020 data to use in comparison to the 2019 data. He said that once the 2020 data is available presentations are going to be made in each county and different municipalities to solicit different project ideas to use the data. He said that he is also working with the La Crosse MPO and how this data can be helpful to them. He said that documentation and a user manual will be available.

### **SMRT Bus update.**

Mr. Gollnik reported that the SMRT Bus Marketing Plan consultant has been selected. Vendi Advertising has been selected as the agency to complete the SMRT Bus marketing plan project and they have started the information gathering portion of the project. He said that he has met with Vendi Advertising along with the SMRT Bus steering committee which includes Peter Fletcher from the La Crosse MPO, Charlie Handy from La Crosse County, and Justin Running from Running Inc.

### **BUILD Grant update.**

Mr. Gollnik reported that the BUILD Grant is a project to develop a freight strategy for the region. He said that he has been in contact with WI DOT to finalize some details. He said that part of the development of the freight strategy will be to send out RFPs for consultants. He said that within six weeks there should be a recommendation for a consultant and a steering committee will be created at that time.

### **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 Villages of Ontario, La Farge, and Viola have all approved their plans and now are working towards implementation of the plans. These communities had \$200,000 to create a plan and any funds that were not used for the plan could then be used for plan implementation as long as it was not used for a construction project. He said that the Village of Readstown is a little behind due to their village clerk resigning at the end of May. The consultants presented a draft of the plan to their village board on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. He said on June 17<sup>th</sup> the village will be holding a public hearing on the draft and will incorporate the suggestions from the public hearing into the draft. He said that we have until December 31<sup>st</sup> of this year to complete the plans and the villages are on schedule to meet the deadline. Commissioner Borreson asked if the plans will be available to view. Mr. Bonifas replied that the plans will be posted on the commission's new website once it is launched.

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**CARES Act Supplemental Funding – RLF.**

Mr. Bonifas reported that in May he had sent out another email blast to economic development personnel in the region to let them know about the CARES Act Revolving Loan Fund. He said that it has generated quite a bit of interest regarding the fund with ten inquiries. There are two businesses that will be submitting applications with one in Pierce County and one in La Crosse County. There has been \$125,000 of the \$1,050,000 loaned out.

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

Ms. Nicewander reported that the Westby Industrial Park project has gone to bid for their construction of the project. Badger Environmental Earth works has been selected and the city is presenting the firm to EDA for approval. She said that they are waiting for some attorney approval on some of the documents and the first preconstruction meeting is scheduled for June 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Town Comprehensive Plan Updates.**

Ms. Nicewander reported that the Town of Campbell and the Town of Holland have both approved their plans. She said that some of the main areas of focus in the Town of Campbell Plan included a future land use plan on the south end of the island to increase biking routes and expand their infrastructure and the biggest obstacle they will be facing is their annexation agreement with the City of La Crosse which expires in 2025. She said the Town of Holland created a new 5 year action plan that they put into their comprehensive plan. She said that they are beginning to act on those goals by creating an Outdoor Recreation Plan, adopting the county outdoor recreation plan, and creating a committee for trail development. She said that she will be assisting them with their outdoor recreation planning and that the town also would like to concentrate on protecting farmland in the town. Mr. Gollnik reported that the Town of Hamilton is nearing a completion of a draft plan. He said that both the Town of Hamilton and the Town of Farmington are working on balancing rural character with development pressures in their plans.

**Outdoor Recreation Planning Updates.**

Ms. Nicewander reported that the Vernon County Outdoor Recreation Plan was approved by their county board last week. She said that some of the goals that they would like to accomplish in the next five years include promoting fishing opportunities, increase campsites located out of the flood zones, and increase the infrastructure at the campsites. She said that they created their outdoor recreation plan in a way that it could be used as a marketing tool to promote the amenities in those areas. She reported that she is also in the beginning stages of working on outdoor recreation plans for Buffalo County, Pierce County, and Trempealeau County. She said that Buffalo County would like to promote more birding opportunities and the use of public lands. She said that Pierce County and Trempealeau County are both in the visioning stages of their plan development.

**Reports from Commissioners.**

No comments.

**New Business and Adjourn**

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

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Vicki Burke,  
Secretary/ Treasurer

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Date

<b>MRRPC Bimonthly Meeting Attendees</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Del Twidt	Buffalo County
Mary Anne McMillan Urell	Buffalo County
John Schlesselman	Buffalo County
Dennis Pelock	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
Cedirc Schnitzler	Monroe County
Bill Schroeder	Pierce County
Neil Gulbranson	Pierce County
James Kraft	Pepin County
Chris Kees Winkler	Pepin County
Phillip Borreson	Trempealeau County
Ernest Vold	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
Greg Wavrunek	Representing Senior Tammy Baldwin
Jackie Eastwood	Transportation Planner, La Crosse MPO
Peter Fletcher	Director, La Crosse MPO
Roxie Anderson	Monroe County Planner
Joe Folsom	Executive Director, Pierce County Economic Develop. Corp.
Rebecca Giroux	WHEDA
Brad Hanson	City of Tomah Administrator
Chris Hardie	Executive Director, 7 Rivers Alliance
Carol Roth	Executive Director, Driftless Development Inc.
Francis Schelfhout	WI DOT
Andrea Trane	Director, City of La Crosse- Planning and Development