



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**
1707 Main Street, Suite 435
La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: (608) 785-9396
Email: plan@mrrpc.com
Website: mrrpc.com

*James Kuhn, Cashton, WI
Chairman*
*Bill E. Schroeder, Hager City, 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 8, 2022
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: Mara Keyes, WWBIC Regional Project Director – Southwest, Peter Fletcher, Executive Director La Crosse Area MPO, Tim Hundt, Representing Ron Kind, Roxie Anderson, Monroe County Land Conservation, Carol Roth, Driftless Development Inc., LeAnna Bender, Pepin County Economic Development Planner, Ray French, WEDC, Francis Schelfhout, WisDot, Amy Holte, Vernon County Grant Writer, and Cari Redington, Vernon County Administrator. The attendance roster is attached.

Minutes of April 13, 2022, Bimonthly Meeting

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the April 13, 2022, bimonthly meeting minutes. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the April 13, 2022, bimonthly meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schroeder. 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, 2022, ending balance in all accounts was \$464,610.13 and the May 31, 2022, ending balance was \$423,992.73. She reported the beginning balance on April 1, 2022, in all Revolving Loan Fund accounts was \$1,121,292.38 and the ending balance on May 31, 2022, was \$945,853.61. Commissioner Nickelatti made a motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Twidt. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments hearing none the Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved.

Presentation on the Northern Grain Belt Port and Terminal Port Statistical Area, Peter Fletcher, La Crosse Area Planning Committee Executive Director.

Peter Fletcher from the La Crosse Area Planning Committee Executive Director presented information about the Northern Grain Belt Port and Terminal Port Statistical Area. He said that there are advantages to being designated as a Northern Grain Belt and Terminal Port Statistical Area. The tonnage is reported once the port is Federally recognized as a multimodal port. This will give the area a competitive edge to attract public and private investment to our region. It also supports regional marketing and economic development efforts and raises the area's profile to improve regional, national, and global visibility and competitiveness. It will also provide more opportunities for federal grants. Wisconsin is the only state without a federally designated port on the Mississippi. He said that we are nearing completion of the 5-to-6-month process and all the towns and counties are working well to get their information submitted.

Local Transportation Funding Opportunities / Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Mr. Fletcher said that there was a Local Transportation Bill that passed last fall in 2021. It is a five year federal infrastructure bill that provides funding for various infrastructure projects. He said that he has listed on the MPO website different grants that are relevant to the area communities www.lacrossecounty.org/mpo. He said that some of these programs are federal programs with an 80/20 match and then there are formula grants that are distributed through the state.

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

BUILD Grant

Mr. Gollnik reported that the BUILD Grant has been ongoing for two months. He said that the groundwork has been laid for the projects and a webpage has been created for the project for outreach.

Election of Officers – JoAnn Nickelatti

Commissioner JoAnn Nickelatti, Chair of the nominating committee comprised of Bill Schroeder, Gerry Krachey, Ron Carney, Del Twidt, and herself reported that the committee met via teleconference call on June 1st and after discussion voted to bring these candidates forward, James Kuhn Chair, Bill Schroeder, Vice Chair, and Vicki Burke, Secretary/Treasurer. Commissioner Nickelatti brought forward James Kuhn and took nominations from the floor for the office of Commission Chair and asked if there were any other nominations from any other board members three times. No other nominations from the floor were brought forward.

Commissioner Nickelatti brought forward Bill Schroeder as a candidate for Vice Chair and took nominations from the floor for the office of Commission Vice Chair and asked if there were any other nominations from any other board members three times. No other nominations from the floor were brought forward. Commissioner Nickelatti brought forward Vicki Burke as a candidate for Secretary/Treasurer and asked three times if there were any other nominations from the board. Hearing none, Commissioner Twidt made a motion to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for James Kuhn Chair, Bill Schroeder, Vice Chair, and Vicki Burke, Secretary/Treasurer. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schlesselman and was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Kuhn thanked the commissioners for their vote of confidence.

Decision on Jackson County Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Bonifas reported that Jackson County has approached the commission to update its comprehensive plan. He said that he has just met with them, and the county has the contract but has not approved it yet. He said that the Jackson County personal are all new to their positions and would like us to do the bulk of the plan. He said that the contract would be a not to exceed \$25,000. He said that the final details are still being fine-tuned. Commissioner Schroeder made a motion to move forward and approve the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan Contract not to exceed \$25,000 and seconded by Commissioner Schmidt. The motion was unanimously approved.

WEDC Main Street Bounce Back Grants.

Mr. Bonifas reported that the Main Street Bounce Back Grant program was originally set to end on June 30, 2022. The Governor originally set aside \$50 million statewide for the program. He said that our area received \$2 million to begin the grant and the grant money was given out rather quickly and then the commission was given an additional \$1 million. In June the state said that they were going to extend the program until the end of the year. He said the state gave the commission an additional \$1 million bringing the total of \$4 million for our region and \$75 million statewide. He said that with the new funds the state has limited one grant per business and the leased property needs to be at least 400 sq. ft. or more to qualify. He said that it is a very popular program.

Westby Industrial Park EDA grant.

Mr. Bonifas reported that the project is going well, and construction is nearing completion. He said that 90 percent of the project is completed, and June 24th is the end date for the project. The final paving and landscaping are being completed.

Lower Kinni restoration plan.

Mr. Bonifas reported that the Kinnickinnic River runs through the City of River Falls. Mr. Bonifas said that the city of River Falls had two power dams on the river. The city abandoned one after a big flood. They applied for and received a grant to remove the dam. The city recertified the other dam for 35 years. The city owns the land surrounding the dam. He said that the city has organized a 503c and would like the commission to help assist the 503c organization to help plan and restore the area around the river.

Commissioner's questions and comments on the projects or subjects listed in the written staff report

Mr. Bonifas reported that the Monroe County Outdoor Recreation plan was approved at their last meeting.

Reports from Commissioners

Commissioner Jaekel would like to have someone present about the SMRT Bus at the tourism and economic development commission. Commissioner Schroeder reported that broad band is an issue and asked what other counties are doing to increase access in their counties. Mr. Bonifas replied that 7 Rivers was conducting a survey regarding broadband access. Commissioner Mary Anne McMillen Urell replied that Buffalo County has used some of their grant money to partner with private companies and they have had some success with this partnership. Commissioner Stirling reported that Crawford County has developed some private and public partnerships to increase broadband services throughout the county working with Vernon Communications and using AARPA grants to install fiber optic cable.

Tim Hundt from Congressman Ron Kind's office said that Congressman Kind is on the Rural Broadband Taskforce and has been working hard over the years. Some counties have been very fortunate to have those public/private partnerships. He said that coops have had a very positive impact on expanding the broadband. He said that he has been helping communities and counties get connected to the funds that are available.

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.

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
Gerald Krachey	Crawford County
Don Stirling	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
Bill Schroeder	Pierce County
Richard Purdy	Pierce County
Phillip Borreson	Trempealeau County
Ernest Vold	Trempealeau County
Nancy Jaekel	Vernon County
Jo Ann Nickelatti	Vernon County
Herb Cornell	Vernon County
Dave Bonifas	MRRPC Staff
Bob Gollnik	MRRPC Staff
Sarah Ofte	MRRPC Staff
Peter Fletcher	Director, La Crosse MPO
Roxie Anderson	Monroe County Land Conservation
Tim Hundt	Representing Ron Kind
Carol Roth	Driftless Development
Ray French	WEDC
Mara Keyes	WWBIC Regional Project Director – Southwest
Amy Holte	Vernon County Grant Writer
LeAnna Bender	Pepin County Economic Development Coordinator
Francis Schelfhout	WisDot
Cari Redington	Vernon County Administrator