



**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*
*Jon Bingol, La Crosse, WI
Executive Director*

MINUTES
MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRRPC)
BIMONTHLY MEETING
10:00 a.m., Wednesday, February 8, 2023
Stoney Creek Inn, 3060 S. Kinney Coulee Road, Onalaska, 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: Dave Carlson, Economic Development Coordinator – Trempealeau County, Carol Roth, Executive Director – Driftless Development, Jackie Eastwood, La Crosse MPO Transportation Planner, Peter Fletcher, Executive Director – La Crosse MPO, Ellie Thorman, Representing Senator Smith, Kay Stanek, Vernon County, Cari Reddington Administrator, Vernon County, Le Anna Kavanaugh, Economic Development Pepin County, Amy Oliver, Vernon County, Francis Schelfhout, WI DOT, Joe Folsom, Executive Director – Pierce County Economic Development Corporation, Rebecca Giroux – WHEDA.

Remembrance of Commissioner Don Stirling

Chairman Kuhn asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of Crawford County Commissioner Don Stirling who died of a sudden illness.

Minutes of December 14, 2022, Bimonthly Meeting

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the December 14, 2022, bimonthly meeting minutes. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the December 14, 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 December 31, 2022, ending balance in all accounts was \$323,983.88 and the January 31, 2023, ending balance in all accounts was \$418,906.51. She reported the beginning balance on December 1, 2022, in all Revolving Loan Fund accounts was \$1,642,613.01 and the ending balance on January 31, 2023, was \$1,126,234.81. Commissioner Cooper 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.

Revolving Loan Funds Update.

Mr. Bingol reported that 4 of the revolving loan funds have been defederalized. He said that this is an opportunity for the revolving loan fund boards to explore other options to revolve the funds out into the communities beyond gap financing which was their only purpose in the past. He said that he would be meeting with the boards and having that discussion with the board members to look at more uses beyond gap financing which will create another economic tool to help businesses in our region. He said that he will also look at ways to improve the underwriting and recapitalizing of the funds.

Vernon County Revolving Loan Fund Administration.

Mr. Bingol reported that Vernon County has a revolving loan fund with over \$700,000 which has also been defederalized. He said that Vernon County is also looking at revamping their structure and the projects that they would fund. He said that Vernon County is proposing having some gap financing ability with funds for more startup businesses with smaller amounts up to \$25,000 and also some targeted funds for projects to do with affordable housing and daycare.

He said that they have asked the MRRPC to work with their committee to administer the fund. As the administrator of the fund the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) would be the initial gatekeeper and vetting projects and then send appropriate loans to the county economic development committee which was established by the county where they would review the loan and provide final approval. The MRRPC would then close the loan and collect the payments. He said that he has been working with the committee to help them develop a loan manual and develop a contract between Vernon County and the MRRPC. He said that the planning is in the final stages, and a contract would be presented to the board in the future once the details have been completed.

Decision on 2023 Budget.

Mr. Bingol presented the 2023 budget to the commission board. He directed the commissioners to the revenues and the expense columns. He listed the different revenues sources such as account interest, county contributions, revolving loan fund programs, local planning contracts, hazard mitigation plans, State Grants such as the WI Department of Transportation grant, The WEDC Bounceback Grant, and the federal grants through EDA. All of the contracts listed in the budget were current projects, but he said that there are new contracts that will be finalized this year. On the expense side, he reported that there were some increases in training dollars to help the new planners that were hired as well as an increase in travel expense since our region is large, and the staff will be traveling to the counties to work with the different municipalities. A motion was made by Commissioner Schnitzler and seconded by Commissioner McMillen Urell. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none the motion was unanimously approved.

Senior Planner Interviews Update.

Mr. Bingol reported that four candidates had been interviewed by the Executive Committee for the planner positions and one candidate has accepted the position as planner and another candidate has been given an offer and we are waiting for their response. Chairman Kuhn thanked the Executive Committee for their assistance with the hiring process.

Intern Update.

Mr. Bingol reported that two interns have been hired. He reported that one of the interns is Jamie Schoen, a senior at UW – La Crosse and will graduate in May and she is working on Mondays and Wednesdays, and the other intern that has been hired is Simon Fichter who is a Junior at UW - La Crosse and works on Fridays. Mr. Bingol said that it is an open-ended internship which is dependent on their schedules. The summer hours will depend on their availability. Their hours were accounted for in the budget. He reported that the interns are doing an excellent job and are adding a lot of value to the plans that they are working on.

BUILD Grant Update.

Mr. Gollnik reported that the BUILD Grant is in its final stages. The grant is set to wrap up in April and there will be maps and information that will be able to be sent out to the transportation contacts in the various counties.

Port Statistical Area Designation Update.

Mr. Gollnik reported that the Port Statistical Area Designation had been approved at the end of the year. He thanked the counties for all of their cooperation to make this happen. He said that now that this designation has been approved, applying for grant dollars will be possible. He said that the next steps will be to explore the possibilities and communicate out to the municipalities that this designation has been approved and what the designation means for the region. Mr. Bingol added that the Port Statistical Area Designation will also make it possible to collect data that will be able to be used and put into plans for the region. He thanked everyone for making the designation possible. Commissioner Schmidt shared a resource about waterways and asked that the resource be forwarded to the commissioners.

EDA Planning Grant Submitted.

Mr. Bingol reported that the new three-year planning grant from EDA to begin April 1st has been submitted.

Monroe, Pierce, and Trempealeau County Hazard Mitigation grant applications. Vernon and Crawford Hazard Mitigation Plan updates.

Ms. Nicewander reported that the applications for updating the Hazard Mitigation Plans for Monroe, Pierce, and Trempealeau Counties were submitted on January 23. These plans will be slated to begin at the end of 2023 through 2025. **Vernon and Crawford County Hazard Mitigation plans.** She reported that the update of demographic and storm event data information for the

Vernon and Crawford County Hazard Mitigation plans has begun. She said that the MRRPC interns are helping with mapping updates and a risk assessment survey was sent to local municipalities and stakeholders and is due at the end of December. She reported that surveys have been created and are waiting for distribution by County staff.

WEDC Mainstreet Bounce Back Grant Update.

Mr. Bingol reported that \$5.6 million was brought into the region and given out to businesses as \$10,000 grants. The commission received approximately \$160,000 in revenue for administering the program which was extended and gave the commission some extra revenue which wasn't part of the original budget.

Westby EDA Grant Update.

Ms. Nicewander reported that the Westby EDA grant has been completed and is closed. She said that the City of Westby will be reporting to EDA for the next three years about their progress.

Jackson County Comprehensive Plan Update.

Mr. Bingol reported that the plan is underway and Abbey did a great job getting the existing conditions and a sample survey completed. He said that he has met with the Jackson County Committee several times and they have returned the revisions for the existing conditions and made a few small changes to their survey. In March their board is going to be approving the public participation plan which is the piece we need before we can share the survey and have the public comment meetings.

Additional Prospective Plan Updates.

Mr. Bingol reported that Vernon County and the Town of Bangor are both interested in updating their comprehensive plans. He also reported that these communities are also interested in updating their outdoor recreation plans; Village of West Salem, Village of Ferryville, and some communities in Pierce County.

Requesting insights and invitations for Jon Bingol for county visits, tours, meetings with county administrative staffs, county boards, and others.

Mr. Bingol reported that his main goal in the next few months is to be present and getting out to all of the communities in the region. He is looking forward to working with the commissioners and key people in the region's counties to better understand and learn what the commission can do to assist these communities.

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

None to report.

Reports from Commissioners.

Adjourn

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

Vicki Burke,
Secretary/ Treasurer

Date

MRRPC Bimonthly Meeting Attendees	
Name	Representing
Del Twidt	Buffalo County
John Schlesselman	Buffalo County
Mary Anne McMillan Urell	Buffalo County
Gerald Krachey	Crawford County
Brad Chown	Jackson County
Ron Carney	Jackson County
Tom Cooper	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
Kim Seipel	Pepin County
Chris Kees Winkler	Pepin County
Bill Schroeder	Pierce County
Neil Gulbranson	Pierce County
Richard Purdy	Pierce County
Phillip Borreson	Trempealeau County
Jo Ann Nickelatti	Vernon County
Nancy Jaekel	Vernon County
Jon Bingol	MRRPC Staff
Bob Gollnik	MRRPC Staff
Abbey Nicewander	MRRPC Staff
Sarah Ofte	MRRPC Staff
Carol Roth	Driftless Development
Jackie Eastwood	Transportation Planner La Crosse MPO
Dave Carlson	Trempealeau County Economic Development Coordinator
LeAnna Kavanaugh	Pepin County – Economic Development
Joe Folsom	Pierce County Economic Development Corporation
Ellie Thorman	Senator Smith's Office
Peter Fletcher	Executive Director - La Crosse County MPO
Kay Stanek	Vernon County
Cari Reddington	Vernon County Administrator
Amy Oliver	Vernon County
Francis Schelfhout	WI DOT
Rebecca Giroux	WHEDA