



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**
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*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, October 11, 2023

Altra Federal Credit Union Operations Building, 1700 Oak Forest Drive, Onalaska, WI 54650

Call to Order at 10:00 am

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: Gregg Wavrunek, Representing Senator Tammy Baldwin, Francis Schelfout, WI DOT, LeAnna Kavanaugh, Pepin County Economic Development Coordinator, Dillon Constant, La Crosse County Planner, Jackie Eastwood, La Crosse County MPO, Peter Fletcher, La Crosse County MPO, Angie Schlosser, Buffalo/Pepin County ADRC Transportation Coordinator, Carol Roth, Executive Director – Driftless Development, Roxie Anderson, Monroe County – Land Use Planner, Dave Carlson, Trempealeau County Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator. The attendance roster is attached.

Minutes of August 9, 2023, Bimonthly Meeting

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the August 9, 2023, bimonthly meeting minutes. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the August 9, 2023, bimonthly meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cooper. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report

Secretary Burke reported that the August 31, 2023, ending balance in all accounts was \$456,320.99 and the September 30, 2023, ending balance in all accounts was \$483,872.92. She reported the beginning balance on August 1, 2023, in all Revolving Loan Fund accounts was \$1,059,330.00 and the ending balance on July 31, 2023, was \$1,126,362.21. Mr. Bingol reported that a savings account of \$300,000 had been opened at Altra. Commissioner Borreson made a motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cooper. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments, hearing none the Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved.

Workforce Development Survey Presentation – Sam Bachmeier, La Crosse County, Community Development Specialist.

Dillon Constant, La Crosse County Planner came to the meeting to present in Sam Bachmeier's place. Mr. Constant shared the results from the Tri-State Workforce Survey, which was completed in collaboration with the 7 Rivers Alliance, LADCO, La Crosse County, Western Technical College, the Workforce Development Board, and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. He reported that the survey to businesses was completed as a follow up to the work that had been done with the WISE Plan which was completed by the 7 River Alliance in 2017. He said that the survey not only gathered information pertaining to workforce development but also gathered some non-workforce information regarding area businesses' access to capital, sales growth, facility operations and capacity, and how and where products are being sold and transported nationally and globally. This information will assist in planning economic development in the region and be a survey that will be conducted and reviewed to establish trends in the region.

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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Report on the first Grain Belt Ports Annual Meeting

Mr. Bingol reported that the first Annual Meeting of the Northern Grain Belt Ports was held at the Radisson on October 5th. He said that last year the region was granted the Northern Grain Belt Ports Statistical Area designation. Prior to receiving the designation this meant that all of the activity and commerce that was transported on the river was not counted. Now the northern section of the Mississippi River in our region is the 64th busiest port in the country. He reported that the next steps are to look for and apply for grants to help improve the waterways and things connected to the waterways. He said that the annual meeting was well attended and thanked all the federal and local government representatives who gave presentations at the meeting and attended.

Decision to hire Andrew Miller and Matthew Holzworth as Planners as recommended by the Executive Committee

Mr. Bingol reported that the Executive Committee met and interviewed two candidates on September 27th. He said that since the distribution of the agenda, one of the candidates, Matt Holzworth, has decided to stay in western Minnesota instead of coming to La Crosse so Andrew Miller will be the only planner hire to approve. Commissioner Cooper made a motion to approve the hiring of Andrew Miller as recommended by the Executive and Administration Committee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Twidt. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the motion was approved.

Decision on Village of Oakdale Comprehensive Plan Contract

Mr. Bingol reported that the Village of Oakdale had contacted the commission to update their comprehensive plan. Commissioner Burke made a motion to approve the contract between the Village of Oakdale and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to update the village's comprehensive plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schnitzler. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the motion was approved.

Decision on Town of River Falls Comprehensive Plan Contract

Mr. Bingol reported that he had been contacted by the Town of River Falls to update the town's comprehensive plan. He said that the town's planning commission has the contract and is still in discussions with their town board, but he would like to get it approved by the commission to be ready to begin once the Town of River Falls approves the contract with their board. Commissioner McMillan Urell made a motion to approve the contract between the Town of River Falls and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to update the town's comprehensive plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gulbranson. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the motion was approved.

Decision on Town of Greenfield Comprehensive Plan Contract

Mr. Bingol reported the Town of Greenfield has approached the commission to update their comprehensive plan. He said that their plan commission has already approved the contract at their board meeting. Commissioner Burke made a motion to approve the contract between the Town of Greenfield and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to update the town's comprehensive plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickelatti. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the motion was approved.

Decision on Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Coon Valley

Mr. Bingol reported that the Village of Coon Valley board is partnering with their Business Association to finance their plan, and they had invited him to talk with their board about planning and economic and community development. He said that at the end of the meeting the board wanted to update their comprehensive plan. Commissioner Nickelatti made a motion to approve the contract between the Village of Coon Valley and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to update the village's comprehensive plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Borreson. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the motion was approved.

Update on Comprehensive Plan for Pepin County

Mr. Bingol reported that Pepin County was initially going to update their comprehensive plan but now have decided to wait since they had made an update to the plan and felt it would be sufficient for a few more years but would be open to working with the commission for future updates.

Update on BUILD Grant...Regional Freight Study

Mr. Bingol reported that staff have been working with a consultant for the last two years to create this Freight Strategy Plan for the region. He said that after reviewing the plan that the consultants had created, he found gaps in the information provided. Mr. Bingol and Mr. Harwood then created a local survey to dig deeper into the data and get a clearer picture of the freight traveling through our region and the issues that need to be addressed in the nine counties. Mr. Harwood is currently at a Department of Transportation meeting in Northern Wisconsin. He said that they are also working with the Placer.ai points of interest data to test the DOT data for the addendum to the plan as well as analyzing the survey results. He said that they have set the date for the plan to be completed by November 15th.

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Update on County Regional Coordinated Public Transit Plans

Mr. Bingol reported that every five years the commission needs to do a regional human transit plan update. Mr. Harwood has been actively involved in updating the plans. He said that stakeholders in each county who are involved in transporting people in the region will be meeting October 18th at Altra Federal Credit Union's Operations Center to create goals for the plan. The Wisconsin DOT has provided the structure for creating and updating the plans.

Update on Public Service Commission (PSC) Broadband Grants

Mr. Bingol reported that all the commission's counties are actively involved in pursuing the PSC Broadband Grants and creating Broadband Plans. He said that all of these plans are being created through cooperative efforts with other counties and redos, consultants, or individual county staff. He also said that he has been attending UW-Extension workshops in the state to gain information to assist the counties with creating their plans and finding creative ways to extend broadband into the region.

Update on RLFs

Mr. Bingol reported that the revolving loan funds have been moving along with more inquiries versus actual loans being made. He said that there has been some confusion from those businesses making inquiries thinking that we are giving out grants versus loans. He said that loans require businesses to prepare more information and prove that they are a credit worthy venture. If there are gaps in the information we need from the businesses, he said that he has been referring these businesses to the Small Business Development Center at UW-La Crosse to help them gather the necessary information. He said that three of our revolving loan funds have been defederalized which allows them to be used creatively. There has been a loan made to the Village of Oakdale through one of our defederalized funds, the CMV Growth Development Fund. This loan was to assist the village with a DNR grant that they had received that requires them to pay the project costs upfront and then be reimbursed by the grant funds. The revolving loan fund will be repaid when the project is completed at a special interest rate.

MRRPC Staffing Update

Mr. Bingol reported that Andrew will be our new planner and Jamie has been recruited away from the commission. He said that the planner position will be reposted, and recruitment efforts will continue in order to grow the team.

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

Commissioner Anderson inquired if the bridge situation had been addressed in the Crawford County Hazard Mitigation plan that is almost at completion. Mr. Bingol replied that it will be addressed, and it was mentioned by another resident who had attended the public hearing on September 28th and is on the list to be added to the plan.

Reports from Commissioners

Commissioner Cooper asked if there is a way to request amendments to Act 10. He said that there is a noncompete clause that is adversely affecting the Jackson County Jail in obtaining jail food. He said that this can really increase costs.

Director's Report

Mr. Bingol reported that he has been attending different meetings across the region to promote the commission and gain more knowledge of what resources are available to the region. He reported that in early September the EDA had an activity sponsored through the University Centers and here in Wisconsin EDA gives funding to two University Centers, UW-Madison and UW-Platteville, for different activities to spur economic development. He said these services include helping people if they want to do prototyping, different business trials for manufacturing and other resources. He said Monroe County is going to be hosting an economic development and tourism summit March 21-22, 2024, and we are partnering with the University Center in Madison to help us coordinate the event with marketing and provide speakers and data. It is going to be held at the Cranberry Country Lodge in Tomah, Wisconsin.

Adjourn at 11:45 am

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 Cooper. 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
Craig Anderson	Crawford County
Bruce Strnad	Crawford County
Ron Carney	Jackson County
Tom Cooper	Jackson County
Vicki Burke	La Crosse County
James Kuhn	Monroe County
Cedric Schnitzler	Monroe County
Toni Wissestad	Monroe County
Kim Seipel	Pepin County
Bill Schroeder	Pierce County
Neil Gulbranson	Pierce County
Richard Purdy	Pierce County
Phillip Borreson	Trempealeau County
George Brandt	Trempealeau County
Patrick Sorge	Trempealeau County
Jo Ann Nickelatti	Vernon County
John Pedretti	Vernon County
Jon Bingol	MRRPC Staff
Sarah Ofte	MRRPC Staff
Jamie Schoen	MRRPC Staff
Simon Fichter	MRRPC Staff
Abbey Nicewander	MRRPC Staff
LeAnna Kavanaugh	Pepin County – Economic Development Coordinator
Francis Schelfhout	WI DOT
Jackie Eastwood	Transportation Planner - La Crosse County MPO
Peter Fletcher	Executive Director – La Crosse County MPO
Dillon Constant	La Crosse County Planner
Angie Schlosser	Buffalo/Pepin County ADRC Transportation Coordinator
Carol Roth	Executive Director – Driftless Development
Roxie Anderson	Monroe County – Land Use Planner
Dave Carlson	Trempealeau County Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator
Gregg Wavrunek	Representing Senator Tammy Baldwin