



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
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*James Kuhn, Cashton, WI  
Chairman*  
*Bill E. Schroeder, Hager City, WI  
Vice Chairman*  
*Vicki Burke, Holmen, 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 14, 2024**  
**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: Kyle Brown, WI SBDC, Rebecca Giroux, WHEDA, Francis Schelfhout, WI DOT, John Breske, La Crosse County, Erin Duffer, La Crosse County MPO, Joe Folsom, Executive Director – Pierce County Economic Development Corporation, Mark Tallman, WEDC, Kara Schuster, Executive Director, WWBIC, Dave Carlson, Trempealeau County Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator, Gregg Wavrunek, Representing Senator Tammy Baldwin, Mary Carney, Representing Representative Derrick Van Orden, and Gavin Michaelson, La Crosse Tribune. The attendance roster is attached.

**Minutes of December 13, 2023, Bimonthly Meeting**

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the December 13, 2023, bimonthly meeting minutes. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the December 13, 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 on December 1, 2023, the balance in all accounts was \$463,064.41 and the January 31, 2024, the ending balance in all accounts was \$564,105.25. She reported the beginning balance on December 1, 2023, in all Revolving Loan Fund accounts was \$1,087,973.80 and the ending balance in all accounts on January 31, 2024, was \$1,149,156.67. Commissioner Cooper made a motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Borreson. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments, Commissioner Hampson asked about the other meeting expense in the Treasurer's report and Mr. Bingol replied that it was for the Northern Grainbelt Port Statistical Area Annual meeting. He said that there was a benefactor for the meeting and the commission will be reimbursed for the expense and the Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved.

**Presentation by Dylan Brown, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Main Street Bounce Back 2**

Dylan Brown reported that the WEDC had implemented the Main Street Bounce Back Program which granted \$10,000 grants to area businesses from 2021 and 2022. He said that in 2023 the WEDC had additional funds to assist those businesses that were awarded a Bounce Bank grant. He said that this program is being implemented with a partnership with the Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) across the state. These SBDCs are providing training events and classes, digital marketing clinics, professional consulting services and entrepreneurial how-to video series to assist these businesses. Businesses that had received a Main Street Bounce Back Grant from 2021-2022 are eligible for this free training.

**Presentation by Rebecca Giroux, Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)**

Rebecca Giroux from WHEDA reported that new legislation had been passed which created four new loan programs, the Vacancy to Vitality Loan, Restore Main Street Loan, Infrastructure Access Loan, and a Home Repair and Rehab Loan. She also mentioned that for a municipality to be eligible for any of these Loan programs the municipality needs to have updated the housing element of its comprehensive plan within 5 years and the comprehensive plan must be compliant with Wisconsin Statutes.

## **Mr. Bingol asked to add agenda item 9.5 to approve a Comprehensive Plan for the City of Galesville**

### **Decision on MRRPC 2024 Budget**

Mr. Bingol presented the 2024 budget to the commission board. He directed the commissioners to the revenue 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, 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. A motion was made by Commissioner Burke and seconded by Commissioner Cooper to approve the 2024 MRRPC budget as presented. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none the motion was unanimously approved.

### **Update on WI DOT 2024 Work Program**

Mr. Bingol reported he and Mr. Harwood have been attending quarterly meetings with the WI DOT. He also reported that the Agricultural Roads Improvement Program (ARIP) has been in the commissions' online newsletter. This grant provides a one-time segregated revenue (SEG) funding of \$150 million to enhance rural roads, bridges, and culverts in Wisconsin's rural communities.

### **Decision on Contract for the City of Osseo Outdoor Recreation Plan**

Mr. Bingol reported that he had been contacted by the City of Osseo to update the city's Outdoor Recreation Plan. He said that the contract is for \$2,000 and their plan commission will be assisting with the plan. Commissioner Borreson made a motion to approve the contract between the City of Osseo and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to update the city's Outdoor Recreation Plan for \$2,000. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Burke. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the motion was approved.

### **Decision on Contract for Garden Valley Township Comprehensive Plan**

Mr. Bingol reported the Town of Garden Valley has approached the commission to update their comprehensive plan. He said that their plan commission has already approved the contract at their board meeting, and work on the plan has started. Commissioner Cooper made a motion to approve the contract between the Town of Garden Valley and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to update the township's comprehensive plan for \$7,000. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carney. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the motion was approved.

### **Decision on Contract for the City of Galesville Comprehensive Plan**

Mr. Bingol reported that at the City of Galesville's council meeting they had expressed interest in updating their comprehensive plan. Mr. Carlson, a member of the city council in Galesville, said that he discussed with the council the reasons to update the plan since it was last updated in 2009 and was asked to move forward and approach the commission. Commissioner Brandt made a motion to approve a contract between the City of Galesville and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to update the City of Galesville's comprehensive plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McMillen Urell. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the motion was approved.

### **Decision to participate in the Regional Outdoor Recreation Project/USDA RDBG with WCWRPC and USDA RPN Program**

Mr. Bingol reported that some of our counties have been part of a rural partners network. There are six of them around the country. It is a White House initiative and is run through the USDA Office of Rural Development. This particular program in our region includes Pepin, Buffalo, and Trempealeau Counties. The Rural Business Development Grant is \$750,000 and 10 percent of this amount, \$75,000, will go to an opportunity grant. He said that the network is applying for the opportunity grant and that there are also Enterprise Grants which focus on outdoor recreation in the region. Commissioner Anderson made a motion to approve the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to participate in the Rural Partners Network. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sorge. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the motion was approved.

### **Promoting Monroe County Economic Development & Tourism Conference, March 21-22, 2024 in Tomah at the Cranberry Country Lodge**

Mr. Bingol reported that the Monroe County Economic Development Conference will be held in Tomah at the Cranberry Country Lodge. He said that this is the first Monroe County Conference held since 2017. They are planning to make this an annual event going forward. Mr. Bingol encouraged everyone to promote the event.

**Introducing the WEDC Ambassador Program**

Mr. Bingol reported that the WEDC Ambassador Program is being created by WEDC and WEDC has brought in some consulting groups and are trying to create this very welcoming atmosphere to lure people to the State. A new website site, lookforwardwisconsin.com, is being created to provide information to people who are looking for more information about the state to determine if they would like to move here. At the website these prospective residents can fill out a form and get connected with an ambassador who can answer their questions. He said that it is just another tool to encourage people to move to Wisconsin.

**Update on MainStreet Bounce Back Audit**

Mr. Bingol reported that he is waiting for the WEDC leadership to send a letter of correspondence about the grant funds.

**Update on BUILD Grant...Regional Freight Study**

Mr. Bingol reported that the Freight Study has been completed and submitted to the state and they have passed it on to the US Highway. He said that once the final approval and close out has been received, the plan will be posted to the commission's website.

**Update on County Broadband Committees**

Mr. Bingol reported that all of the counties in our region are involved. He said that they are still working on the four-county partnership. He said that the counties are discussing creating an RFP and leveraging some of the grant dollars. The other counties, La Crosse, Monroe Vernon, and Crawford Counties, have really accomplished a lot.

**Update on RLFs**

Mr. Bingol reported there are some potential projects in the Business Capital Fund area, and a few inquiries in the CMV Growth Development Fund, La Crosse Revolving Loan Fund, and the CARES Act fund which is now in the revolving stage. The Vernon County Revolving Loan Fund has had two loans closed in December.

**MRRPC Staffing Update**

Mr. Bingol reported that sadly Andrew Miller has taken another position and will be leaving. Mr. Bingol introduced the recently hired Senior Planner, Jack Zabrowski.

**Director's Report**

Mr. Bingol reported that Sunday, February 25 is a Stewardship event that is being held in Crawford County. Comprehensive Planning is the main topic to be discussed and the Town of Utica will be on the panel.

He said the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) office for Rural Prosperity has a grant program that they were calling Thrive Rural Program to help rural communities with economic development. WEDC selected only ten communities to participate, and Driftless Development in Gays Mills was selected for this downtown program. There were 10 applicants from the region.

**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 McMillen Urell. 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
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
Sharon Hampson	La Crosse County
James Kuhn	Monroe County
Kim Seipel	Pepin County
Neil Gulbranson	Pierce County
Phillip Borreson	Trempealeau County
George Brandt	Trempealeau County
Patrick Sorge	Trempealeau County
John Pedretti	Vernon County
Jo Ann Nickelatti	Vernon County
Nancy Jaekel	Vernon County
Jon Bingol	MRRPC Staff
Sarah Ofte	MRRPC Staff
Ken Harwood	MRRPC Staff
Andrew Miller	MRRPC Staff
Jack Zabrowski	MRRPC Staff
Dylan Brown	Wisconsin SBDC
Rebecca Giroux	WHEDA
Mark Tallman	WEDC
Francis Schelfhout	WI DOT
Kara Schuster	WWBIC
Erin Duffer	Transportation Planner - La Crosse County MPO
Gregg Wavrunek	Representing Senator Tammy Baldwin
Mary Carney	Representing Representative Derrick Van Orden
John Breske	La Crosse County
Joe Folsom	Executive Director – Pierce County Economic Development Corp.
Dave Carlson	Trempealeau County Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator
Gavin Michaelson	La Crosse Tribune