



**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*
*Greg Flogstad, Onalaska, WI
Director*

MINUTES

MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRRPC)

BIMONTHLY MEETING

10:00 a.m., February 11, 2015

Best Western Riverfront Hotel, 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. The attendance roster is attached.

Minutes of December 10, 2014 Bimonthly Meeting

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the December 10, 2014 bimonthly minutes. Commissioner Barr made a motion to approve the minutes; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Ross to accept the December 10, 2014 bimonthly meeting minutes and the motion was carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Secretary-Treasurer Burke gave the treasurers report. Ms. Burke said the November 30, 2014 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$208,412.55 and the December 31, 2014 ending balance was \$183,649.02. She reported the beginning balance in December 31, 2014 was \$183,649.02 and January 31, 2015 balance was \$253,135.12.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund (BCF) began with a November 30, 2014 balance of \$239,530.45. Activity from December 1, 2014 through January 31, 2015 included loan repayments of \$13,707.33 and interest earned of \$83.77 leaving a January 31, 2015 balance of \$253,321.55. The BCF Sequester Account began with a December 1, 2014 balance of \$368,880.29. There was no activity from December 1, 2014 through January 31, 2015.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 began with a November 30, 2014 balance of \$59,783.37. Activity from December 1, 2014 through January 31, 2015 included loan repayments of \$645.62 and interest earned of \$20.46 leaving a January 31, 2015 balance of \$60,449.45. Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 Sequester Account began with a December 1, 2014 balance of \$157,885.61. There was no activity from December 1, 2014 through January 31, 2015.

Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund began with a December 1, 2014 balance of \$40,508.02. Activity from December 1, 2014 through January 31, 2015 included loan repayments of \$777.75 and interest earned of \$7.07 leaving a January 31, 2015 balance of \$41,292.84. Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund Sequester Account began with a December 1, 2014 balance of \$164,025.88. Activity from December 1, 2014 through January 31, 2015 included interest earned of \$28.31 leaving a January 31, 2014 balance of \$164,054.19.

The La Crosse County Business Fund began with a December 1, 2014 balance of \$46,817.10. Activity from December 1, 2014 through January 31, 2015 included loan repayments of \$2,710 and interest earned of \$12.26 leaving a January 31, 2015 balance of \$49,539.36. Ms. Burke said the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund Sequester Account began with a December 1, 2014 balance of \$80,908.73. Activity in this account from December 1, 2014 through January 31, 2015 included interest earned of \$27.49 leaving a January 31, 2015 balance of \$80,936.22.

Providing Planning and Economic Development Services to Improve the Region's Environment, Economy, and Quality of Life

- ***Land Use Planning*** ▪ ***Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances*** ▪ ***Transportation Planning*** ▪ ***Economic Development Planning***
- ***GIS Mapping*** ▪ ***Recreation Planning*** ▪ ***Revolving Loan Fund Administration*** ▪ ***Grant Writing*** ▪ ***Socioeconomic Data Dissemination***
- ***Assist Local Interests in Responding to State and Federal Programs*** ▪ ***Advisory Service on Local Planning Issues***
- ***Coordinating Agency for Programs and Activities*** ▪ ***Public Advocacy on Issues Affecting Our Region***

Commissioner Savage made a motion to approve the treasurer's reports as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schroeder and approved unanimously.

Decision on Requesting Waiver to EDA on RLF Loan Private Funds Leveraging Ratio and Job Ratio

Mr. Flogstad said after doing some research he found there is some flexibility with the revolving loan funds in regards to the RLF loan private funds leveraging and job ratios. He said as custodian of these funds the loan boards do have some flexibility in setting some criteria as long as we follow guidelines set in the administrative plans. He continued by reviewing the current private funds leverage and jobs ratios. He said the RLF funds currently have existing private funds leveraging policies of \$2 of private/bank financing for every \$1 of RLF financing. He explained the BCF 1 Administrative Plan requires \$2 dollars of private/bank financing for every \$1 of RLF funds but a waiver request to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) could be made for \$2 of private/bank financing for every \$1 of RLF funds applied to the entire portfolio rather than to each individual loan. As of 09/30/14 that BCF 1 portfolio ratio was about \$10 to \$1. Mr. Flogstad said as far as the jobs ratio for the BCF 1, it is currently \$10,000 of lending for every job but we could request a waiver to EDA of up to one job per \$20,000 or more of RLF lending.

Mr. Flogstad said all other RLF administrative plans (BCF 2, La Crosse County Economic Development Fund and the CMV Growth Development Fund) allow for \$2 of private/bank financing for every \$1 of RLF funds applied to the portfolio as a whole so the loan boards have more flexibility. Mr. Flogstad said as of September 30, 2014, the portfolio ratios for the BCF 2 RLF were \$4 to \$1; La Crosse County Economic Development Fund was \$13 to \$1; and the CMV Growth Development Fund was \$6 to \$1. Mr. Flogstad then reviewed the existing loan amount per job policies for these funds: BCF 2- \$10,000 of RLF lending for every job; La Crosse County RLF, \$10,000-\$15,000 lending for every job; and the CMV Fund, \$12,000-\$20,000 of RLF lending. He said currently the maximums allowed by the RLF administrative plans are: BCF 2, La Crosse County Economic Development Fund, and CMV Growth Development Fund (\$20,000 of RLF lending for each job). He said the loan boards have the flexibility to allow \$20,000 of RLF lending for every job.

There was some discussion on who sets these limits for the RLFs. Mr. Flogstad explained that RLF loan boards have flexibility to set limits according to what is in each respective administrative plan. However, a request for a waiver has to be made to EDA if the proposed change does not follow the administrative plan requirements. Commissioner Barr asked if we could consider making these changes and then look at them again in a few years. Commissioner Schroeder said one year wasn't long enough and five years was better. Commissioner Ross asked about the programs in place and if these funds are available to existing businesses who want to expand. Mr. Flogstad said the RLF funds can be used for existing businesses and expansion projects but the problem is the RLFs need to participate with banks. Mr. Flogstad said the RLF funds can be used for new, existing, and expanding businesses and even refinancing in some cases. Commissioner Christenson made a motion to encourage the proposed RLF changes. Commissioner Purdy seconded the motion. Mr. Flogstad said we could look at this every year to evaluate it to see how it's going. Commissioner Burke said she serves on the La Crosse County Economic Development Board and they tried to streamline their application process a few years ago.

Chairman Kuhn asked about the status of the sequestered RLF funds. Mr. Flogstad explained the RLF sequestered funds are still ours but the interest goes to the Federal government on those funds. Commissioner Borreson asked how many potential businesses have been turned down or only partially granted, or is anything happening with the RLFs? Mr. Flogstad said we get calls from different businesses but we need banks to participate. Commissioner Ross suggested having a template for a business plan that could be mailed to prospective businesses. He said preparing a business a plan can be very intimidating. Mr. Ross said that instead of losing a call, have a database set up and call the business back in a month. Mr. Flogstad said there is a nice business plan template available on the MRRPC website in each RLF loan application. Commissioner Barr said that if a business wants money bad enough they will figure it out. Commissioner Ross said it's good to give people a sense they are not on their own. Commissioner Burke mentioned streamlining requirements. She said the University of La Crosse Small Business Development Center (SBDC) will help with business plans. Commissioner Flogstad said UW-River Falls SBDC will also help with business plans. Commissioner Kuhn said a business has to know that help is available. Commissioner Schroeder said when he started his business someone from SCORE helped him out. He said the process is overwhelming if you are trying to keep a business going at the same time. Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any more discussion and the motion was unanimously approved to encourage the RLF boards to consider these less rigorous standards.

Decision on 2015 MRRPC Budget

Mr. Flogstad presented the 2015 MRRPC Budget. He reviewed the proposed income sources of \$367,805 and expenses projected at \$360,261 for 2015. He explained he did not budget for the Economic Development Planner position due to revenue constraints. Mr. Flogstad said there are funds budgeted to replace some outdated computers. He said the budget he presented should finish in the black. Commissioner Kuhn asked if there were any questions on the budget. Commissioner Savage made a motion to approve the 2015 MRRPC Budget as presented and Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the 2015 MRRPC Budget was approved unanimously.

Discussion on Regional Comprehensive Plan and Commissioner Assistance with Dissemination to Other Libraries and Other Organizations or Institutions

Mr. Flogstad said the MRRPC Regional Comprehensive Plans have been printed and are ready to be distributed. He referenced a distribution list in the packets. He then asked if Commissioners would be able to deliver plans to local libraries etc. to help with postage costs.

Report on Certified Sites and Proposed, “Golden Shovel” or “Platinum Place”, Business Site Selection and Promotion Program Criteria

Director Flogstad said the “Certified Sites in Wisconsin” Program is a major initiative in the state creating consistent standards for industrial site certification so that business expansion can be closed on quickly. He explained a Certified Site designation serves as a pre-qualification indicating a property’s title is clear and that it has sufficient utilities and other infrastructure for industrial use; and that it is properly zoned and has adequate transportation access for such uses. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) sponsors the program. There was then some discussion on a “Certified Site” already in place in Prescott, Wisconsin. Mr. Flogstad said another program “Golden Shovel” is in the planning stages. This program is less stringent than the certified sites requirement. He said the MRRPC will be working in collaboration with the 7 Rivers Alliance has been asked to do the check off on “Golden Shovel” designation requests. He said if a site is designated as a “Golden Shovel” site, WEDC and 7 Rivers Alliance will market the site. Mr. Flogstad said La Crosse County will be making application to get the Lakeview Business Park designated as a “Golden Shovel” site. There was some discussion on the requirements and mandates involved with “Certified Sites” and “the “Golden Shovel” designation. Mr. Flogstad said the “Golden Shovel” program probably won’t get going until July. He said the MRRPC will receive \$150 per site to do the check off list for “Golden Shovel” designation. There was then some discussion on 7 Rivers Alliance and its structure. Mr. Flogstad said 7 Rivers Alliance has a unique challenge as they serve Minnesota and Iowa too. He said they have a full time director and could be compared to Momentum West.

Report on Planning Joint Use of Federal and State Funded Vehicles in Crawford, Vernon and La Crosse Counties

Mr. Fletcher said the MRRPC was awarded a grant from the Wisconsin DOT to inventory all the state and federally funded transit-related vehicles in La Crosse, Vernon, and Crawford Counties. He said staff is inventorying the vehicles and investigating the possibility of joint use of the vehicles that historically has been difficult to accomplish. Mr. Fletcher explained that if there are mechanical problems with a vehicle there should be a process in place allowing opportunity for the sharing of vehicles. He explained that in the past the problems with sharing these vehicles included costs, liability etc. This project will try to address some of these issues up front. He said the project will document vehicles ages, annual miles driven, annual hours used and their specific days and hours of operations. The project will try to answer the liability and insurance questions in order to resolve barriers in sharing of the vehicles. Mr. Fletcher said overall 114 vehicles have been identified to date. He said staff has sent out a vehicle inventory sheet requesting vehicle information and also sent out a vehicle sharing survey to agencies with state or federally funded vehicles. Mr. Fletcher said the project should be done by April.

Chairman Kuhn questioned why the project was just looking at vehicles in the three counties. Mr. Fletcher explained the grant application for this project came from the City of Prairie du Chien. He said the federal and state funds for these vehicles is shrinking and there is more need for coordination. Commissioner Nickelatti said that people along the river are well served by the SMRT bus but the eastern part of Vernon County isn’t as well served. Mr. Fletcher said the SMRT bus service alleviates some of the pressure on other buses so those busses can serve other parts of the county.

Discussion on MRRPC Forming a Regional Non-profit to Increase MRRPC’s Access to Federal, State, Local and Private Funding Sources

Mr. Flogstad said in looking for more revenue sources for the MRRPC he wanted to present the idea of forming a regional non-profit to increase the MRRPC’s access to federal, state, local and private funding sources. He gave the history of how and when the

MRRPC was formed. He said many funding organizations solicit applications from non-profits and provided some examples of these organizations. He explained that at times the MRRPC not being a non-profit makes us ineligible in some cases or requires extensive narrative of who we are and/or to get an attorney's opinion that we legally exist to apply for funds. Commissioner Purdy asked if the MRRPC considered partnering with groups that already have that designation. Commissioner Folcey asked about the regional non-profit being used in regionalizing all four revolving loan funds together. Mr. Flogstad thanked her for mentioning that because that is another service it could provide. There was some discussion on this. Commissioner Borreson said this is not a decision that has to be made to day but could be considered for the future. He said having the opportunity to preserve funding is very positive.

Commissioner Barr said if we believe in our mission, good things have happened and we want to continue that. Commissioner McMillan-Urell said forming a regional nonprofit is a good idea and something we need to look at. Commissioner Smith said he agreed it's something we should explore. Mr. Flogstad said he talked to the Director at the UW-L Small Business Development Center who is an attorney and she thought it was something worth pursuing. Commissioner Schroeder asked if any of the other RCPs were doing it. Commissioner Flogstad said the Northwest Wisconsin RPC has a regional non-profit. Commissioner Christenson made a motion to encourage the MRRPC Director to proceed in pursuing forming a regional non-profit; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Burke and approved unanimously.

Director Flogstad said the speakers from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) will be here in April. They were scheduled to make a presentation today but because of a scheduling conflict were unable to make it.

Old and New Business

Mr. Fletcher said he attended a meeting about the proposed roundabout in Cashton at the intersection of Highway 33. Commissioner Kuhn questioned the diameter of the proposed roundabout and mentioned at times roundabouts cause problems for large trucks etc. Mr. Fletcher said the roundabout will be designed for truck use. Commissioner Schroeder said roundabout intersections can be hazardous and tip the trucks freight over. There was some more discussion on trucks and roundabouts.

Mr. Fletcher said staff met with Buffalo County Zoning Committee on updating their existing zoning ordinance. Staff presented the committee with a proposal to update the county's zoning ordinance that will be brought before the County's finance committee. Mr. Fletcher said Buffalo County's zoning ordinance was adopted in 1965 and 1968. Mr. Fletcher said there is also an effort in Buffalo County to create a bike trail along the Great River Road to Nelson. He said staff will assist with granting writing for funding that project. He said the proposed trail project will have to be identified in the Buffalo County Outdoor Recreation Plan. He MRRPC staff will assist the County in updating their Outdoor Recreation Plan so they can apply for grant funds for the trail project. Commissioner Borreson asked how many counties had updated outdoor recreation plans. Mr. Fletcher wasn't sure but said MRRPC staff tries to assist counties with updating their outdoor recreation plans every five to seven years.

Vicki Burke, Secretary-Treasurer