



**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., June 13, 2018**  
**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. The attendance roster is attached. There was one guest, Jennifer Kuderer, Regional Economic Development Director, WEDC.

**Minutes of April 11, 2018 Bimonthly Meeting**

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion on the April 11, 2018 bimonthly meeting minutes. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve the April 11, 2018 meeting minutes and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Chown. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the minutes were unanimously approved.

**Treasurer's Report**

Secretary-Treasurer Burke gave the treasurers report. Ms. Burke said the March 31, 2018 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$333,401.53 and the April 30, 2018 ending balance was \$359,113.78. She reported the beginning balance in May 2018 was \$359,113.78 and May 31, 2018 ending balance was \$332,547.98.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund (BCF) began with a March 31, 2018 balance of \$333,859.25. Activity from April 1, 2018 through May 31, 2018 included loan repayments of \$7,493.28, interest earned of \$101.24, \$131,541.65 was transferred to a new non-federal account, and \$2,077.00 administrative expenses were paid leaving a May 31, 2018 balance on hand of \$207,835.12. The BCF Sequester Account began with a March 31, 2018 balance of \$454,547.99. Activity from April 1, 2018 through May 31, 2018 included interest earned of \$184.48 and \$394,414.63 was paid back to the US Department of Commerce-Economic Development Administration leaving a balance on hand of \$60,317.84. The new Business Capital Fund (BCF) non-federal account began in April 2018 with a \$131,541.65 beginning balance. Activity from April 1, 2018 through May 31, 2018 included interest earned of \$38.75 leaving a balance on hand of \$131,580.40.

Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 began with a March 31, 2018 balance of \$46,722.98. Activity from April 1, 2018 through May 31, 2018 included loan repayments of \$1,788.00, interest earned of \$19.92, leaving a May 31, 2018 balance of \$48,530.90. Ms. Burke said the Business Capital Fund 2 Sequester Account began with a March 31, 2018 balance of \$160,718.70. Activity from April 1, 2018 through May 31, 2018 included interest earned of \$114.53, leaving a balance on hand of \$160,833.23.

Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund began with a March 31, 2018 balance of \$59,628.06. Activity from April 1, 2018 through May 31, 2018 included loan repayments of \$7,915.94, interest earned of \$12.47, a transfer from the Sequester account of \$104,108.32, a loan funded for \$100,000.00, and a loan closing fee of \$300.00, leaving a May 31, 2018 balance of \$71,964.79. Ms. Burke said the CMV Growth Development Fund Sequester Account began with a March 31, 2018 balance of \$104,104.38. Activity from April 1, 2018 through May 31, 2018 included interest earned of \$3.94 and transferring the balance of \$104,108.32 to the CMV regular account leaving a zero balance and closing the sequester account.

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***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***

MRRPC Bimonthly Meeting Minutes – June 13, 2018

The La Crosse County Economic Development Fund began with a March 31, 2018 balance of \$32,776.15. Activity from April 1, 2018 through May 31, 2018 included loan repayments of \$4834.00 and interest earned of \$8.75, leaving a May 31, 2018 balance of \$37,618.90.

Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented. Commissioner Schroeder made a motion to approve the treasurer's report. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Twidt. Chairman Kuhn asked if there were any questions or comments and hearing none, the treasurer's report was unanimously approved.

**Election of Officers:** Commissioner James Ehram, Chair of the nominating committee comprised of Bill Schroeder, Jo Ann Nickelatti and himself nominated Jim Kuhn for Chairman, Marge Baecker for Vice-Chairman, and Vicki Burke for Secretary Treasurer. Commissioner Ehram asked if there were any other nominations from any other board members three times. Hearing none, Commissioner Schroeder made a motion to close the nominations and to cast a unanimous ballot for the election of James Kuhn as Chair, Margaret Baecker as Vice-Chair, and Vicki Burke as the Secretary/Treasurer. Commissioner Twidt seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

### **Presentation on the Mississippi River Parkway Commission's Corridor Management Plan.**

Mr. Fletcher said that he has been working with the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) to update their corridor management plan which had been completed 18 years ago. The MRPC manages the Great River Road which passes through 8 counties between Pierce and Grant County. The revised plan would be a more concise document and provide specific achievable outcomes that would be able to happen within 8 to 10 years. He said that the first part of the planning process was to complete an inventory of public facilities along the Great River Road which included boat landings, canoe trails, turnouts, waysides, bike trails, lock and dams, historical markers, state wildlife areas, interpretive centers, and parks. There were 132 public facilities that were inventoried and rated. Two to seven people viewed each public facility and rated it using a standardized rating sheet of six different questions. He said the questions asked included: Is this facility easily recognizable by a traveler on the Great River Road? How would you rate the appearance of the facility on the Great River Road? Is the facility adequately maintained? Does the facility adequately meet its purpose? Overall how would you rate the facility? and Rate the importance of the facility for someone to see or visit while traveling the Great River Road. He said that 77 of the 132 facilities scored a 1 or 2 on the rating sheet as being important for visitors to see and 90% of the 77 facilities that were rated as important for visitors to see were easily seen on the Great River Road. Mr. Fletcher said that the majority of the facilities were well maintained and only 10% of the facilities received a negative response regarding maintenance. The results from the question about the appearance of the facility from the Great River Road resulted in 25% of the facilities were difficult to see or not appealing when viewed from the Great River Road. He said the results about the purpose of the facility resulted in 95% of the public facilities adequately meeting their purpose which is more good news. He said that when asked to rate the facility overall 90% of the public facilities received a rating of 1 or 2 which is good news. He also said that the rating sheets provided an opportunity for comments and recommendations and the majority of the comments recommended better signage for direction and identification and weeding and brush removal to create better views.

Mr. Fletcher said that the inventory data was taken to a strategic planning meeting and used to create goals and action items for the plan update. He said that the goals that have emerged from the plan include: 1) establishing policies, programs, and practices to ensure long term success of the Great River Road Wisconsin's Mississippi River National Scenic Byway 2) implement education programs to increase knowledge of the Great River Road among students, residents, elected officials, and business owners 3) cultivate regional promotion and collaboration which maximizes preservation and economic benefits of the Wisconsin Great River Road for Scenic Byways communities and 4) expand and define the experience for travelers on the Great River Road including website management and creating new social media exposure, strengthening and creating new marketing partnerships, and completing a yearly visitor's guide. Currently there is no paid staff, but the Mississippi River Parkway Commission would like to hire an Executive Director to maintain future sustainability of the organization over time through fundraising and projects. A Friends of the Great River Road is also a group that was created by one of the parkway commissioners as another way to move the commission forward. Mr. Fletcher said that one of the main goals of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission is to improve the signage, so travelers will immediately know that they are traveling on a National Scenic Byway. He said that there are only 112 National Scenic Byways in the nation and the Great River Road is the only National Scenic Byway in the State of Wisconsin. He said one suggestion is to create Wisconsin National Scenic Byway signs

and placing them at the beginning of the north and south corridors in Pierce and Grant counties. Currently the signage includes helmsman and wayfaring signs which are difficult for the average traveler to connect to the Wisconsin Great River Road as a Scenic Byway. The new signs will help travelers make connections to the Great River Road as a National Scenic Byway and will also help brand the corridor. Mr. Fletcher said that a draft of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission's Corridor Management Plan has been submitted and is in the process of gathering additional feedback with completion in late summer or early fall. Mr. Fletcher asked if there were any comments or questions. Commissioner Nickelatti commented that the signage is a very good idea and would help to bring some attention to State Highway 35 since the road is in bad repair from La Crosse to Prairie du Chien. Commissioner Kraft asked if the signs would identify that this the only National Scenic Byway in Wisconsin to let travelers know that the road is unique. Commissioner Leys commented that the new Federal interpretive center at the Fish Hatchery in Genoa is a huge asset on the Great River Road. He said that the waysides with toilets should be open all year instead of only from Memorial Day to Labor Day because travelers need them in the spring and fall. He said that once State Highway 35 is rebuilt he hoped that the road would be widened to accommodate bike travelers which is common in Iowa. Mr. Fletcher said that these are all good ideas to share with the Department of Transportation. Commissioner Folcey asked if federal legislators have been approached to get more proper signage for the Great River Road to identify it as a Scenic Byway? Mr. Fletcher responded that the corridor management plan is the first step to raising awareness for the need for new signs to highlight the Scenic Byway. Commissioner Kraft asked if businesses or others could sponsor the new signs. Commissioner Nickelatti asked what other states such as Iowa are doing to provide signage. Mr. Fletcher responded that Minnesota is still working with their DOT and Illinois has exit signs on their interstates. Commissioner Baecker asked if the Parkway Commission had looked at Hwy 61 in Minnesota to see how we compare. Mr. Fletcher replied that Minnesota is facing the same issues with signage as we are in Wisconsin and trying to get better signage.

Commissioner Baecker asked if the Parkway Commissioner received any government funding. Mr. Fletcher replied that they have received funds through the Department of Transportation and tourism grants and raise funds through the visitors' guide booklet. With an executive director that person would be able to go out and raise funds and market the Great River Road. Commissioner Ehrsam commented that businesses could advertise using the Great River Road. Commissioner Baecker commented that there is so much history associated with the Great River Road that could be used in schools. Mr. Fletcher replied that there is a textbook to use with fourth and fifth graders with a curriculum to help teachers teach about the Great River Road and it is available to schools. He said the Parkway Commission will give them out to schools. Commissioner Leys asked what the schedule is for repaving Hwy 35 between La Crosse and Prairie du Chien. Mr. Fletcher said that he can find that out by looking at the DOT's 6-year improvement plans. Mr. Bonifas asked if there were any plans to have a uniform sign for all states to identify their National Scenic Byways or if Wisconsin is going on their own? Mr. Fletcher said that is something that they have been in contact with other state commissions about. Mr. Fletcher concluded by saying that in order to be designated a National Scenic Byway one of six criteria has to be met and Wisconsin's National Scenic Byway meets all 6 of the criteria.

**Presentation on Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's Activities and Programs by Jennifer Kuderer, Regional Economic Development Director.**

Ms. Kuderer, Regional Economic Development Director with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, discussed activities, programs and services of the WEDC to further economic development in the state. Ms. Kuderer said that her role is to work directly with communities in her region. Resources generally offered through WEDC include assistance to downtowns, small businesses, business expansion projects, and collaborating with more than 600 local economic development partners. She then provided information on the following programs: (1) Certified Site Program - encourages business expansion and attraction by having sites available that are shovel ready meaning environmental and zoning issues have been resolved and the price is determined so a business can move quickly to close on the property and begin business operations. Black River Falls and Sparta are two communities who have recently participated in this program. (2) Wisconsin Supply Chain Marketplace portal is a tool to connect manufacturers to other businesses. (3) Made in Wisconsin Program involves Wisconsin companies applying to use the logo in their marketing campaigns to advertise their product such as "Manufactured In", "Brewed In", or "Engineered In" Wisconsin. (4) Think - Make - Happen branding campaigns are to help attract talent and businesses to the state. (5) Young Professionals Week was established to help engage young professionals with their communities, creating a sticky factor influencing young people to develop roots in their communities, so they stay and help market Wisconsin as a great place to live, work, and raise a family. (6) Fab Lab Grant Program to school districts to connect with the next generation of talent by providing them with matching funds to provide equipment such as 3-D printers, laser cutters and engravers etc. Black River Falls and Onalaska School Districts have received this grant in the region. (7) Industry Clusters Initiatives such as advanced

Manufacturing, water technology industry, aerospace, and biotechnology. (8) Entrepreneur and Innovation Division, (9) Pop Up Shop Program. (10) The Business and Community Development Division provides technical assistance to businesses through revolving fund loans and tax credits. (11) Industrial Revenue Bond program helps manufacturers with financing. (12) Workforce Training Grant Program. (13) International Business Development Division helps companies export to international clients. Export Tech is a specific program that helps businesses to learn how to create a plan to break into international markets. (14) Main Street Community and the Connect Communities programs provide technical assistance to communities who want to revitalize their downtown areas and central business districts. The cities of La Crosse and Viroqua are part of the full-fledged Main Street Community program. (15) Brownfield Properties Program help communities with cleaning up contaminated sites. She said key areas of technical assistance grants include historic preservation and downtown redevelopment to help create jobs and new tax base. Commissioner Schlesselman commented how important planning and economic development are to our communities in order to make use of these programs.

### **Report on U.S. Dept. of Commerce-EDA public facility flood disaster grant assistance projects in the cities of La Crosse, Arcadia and Viroqua.**

Mr. Bonifas said that after all of the disasters of 2017, the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration - EDA was awarded an additional \$587 million nation-wide for natural disaster recovery from hurricanes, fires, and floods. The only counties not eligible in our region were Pierce and Pepin. He said EDA is using a two-phase application process which includes a write up of each project to EDA involving a description of the project and its impact on the economy. He said that EDA is mostly looking for projects involving infrastructure, for example enlarging storm water pipes and pumping stations to prevent future flooding so transportation of goods isn't impacted. He said that once you submit a description of the project and its economic benefits EDA will respond with either a yes or a no. He said that he pulled out all of the County Hazard Mitigation Plans to see what infrastructure projects were identified. Mr. Bonifas said that he has contacted Emergency Management teams in the areas that were affected and some of the cities. In his contacts there were three cities that chose to pursue grant applications, the cities of Viroqua, Arcadia, and La Crosse. An EDA representative was here and met with representatives of these cities and MRRPC staff. The City of Arcadia is currently working on a flood study to build a levee to protect the downtown area and Ashley Furniture. The study has not been completed but part of the study is that the city would be responsible for upgrades to their storm water pumps and adding two additional pumps. The total project with the pumps and the levee is \$28 million as the initial estimate and the city is hoping to reduce it to \$24.6 million. The City is looking for \$8 million grant from EDA. The City of La Crosse is looking at 3 separate projects. There are three lift stations in North La Crosse that need improvements. The pumps can't keep up with the larger storm water pipes causing road flooding and interruption of commerce. This will be a \$3 Million grant application. He said the other project is with the City of Viroqua in conjunction with Vernon County involving industrial park development and moving the county highway shop. Commissioner Nickelatti asked about the timeline for these grants. Mr. Bonifas replied that time is of the essence since the dollars available are first come first serve. MRRPC has been involved in helping coordinate meetings and grant writing assistance with the Cities of Arcadia and La Crosse. Commissioner Schroeder asked why so much development occurred in the floodplain in North La Crosse. Mr. Bonifas responded that the construction happened prior to when floodplain regulations went into effect.

### **Review of EDA Regional Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Plan for the Business Capital Fund, CMV Growth Development Fund and the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund.**

Mr. Flogstad said that the commission has four revolving loan funds that were created at different times for business lending. He said currently there are four separate documents to guide the administration of these revolving loan funds which are essentially the same. He presented a document to all the commissioners which will be used to administer all four revolving loans funds which will include information about how the loans are administered, the interest rates, and terms and conditions of the loans. He said that the draft document has been submitted to EDA for review. The administrator at EDA said that they don't want us to act on it until it has been reviewed by EDA and they have commented on it since it is unique that our commission is creating one plan for all of our EDA revolving loan funds. He said that since these loans were funded with federal dollars there is a hierarchy to their administration. First there is the federal government with their guidelines, the commission, and then the revolving loan fund boards and staff that carries out the day to day activities.

Mr. Flogstad highlighted some of the areas of the draft plan. He said the plan highlights the region's diverse economy, business development strategy and ties into the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. He said the plan also highlights other public financing sources and allows any business that can get financial backing to be eligible for these revolving

loan funds and outlines the leveraging requirements. He said that once the plan has been reviewed by EDA and they have commented on the plan it will be presented at the August or October meeting for the commission to review and approve.

**Report on the Association of Wisconsin Regional Planning Commissions First Annual Summit on Thursday, June 14, 2018, in Wisconsin Rapids at the Mead Inn.**

Mr. Flogstad said that there will be five people from the commission attending the first annual summit of the AWRPC in Wisconsin Rapids, Jim Kuhn, Marge Baecker, Sarah Ofte, Peter Fletcher, and himself. On June 14<sup>th</sup> there will be sessions for both commissioners and staff to attend and the annual meeting will be held on June 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Resolution Recognizing Ernest Vold.**

Mr. Flogstad announced that Ernest Vold had just retired from the Trempealeau County Board after 51 years of service. As an appreciation for Commissioner Vold's years of public service to the Trempealeau County Board and to the MRRPC Mr. Flogstad stated he prepared Resolution 6.13.18 recognizing Commissioner Vold. He then read the Resolution. Commissioner Twidt made a motion to approve Resolution 6.13.18 recognizing Ernest Vold's years of service and Commissioner Ehram seconded the motion, Motion was unanimously approved.

**Old, Business, New Business and Adjourn**

Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any old business, there was no response, Chairman Kuhn asked if there was any new business, there was no response, Chairman Kuhn asked for a motion to adjourn, A motion was made to adjourn by Commissioner Twidt and seconded by Commissioner Schroeder. The motion was unanimously approved.

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Vicki Burke, Secretary-Treasurer

MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING ATTENDANCE ROSTER

DATE: 6-13-18

PLACE : AmericInn

	NAME	REPRESENTING
1.	Greg # [unclear]	MRRPC Staff
2.	Margaret Brecker	Trempealeau Cty.
3.	[unclear]	Buffalo Co
4.	Del Twidt	Buffalo Co
5.	James Ehrson	La Crosse Co
6.	[unclear]	monroe Co
7.	Sharon Falcey	Monroe Co.
8.	RON LEYS	CRAWFORD
9.	JIM KRAFT	PEPIN COUNTY
10.	Ernest void	TREMP CO.
11.	Vicki Buder	La Crosse Co.
12.	James Kuhn	MONROE CO
13.	John Nickelatti	Vernon Co.
14.	Herbert Cornell	Vernon co
15.	Dorothy Gladys	Cumford Co.
16.	Beal Schroeder	Pierce
17.	Rich Pandy	"
18.	A. Brad Chown	Jackson County
19.	Dave Bahr	MRRPC staff
20.	Peter Fletcher	"
21.	Sarah Ofte	MRRPC Staff
22.		
23.		
24.		
25.		