



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
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*Eugene Savage, Black River Falls  
Chairman*  
*Margaret Baecker, Independence  
Vice Chairman*  
*Vicki Burke, Onalaska  
Secretary & Treasurer*  
*Greg Flogstad, Onalaska  
Director*

**MINUTES**  
**MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRRPC)**  
**BIMONTHLY MEETING**  
**10:30 a.m., August 8, 2012**  
**Midway Hotel La Crosse "River Jacks", 1835 Rose Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin**

**Call to Order**

Chairman Savage called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and asked for the roll call. Greg Flogstad, Director took the roll and stated a quorum was present. The attendance roster is attached. Guests in attendance: Paul Wydeven, Wisconsin Department of Transportation; Bill Warner, Pierce County Economic Development Corporation; Karl Green, La Crosse County UW-Extension; and Jim Bowman, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

**Minutes of June 13, 2012 Bimonthly Meeting**

Commissioner Ehrsam made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Nickelatti to accept the minutes of the June 13, 2012, bimonthly meeting. Approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report**

Vicki Burke, MRRPC Secretary/Treasurer presented the treasurers reports. Ms. Burke said the May 31, 2012 balance in all MRRPC accounts was \$258,018.26 and the June 30, 2012 ending balance was \$251,589.93. Ms. Burke reported that the beginning balance in July 2012 was \$251,589.93 and the balance in all accounts as of July 31, 2012 was \$233,920.98.

Ms. Burke then presented the financial report for the Business Capital Fund. The balance in this account as of May 31, 2012 was \$236,716.49. From June 2012 through July 2012 activity in this account included loan repayments of \$29,174.89 and account interest of \$107.32 leaving a July 31, 2012 ending balance of \$265,998.70. The BCF Sequester Account began with a May 31, 2012 balance of \$154,562.90. From June 1, 2012 through July 31, 2012 there was no activity in this account leaving a July 31, 2012 balance of \$154,562.90.

Ms. Burke said that as of May 31, 2012, the Business Capital Fund II RLF had a balance of \$60,856.33. She said that from June 1, 2012 through July 31, 2012 activity in this account included interest of \$26.21 and loan repayments of \$4,365.42 leaving a July 31, 2012 balance of \$65,247.96. The BCF II Sequester Account began with a May 31, 2012 balance of \$54,563.28. From June 1, 2012 through July 31, 2012 there was no activity in this account leaving a July 31, 2012 balance of \$54,563.28.

The CMV Growth Development Fund began with a May 9, 2012, balance of \$55,584.01. Ms. Burke said from the period of May 10, 2012 through July 11, 2012 interest earned on this account totaled \$14.41 and loan payments made totaled \$405.02 leaving a July 11, 2012 balance of \$56,003.44. Ms. Burke said the balance in the CMV-EDA Sequester Fund as of May 9, 2012 was \$161,740.13. During the period of May 10, 2012 through July 11, 2012 activity in this account consisted of interest earned of \$41.76 and an interest payment to the U.S. Treasury of \$31.07 leaving a July 11, 2012 balance of \$161,750.82.

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***A Nine County Economic Development District Providing Assistance to Local Governments***

- *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*

Ms. Burke said the La Crosse County Economic Development Fund began with a May 13, 2012 balance of \$63,116.04. During the period of May 14, 2012 through July 15, 2012, loan repayments of \$22,710.00 were made and account interest earned totaled \$33.17 leaving an account balance as of July 15, 2012 was \$85,859.21. The La Crosse County Business Sequester Account began with a May 31, 2012 balance of 14,176.65. From June 1, 2012 through July 31, 2012 activity in this account included account interest earned of \$3.54 leaving a July 31, 2012 balance of \$14,180.19.

Chairman Savage asked for a motion of approval on the treasurers reports presented. Commissioner Schlessleman made a motion to approve the treasurer's reports as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ross, and approved unanimously.

Mr. Law reported there have been no new loans since last bimonthly meeting. He said outreach for the funds continues and that he is looking for new borrowers as there are funds available for lending from all of the RLFs. Mr. Flogstad said the La Crosse County RLF just refinanced a loan for a manufacturer in La Crosse County that was set to balloon in July.

#### **Discussion on Wisconsin RPCs and Counties Association Efficiency and Consolidation of Public Services Initiative**

Mr. Flogstad said the Association of Wisconsin Regional Planning Commissions (AWRPC) met in June to for a strategic planning session and to discuss where things are headed. Mr. Flogstad said that Wisconsin RPC's with assistance from the Counties Association is pursuing a \$500,000 funding proposal from the Wisconsin Department of Administration in the Governor's 2014-2016 budget. The proposal includes \$50,000 for each regional planning commission and \$50,000 to fund a coordinator for the proposed project. A match of \$50,000 will also be pursued from the Economic Development Administration to fund the coordination position for another year. The project would involve development of regional projects that would be used as models to improve public service delivery efficiencies and results. Mr. Flogstad said the Department of Administration would like the funding request by September 15, 2012 along with performance measures estimating potential return on the state's investment. Mr. Flogstad then provided some possible examples of regional projects. Mr. Flogstad said the regional planning commissions are meeting in Madison today on this, but he obviously did not attend because of the Commission meeting today.

#### **Discussion on Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council Request for Tribe Representation on all Wisconsin Regional Planning Commissions**

Mr. Flogstad said Wisconsin's nine regional planning commissions were invited to a Great Lakes Inter-tribal Council (GLITC) meeting on July 16, 2012. He said the GLITC made a request that tribes have representatives on each RPC. Mr. Flogstad said that Tom Maulson, President of the GLITC, said the GLITC would like to work with the regional planning commissions. Mr. Flogstad listed all of the tribes in the state. He explained that State Statutes would need to be changed to allow for representation of the tribes and several other items would have to be discussed such as how much representation and a tribal funding formula would need to be determined. Mr. Flogstad said the GLITC lobbyist, RPCs and the WCA Lobbyist will meet in August to discuss this request further. Commissioner Jaekel expressed concern about opening up representation for other organizations. She said she has nothing against the GLITC but this could set a precedent for other organizations to request representation on the regional planning commissions.

#### **Decision on Town of Arcadia and Trempealeau County Comprehensive Plan Contract**

Mr. Fletcher presented a contract between Trempealeau County and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC). He said that Trempealeau County as a service to the Town's in their county is providing funding for individual Towns to update the Town Comprehensive Plans. He said the plans should be updated every five years. He said the purpose of this contract is to secure the planning services of the MRRPC to update the Town of Arcadia Comprehensive Plan in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001. Mr. Fletcher said a lot has changed in the Town of Arcadia since 2008 when their original plan was prepared. The Town has been impacted by several Frac sand mining requests. He said the contract is for \$2,200 and the plan should be complete by the end of 2012. Chairman Savage asked for a motion to approve the contract. Commissioner Borreson made a motion to approve the contract between the MRRPC and Trempealeau County to update the Town of Arcadia Comprehensive Plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Vold and approved unanimously.

#### **Decision on Town of Holland (La Crosse County) Town Plan Contract for Implementation Assistance**

Mr. Fletcher presented a contract between the Town of Holland located in La Crosse County and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission. He explained the purpose of the contract is to secure the planning services of the MRRPC to assist the Town with implementation of specific actions identified in the Town of Holland Comprehensive Plan "Five Year Action Plan". He said the Town's plan was completed several years ago and the Town needs assistance in implementing

several of the recommendations in the plan that include: 1) Standards for rezoning “Exclusive Agricultural” lands, 2) Requirement for neighborhood plans prior to large tracts being developed, 3) Utilization of platted lands plans prior to development of un-platted lands and 4) Environmental impact assessment list. He said the timeline for the contract is nine months. Chairman Savage asked for a motion to approve the contract between the MRRPC and the Town of Holland in La Crosse County. Commissioner Burke made a motion to approve the contract between the MRRPC and the Town of Holland; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Ehrsam and approved unanimously.

#### **Update on Kickapoo Valley Biofuel and Wood Product Feasibility Study**

Mr. Law provided a brief update of the Kickapoo Valley Biofuel and Wood Product Feasibility Study. He said the MRRPC has an EDA grant for half the study but is looking for matching funds. He said the Village of La Farge has submitted an application to WEDC for the match. Mr. Law said MRRPC staff will be meeting with representatives from Cooperative Development Services and Paul Bader from the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative on August 16<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Law said these organizations have experience in forest products and solid biofuels. Mr. Law referred everyone to a U.S. map indicating bio-fuel potential by State where Wisconsin was shown to be in a moderate position. Mr. Law reviewed the advantages of using biomass for heating: 1) Efficiency, 2) Biomass thermal is very scalable, 3) Utilization of byproducts and waste streams, 4) Biomass is one of the few types of renewable energy that can be stored, 5) Biomass creates jobs in the local market, 6) Reduced fuel costs, and 7) It's not as volatile as other fuel sources. Commissioner Leys said that Wisconsin Power and Light closed their Cassville biofuels plant. Bill Warner said that UW-River Falls prepared a feasibility study on biofuels and the results were disappointing. Some discussion occurred on outside wood burners and the regulation of these wood-burners by some Towns. Mr. Warner said there are some perceptions on these wood-burners that need to be overcome. Commissioner Krachey added there are wood-burners that are built well and have very low emission, but they are more expensive. Commissioner Schlesselman said he designed and built a burner that uses a secondary combustion process that burns much hotter and burns clean. Commissioner Smith said the more efficient a burner is, the less it smokes. Karl Green from UW-Extension asked what biomass was being focused on. Mr. Law said the focus is on wood pellets and whether or not a pellet mill in the Kickapoo Valley is feasible.

#### **Update of Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's (WEDC) Regionalizing Business Revolving Loan Funds Initiative**

Mr. Law said the WEDC is encouraging regionalizing the 12 Community Development Block Grant RLFs in the region to increase flexibility, and use of the funds for businesses in the region. He said a meeting was held last week on the regionalization initiative with WEDC and regional RLF representatives that was well attended. Mr. Law explained the group that met examined the three regional RLFs currently operating throughout the State. He directed everyone to the chart in the meeting packets displaying the characteristics of loans being administered by the three Regional RLFs currently operating. He said this is a menu of options and are just considerations; it's up to the Regional Revolving Loan fund to make decisions on the types of loans the RLF wants to pursue etc. Mr. Law said with regionalization, upon repayment of existing loans the funds may become defederalized making the RLF funds a more flexible tool for economic development. He explained the funds could be used for micro loans, short term economic development loans, or downtown façade/historic reinvestment loans etc. Mr. Law said the RLF regional group is going to meet regularly to discuss types of loans and governance structures. He said it's up to the Regional RLF to decide how it's managed but a typical governance structure would have the Regional RLF Board serve as the body with lending authority who would contract with a Program Administrator that would administer the RLF on a day-to-day basis. The local loan committees would approve smaller RLF loans as well as downtown façade/historic reinvestment loans and micro-loans. Mr. Law said WEDC will provide technical assistance. Commissioner Jaekel asked about the RLF regional board makeup. Mr. Law said typically regional RLFs like to have equal representation from member counties. Commissioner Carney said there are 12 RLFs in the region with over \$8.6 million in funds. Mr. Law said the next meeting for the group is set for September 12<sup>th</sup>. Some more discussion occurred on the governance structure of a regional RLF and the accessibility of the funds. Bill Warner said that David Connelly from Crawford County has asked to be invited to the regional RLF meetings but was not invited by WEDC because Crawford County currently does not have an RLF. Commissioner Jaekel questioned why the funds couldn't be defederalized locally? Mr. Law stated that it is his understanding that this is a WEDC decision based on their interpretation of HUD's regulations.

Mr. Warner said the Pierce County RLF has not made a decision on this. He said local RLFs were bypassed on determining the structure of the Regional RLF and there could have been a better approach. He felt the whole procedure has been a very top to down approach. Mr. Warner explained the City of River Falls in Pierce County sits in two counties that would involve two different regional RLF funds. Mr. Warner said the Pierce County RLF fund has been very active. He said they are discussing whether or not they want to participate in the regional RLF. He said defederalizing the funds is not a sure thing, it's not formal yet.

Mr. Green said the RLFs that are most active now have the most to gain from the regionalization of the funds. Mr. Warner said that 70-88% of the Pierce County RLF assets are in loans and it doesn't make sense to regionalize their fund and lose \$12,000 out of their budget available for administration of their RLF. There was some more discussion on whether or not counties and communities are required to participate in the regional RLF. Mr. Law said no one is being forced to join but all RLFs are eligible. Mr. Flogstad stated the regional RLF meetings are open to everyone.

### **Report on State of Wisconsin Regionalizing Community Development Block Grant Funds**

Bryan Law gave a report on the initiative by the Wisconsin Department of Administration on regionalizing Community Development Block Grant Housing funds. He explained the State is changing the way it distributes CDBG housing funds. Recipients will now have to be members of a consortium. In each consortium, one county will serve as the lead county, and will administer the program throughout the consortium. There will be seven regional housing consortiums around the State. Mr. Law said MRRPC counties will be located in two different consortiums. Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon counties are in the consortium boundaries that has designated La Crosse County as the lead; Pepin, Pierce and Buffalo are in the consortium led by Chippewa County. Mr. Law said the average amount of funding for each region is expected to be between \$850,000 and \$1 million and eligible activities include: deferred loans for housing rehab, handicapped accessibility projects, down-payment assistance for home buyers, demolition of dilapidated structures, and public facilities that serve low- and moderate-income people. Some discussion then occurred on counties that have already approved resolutions to join the consortiums. Mr. Law said Crawford and Vernon counties to date have not passed resolutions to join the consortium led by La Crosse County. Commissioner Krachey asked that a participation resolution be mailed to the Crawford County Clerk. Mr. Law said DOA is holding a training session on August 20, 2012 in Richland Center on this. He said applications for housing funds are due at the end of October 2012.

### **Federal EDA Flood Funds for 2010 Disaster in Buffalo, Jackson and Trempealeau Counties**

Mr. Flogstad said that the U.S. Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration has funding available for communities that were part of a declared disaster area between October 1, 2010 and September 30, 2011. He said that includes Buffalo, Jackson and Trempealeau counties in our region. He said the funding is aimed primarily at repairing damages to roads and/or other public facilities and the project must also provide economic development benefits. Commissioner Baecker asked if counties had been notified of these funds. Mr. Flogstad said that staff contacted all the counties and some of the communities about potential projects.

### **Commissioners Questions and Comments on Written Staff Report**

Chairman Savage said everyone should have in their packet a summary of the items listed under agenda item no. 10. He asked if there were any questions or comments. Commissioner Krachey asked about the commuter bus project status. Mr. Fletcher said bids from bus companies are due August 17<sup>th</sup> and hopefully the service will be up and running this fall. Commissioner Baecker commented the La Crosse Tribune has provided good coverage for this project. Mr. Flogstad provided an update on the Bergquist Company Loan. He said The Bergquist Company and Pierce County have both signed the loan agreement and are now waiting for the State to sign it. He also mentioned that the loan may likely all be State funds due to a HUD audit the State had.

### **Old Business and New Business**

Chairman Savage asked for comments from Mr. Wydeven from DOT. Mr. Wydeven briefly discussed DOT funding. He said the funding for Wisconsin will be 1/3 less. He said this is a two year funding program. He said planning dollars are about the same so funding provided to the MRRPC should be about the same. Chairman Savage asked Mr. Warner from Pierce County for his comments. Mr. Warner brought to everyone's attention an article on Frac Sand mining in Minnesota and Wisconsin that recently ran in the Fedgazette. He said the article was very thorough and informative. Chairman Savage asked Jim Bowman from WEDC for his comments. Mr. Bowman introduced himself, provided some information on his background in economic development planning, and provided an overview of his job at the WEDC. He explained he will be working closely with businesses on expansion/attraction/startup projects that will hopefully lead to some successes in the future.

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the August 8, 2012, bimonthly meeting minutes approved on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of October 2012.

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Vicki Burke, Secretary-Treasurer