Naturally Meramec Consortium

Regional Meeting

January 23, 2018

Meramec Regional Planning Commission, 4 Industrial Drive, St. James, MO

6:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

**Attendees:** Chrysa Niewald, Owensville-Rosebud Tourism; Greg Harris, Rock Island Trail; Rachel Robertson, St. James Winery; Mike Bottom, Knee Deep Farm; Deb Kleinheider, St. James Marketplace Café; and Julie Schrope,Swiss Meat and Sausage Company.

**Staff Present:** Connie Willman and Bonnie Prigge

**Call to Order and Introductions:** Vice Chairman Kleinheider opened the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the August 15, 2017 meeting were presented. Greg Harris made a motion, seconded by Julie Schrope, that the minutes be approved as presented. Motion passed.

**Staff Report:** Connie Willman reported that, prior to dues implementation, there were 102 Naturally Meramec Consortium members. Grants submitted include $16,500 for a Missouri Agriculture and Small Business Development Authority: MO Value-Added Grant Program to conduct a food hub feasibility study and $20,000 for Coover Charitable Foundation to continue collective marketing efforts. In process: $40,000 for a USDA rural Business Development Grant for marketing/training. Connie distributed a certification form for members to complete to go with the grant.

**Election of Officers:** Due to personal reasons, it was necessary for Brenda Story to resign her position as Naturally Meramec Consortium Chairman. Members elected Deb Kleinheider as Chairman and Julie Schrope as Vice Chairman.

**Dues Structure:** Bonnie Prigge gave an overview of the new NMC dues structure. Dues will be $300 per year. This can be paid all at once, or in two payments. These will be pro-rated at $25 per month so that members pay only for those months they are a member. Participants offered suggestions for considering dues for next year:

* Offer a discount for a single payment of dues.
* Next year, start dues at March, not January.
* Consider no, or lower dues for Not-For-Profits.
* Consider a rate scale by size of business.

It was also suggested that the website be linked with State sites.

**"Instagram for the Travel Industry:"** Connie presented the PowerPoint prepared for the group by Caledon Virtual. More than 800 million people use Instagram, with a 2.3 percent engagement rate per follower. 48 percent of users rely on Instagram to find a new travel destination. Users use the location feature to find real pictures of people who have visited their desired destination, finding attractions.

**Announcements:** Greg Harris reported that the "Big Bam Ride" from Joplin to Eureka will take place from June 17-22 in 2018. Waynesville will be a stop on day three.

**Networking:** Members networked and enjoyed refreshments, provided Swiss Meat and Sausage Company, St. James Marketplace Café and Bonnie Prigge.