

**MERAMEC REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE/DEVELOPER'S LUNCHEON
Tuesday, August 25, 2015
MEETING MINUTES**

Members Present:, Ray Walden, Wayne Morgan Cyndra Lorey, Janey Radford, John Petersen

Members Absent: Dennis Wilson, Cheri Tune, Tony Floyd, , Candace Connell, Krista Snyder, Donald Claycomb, David Dudenhoeffer, T.R. Dudley, Bruce Sassmann, Rosiland Pride, Bob Baldwin, John Butz, Kathy Byrd, Byron Craig, Carl Stephens, James Wright, Jim Barnett, John Casey, Luge Hardman, Mark Boyer, Mike Distler, Randy Verkamp, Robert Vineyard, Robin Huskey, Shannon Grus, Thomas Leasor, Byron Baker, Jeff Davis, Terry Palmer, Christopher Dickeneite, Ken Bassett, Russell Scheulen, Jan Haviland, Janet Walker, Marla Stevenson, Carol Carson, Jeff Clark, Robert Schaffer, Keith Strassner, Ted Day, Nancy Montgomery, Richard Huse, and John Greenlee. James Morgan, Lowell Tonding, Butch Tucker,

Welcome and Introductions: Chairman John Petersen Morgan opened the meeting at 12:10 p.m.

Approval of April 28, 2015 Minutes: Cyndra Lorey requested a change to move her from 'absent' to 'present.'. Morgan made a motion, seconded by Walden, that the minutes be approved. Motion passed.

Economic Development Activities Across the Region: John Petersen presented a series of questions to members about economic development.

a. Does your jurisdiction offer an financing tools to stimulate private investment?

John Petersen listed several tools used by the city of Rolla including Tax Increment Financing (TIF) recently used with Kohl's, Community Improvement District (CID) being used at Forum Shopping Center, Transportation Development District to be used for Rolla West development (with potential for TIF). Also available is Chapter 353 and Chapter 100. Wayne Morgan noted that most cities have much the same resources to offer. Cyndra Lorey also noted Enhanced Enterprise Zone (EEZ) and that Small Business Development Center (SBDC) offers some support to businesses. Janey Radford reminded the group that many local Industrial Development Authorities (IDA) have funds that can assist.

Bonnie Prigge asked about the opportunity for Angel Investors. Lorey explained that the Ozark Angel Investment Group has been initialized but currently lacked projects. Prigge mentioned the efforts of Dr. Sean Siebert on behalf of entrepreneurs and suggested the two entities be introduced. Prigge also informed the group of an upcoming entrepreneur assessment to be performed by Southeast Missouri University out of Cape Girardeau and hopes that this can lead to a better environment for growth.

Radford added that Dr. Siebert could hold entrepreneur trainings in one's community provided the community could host and Washington County is trying to coordinate one.

b. Are you provided with sufficient information about business/industry financing options? At what level do you feel you are lacking information – federal/state/local? Are businesses/industries in your jurisdiction well-informed?

Wayne Morgan noted that businesses are not well informed and don't know what programs exist that can help. He works to try to connect businesses with state programs but it is sometimes difficult. He also noted that banks are not familiar with MRDC.

The group discussed turnover at MoDED has lost experience with programs and it is hard to maintain contacts at the state. It is hard to keep track of all the programs that come and go.

Lorey pointed out that oftentimes companies are looking for grants and not loans so it is hard to connect them to any financing options.

The group also discussed that many programs are not friendly to small businesses because the preference is for manufacturing. Small businesses contribute significant sales tax and more is needed to help them. Everyone agreed that they are well informed of the financing options offered through MRPC.

c. What potential/new national and international markets for manufactured and/or agricultural products has your jurisdiction explored?

Wayne Morgan noted that agriculture is becoming more of an industry with groups like Naturally Meramec used to promote. He sees potential for more exporting.

Bonnie Prigge noted that the state has had some trade missions abroad and that several Meramec region companies already export. She also noted that the state has programs to help businesses with trade visits and trade shows.

The group discussed that agricultural products have several ‘hoops to jump through’ but it is achievable to export.

Additionally the group discussed workforce development. Bonnie Prigge summarized a tour of State Technical College of Missouri in Linn and how it teaches courses to meet market demand. The group discussed how businesses can’t find workers with skills and Wayne Morgan noted a particular lack of maintenance skills/industrial maintenance. An update of Certified Work Ready Communities still shows a lack of student population getting certified and the group discussed how to increase this sector. The tie between the NCRC and job placement needs to be better highlighted – businesses need to show they want it so schools will support it and students will get it. Janey Radford noted that some counties fell short on employers because small businesses only counted as a partial. She asked how one would know if a company has profiled and Bonnie Prigge said she would find out and share.

Cyndra Lorey noted to the group her difficulty in getting companies to look at non-metro areas because they assume there is no labor pool. RREC will be hiring a consultant to complete a labor-basin study of Phelps County and the surrounding area. She will share with the group. Janey Radford informed the group they have a local company relocating out of Potosi to the area where most of its employees are from and that a significant portion of Potosi residents head out of the area for work and they need more local companies hiring local people.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, October 27, 2015 at 12:00 noon.

Adjournment