

**Naturally Meramec
Phelps County Meeting
April 3, 2015
Public House Brewery, St. James**

Meeting Notes

Attendees: Randy Verkamp, Lindsey Shockley, Jeff Davis, El Willman, Gary Hicks, Penelope Beache, Chuck Held, Jane Held, Heinrich and Gina Grohe, Peter Hofherr, Maria Bancroft and Connie Willman

Welcome: Connie Willman, MRPC, welcomed attendees, introduced Maria Bancroft and thanked host Peter Hofherr, CEO of the St. James Winery, for hosting the event.

Public House Brewery and St. James Winery: Peter welcomed attendees and gave some history and facts about the St. James Winery and the Public House Brewery. Peter recalled a conversation he had with his father when he was a child, in which his father envisioned a time in which many people would exit the highway to buy wine at the winery. That vision has certainly come to fruition, as the St. James Winery has become a leader in the Midwest industry, remaining in the top ten most medaled wineries in the country every year for the last decade. St. James Winery now produces more than 500,000 gallons of wine per year, with wines sold in 18 states. The Hofherr family opened the winery in 1970 and it remains a family-owned business.

In 2010, Josh and Beth Stacy and Josh and Trisha Goodridge opened the Public House Brewing Company in Rolla, MO. Building upon the success of that business, the Stacys and Goodridges partnered with the St. James Winery to build the Public House in St. James. The facility opened in November, 2014 and has become an attraction for both local repeat business and travelers off of I-44.

Introductions: Attendees were asked to introduce themselves and tell a little about their businesses or entities involved with agriculture/tourism:

Randy Verkamp: Randy Verkamp is the Presiding Commissioner of Phelps County. Additionally, he has raised cattle for many years. Randy is interested in the Naturally Meramec consortium as a way to grow agriculture and tourism businesses in the county and the region.

Lindsey Shockley: Lindsey is a financial advisor for Edward Jones, Rolla. Her family members own farms and raise livestock.

Jeff Davis: Jeff is the St. James City Administrator. He wants to see St. James and Phelps County grow with more businesses like St. James Winery, the Public House Brewing Company, Sybill's and others.

Gary Hicks: Gary Hicks is Associate Commissioner of Phelps County, who attended the meeting to get more information on how the consortium will work and who will be asked to participate.

Penelope Beache: Penelope is directing the newly-formed Slow Food St. James Chapter. This organization is part of Slow Food USA, a global network of over 100,000 members in more than 150 countries that promote good, clean and fair food for all. This group champions local, culturally significant heritage foods, customs and recipes and brings these experiences into farms, markets, restaurants and homes.

Chuck and Jane Held: The Helds own and operate the Nutty Pig Farm, on which they raise heritage hogs that are free to wander woods and graze in pastures. They thrive on acorns, hickory and walnuts and are supplemented with natural grains with no antibiotics or hormones. The Helds are interested in the marketing aspects of Naturally Meramec.

Heinrich and Gina Grohe: The Grohes own and operate the Heinrichshaus Vineyards and Winery, located outside of St. James on Hwy. U. The winery features a country setting with a terrace for wine tasting and

picnicking.

Naturally Meramec Background: Connie Willman reviewed the Naturally Meramec project. Staff have been working to finance the project for about four years, following a discussion of the MRPC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Advisory Committee presentation by Peter Hofherr. The need for a consortium of agriculture/tourism businesses that crossed "silos" was identified. The project was funded this year by the USDA Rural Development Farmer's Market Promotion Program and the Delta Regional Authority. The purpose of the project is to provide a forum for agriculture and tourism businesses to meet together to discuss ways they can use and market each other's products/services.

Needs: Staff asked attendees to share the top three needs of their businesses or agriculture/tourism-related entities, with which Naturally Meramec may be able to help. Responses follow:

- Need more farmer's markets and additional opportunities for farmers to sell additional products that may currently be restricted in some communities
- Need business finance
- Need increased market opportunities
- Need help with marketing of products/services
- Need help with business plans as a strategy to promote locally grown products
- Need a website or other vehicle to connect the 500+ businesses that have been identified across the region
- Need to encourage communities to go back to basics—bakeries, sausage makers, etc.

Naturally Meramec Structure: Some discussion was held as to how the consortium may be structured. Because of the nature of some of the businesses, it may be necessary to form groups within the consortium in order for discussion topics to be directed to some sub-clusters. This will be a topic for discussion once the regional consortium begins meeting.

Agriculture/Tourism Database: Staff distributed a copy of the Phelps County database of agriculture and tourism businesses. Attendees were asked to check their information for accuracy and to check the list for any other corrections or missing agriculture/tourism businesses. They should contact Connie with any changes or additions.

Adjourn: Following an invitation to continue conversations over dinner at the Public House, the meeting adjourned.