Naturally Meramec Consortium

Regional Meeting

October 30, 2018

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

6:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

**Attendees:** Charles & Jordan Ray, CDR Naturals; Ron & Marie Selfers, Sustainable Ozark Partnership; Peter Hofher, St. James Winery; and Julie Schrope, Swiss Meat and Sausage Company.

**Staff Present:** Connie Willman and Samantha Maddison

1. **Call to Order and Introductions:** Vice Chairman Schrope opened the meeting at 6:07 p.m.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the January 28, 2018 meeting were presented. Charles Ray made a motion, seconded by Jordan Ray, that the minutes be approved as presented. Motion passed.
3. **Staff Report:** Connie Willman reported that the organization received 2 grants to keep the program running for the next 3 years. The first grant she reported on was the Rural Business Development Group Grant for a total of $40,800 to be spent over the next year. The grant began on July 1, 2018 and will end on June 30, 2019. During this time, Naturally Meramec will Complete a Food Hub Feasibility Study, hold “taste counties” events, and hold multiple trainings for the Naturally Meramec Consortium Members. The second grant that Connie reported on is the USDA Farmers Market Production Program for a total of $425,000 to be spend over the next three years. During the grant period Naturally Meramec will facilitate an entrepreneur workshop series, hold “taste of counties” events, establish 9 additional regional trails, conduct marketing research, and hold 6 speed date events per year
4. **Dues Structure:** As the discussion on dues began, Charles Ray voiced that the cost of the current dues is significantly too high. Many of our local businesses cannot afford to pay the $300 dues. Everyone in the room was in agreeance with this statement. Peter Hofher mentioned that his business was willing to pay the current fee, but felt that many businesses would not be able to support this cost. He suggested that we turn to a revenue based dues system so the larger, more plentiful companies can help support the smaller businesses. At this point, it was suggested that we need to stop this discussion until a concrete strategic plan has been put in place. When we can present a solid list of benefits before we decide on a set dues amount.
5. **Discussion of Meeting date/time/location:** Samantha asked the group if there was a particular day of the week that worked better for everyone or if there was a specific day that was not an option. Charles Ray mentioned that Tuesday or Thursday would more than likely be the best options as Monday and Friday are usually not good days for meetingsand Wednesday is normally a night that individuals would attend church. Peter mentioned that the first part of the week is normally harder for big businesses to step away as they are planning for the rest of the week. We also discussed where to host the meetings. Many thought it would be good to travel, but to also have meetings centrally located too. Charles ray motioned to schedule the meetings on Thursdays @ 6:00 pm and to rotate between the different counties and have them at MRPC as well. Motion was seconded by Julie Schrope. Motion passed.
6. **Strategic Plan:** Tabled until next meeting.
7. **Announcements:** No new announcements
8. **Networking:** Members networked and enjoyed refreshments, provided Swiss Meat and Sausage Company