

Naturally Meramec Consortium

Regional Meeting

February 28, 2019

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

6:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

**Call to Order:** Samantha Maddison called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes from the January 24, 2019 meeting:** Samantha presented the minutes for approval. Ron Selfors made a motion, seconded by Greg Harris, that the minutes be approved as presented. Motion passed.

**Nomination of new Vice Chair:** tables until later date

**Staff Report:** Samantha updated the group with the final designs of the marketing materials and let the group know they should be here soon. Samantha reported that she has been working on the Food Hub Feasibility Study for the USDA Rural Business Development Grant. Another person will be hired to assist her on both the Naturally Meramec project as well as an opioid project. Samantha is working on setting up trainings, including a training on canning with University Extension and one on customer service. Samantha also updated the group on an upcoming Taste of Pulaski County event that Naturally Meramec would be attending.

**Marketing Impact:** Caitlin gave a brief update about previous posts that have been put on Facebook. She explained that during the month of February, Naturally Meramec’s page received 6 new likes and posts reached a total of 823 people. The website had 229 new users and the average session time is higher than the average for most websites.

**Strategic Plan:** Members will begin to prioritize weaknesses and threats so the group can establish goals and complete the strategic plan. The list of weakness and threats was send out to the larger group for input as there were only four people present at the meeting because of inclement weather.

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| **SWOT Analysis** | |
| **Mission:** The mission of Naturally Meramec is to create a culture of local agriculture, tourism and culinary businesses that will benefit from symbiotic relationships with others, resulting in the growth of business in the Meramec Region. | |
| **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| * MRPC established (adds credibility to region) * Natural Beauty * Diversity in agriculture * Wineries/historical culture * Geographical beauties * Local restaurants * Unique antique culture * Community involvement * Local artists * I-44 & Rt. 66 * Cycling trails (national cyclist destination) * Local funding opportunities (grants, loans) * Presence of universities in the region | * Washington Co – no major roadways * Lack of diversity * Lack of lodging * Fear of competition w/I industry (zero-sum game) * Fear of strangers * NMC membership * Knowledge of NMC * Time/participation * Lack of broadband * Business turnover * $$$ * Lack of advertisement (broad based) |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| * Keeping open/closed update * Registries/distribution list * Make use of current amenities * Internet reach * Nationally established business (Ozark Scenic Riverways, St. James Winery) * Collaboration with communities * Relationships w/ MO Div. of Ag & Tourism * Economy * Geographic Location * Availability to use existing storefronts * Active vacation culture | * Availability of funding – grants * Large cities (competition) * Infrastructure * MODOT road funding * General fear of societal changes * State & federal regulations * Lack of communication between government & public * General overall economy * Immigration issues |