

**Meramec Regional Planning Commission**  
**Minutes**  
**Dec. 14, 2023**

**Call to Order**

Chairman Mary Heywood called the Dec. 14, 2023, meeting of the Meramec Regional Planning Commission to order at 7:36 p.m. The meeting was conducted via Zoom and in-person.

**Welcome**

Chairman Heywood welcomed everyone to the meeting. Board members Tammy Bruckerhoff, Patricia Heaney, Tai Kimes, Bob Parsons, Bob Parsons and Kyle Williams participated via Zoom. Board members participating in person were Steve Black, Jason Ward, Erik Lowes, Gary Larson, Tim Schulte, Duane Kraettli, Vic Stratman, Steve Vogt, Darryl Griffin, Joey Auxier, Tom Coots, Kent Bagnall, Sean Wilson, T.R. Dudley, Adam Housewright, John Money, John Casey and Mary Heywood. MRPC staff attending in person were Bonnie Prigge, Samantha Sherman, Linda Loughridge, Tammy Snodgrass, Caitlin Jones and Linda Carroll. MRPC staff members Donald Keeney and Anne Freand participated via Zoom. Payton Ruddy with Rep. Mark Alford's office participated via Zoom. Grant Wilson with Rep. Jason Smith's office participated in person.

**Consent Agenda**

The following consent agenda items were presented for approval:

- a. Minutes – Nov. 9, 2023
- b. Local Review  
None.
- c. State Review
  1. Department of Conservation, Jefferson City, MO  
10.664 – Cooperative Forestry Assistance  
Restoring Glades and Woodlands through Fuel Reductions to Minimize  
Catastrophic Wildfires  
Federal: \$235,000  
State: \$175,000  
Total: \$470,000
  2. Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City, MO  
16.554 – Superfund State and Indian Tribe Combined Cooperative Agreements  
(Site-Specific and Core) Superfund Combined Cooperative Agreement  
Federal: \$1,128,939  
State: \$46,618  
Total: \$1,175,557

The Office of Administration issues the Missouri Federal Assistance Clearinghouse grant reviews weekly. Staff is sharing reports in between meetings with board members. If you have questions about grants listed, you can call MRPC staff, or the Office of Administration as listed on the reports.

d. Contracts

- St. James Ambulance  
Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to enter into a technical assistance contract for grant writing for various grants as

identified by St. James Ambulance and for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to sign any necessary documents.

- St. James Ambulance

Permission is requested for MRPC's executive director to enter into a grant agreement with St. James Ambulance for grant writing for the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant, and for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to sign any necessary documents.

- Maries County

Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to approve and sign a Maries County Floodplain technical assistance contract for the period Jan. 1, 2024, to Dec. 31, 2024, and for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to sign any necessary documents.

- Crawford County

Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to approve and sign a Crawford County Floodplain technical assistance contract for the period Jan. 1, 2024, to Dec. 31, 2024, and for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to sign any necessary documents.

- Meramec Regional Planning Commission

Permission is requested for MRPC, in partnership with Fort Leonard Wood and SOP, to apply to the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) for funds to complete a Military Installation Resiliency Review (MIRR), and for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to sign any necessary documents. MRPC is seeking approximately \$575,000 to complete the project, which requires a local match of 10%.

- Route 66 Museum of Phelps County, Inc.

Permission is requested for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to enter into a technical assistance contract for grant writing for the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums and any other grants as identified by Route 66 Museum of Phelps County, Inc. and for MRPC's chairman and/or executive director to sign any necessary documents.

Bonnie Prigge noted that on page 7 of the Nov. 9 minutes the last item under the Executive Director's Report said Sunset Law Training. It should have said Sunshine Law Training. Vic Stratman made a motion to approve the consent agenda with noted change; Jason Ward seconded. The motion carried.

**Presentation: MRPC Membership Dues Proposal**, Bonnie Prigge, MPRC Executive Director and Linda Loughridge, MRPC Fiscal Officer

Bonnie briefly reviewed the basics of the membership dues proposal that was presented at the November board meeting.

- For FY24-25, the per capita would increase from 54.59 cents to .60 cents, with a 2% increase in FY 24-26.
- For FY24-25, the per capital for cities with populations less than 10,000 would increase from 71.03 cents to .75 cents, with a 2% increase in FY25-26.
- For FY24-25, the per capital for cities with populations of 10,000 or greater would increase from 71.03 cents to 72.5, with a 2% increase in FY25-26.
- For FY24-25, the per capita for cities with less than 471 would increase from \$300.50 to \$400, with a 2% increase in FY25-26.

- If the census count went backwards, the dues would remain the same, as would the number of hours allotted to that city or county.
- Buyups are still an option.

Tim Schulte made a motion to approve the consent agenda with noted change; Gary Larson seconded. The motion carried.

Bonnie said she would send it out officially next week.

### **Update from State and Federal Legislators:**

Grant Wilson with Rep. Jason Smith's office:

Mr. Wilson reported that the Congressman introduced the American Families and Jobs Act, which combines the following three bills:

- HR 3936 Tax Cuts for Working Families Act – This act would amend the Internal Revenue Code to rename the standard deduction the guaranteed deduction, and to add a bonus amount to the guaranteed deduction for taxable years 2024 and 2025.
- HR 3937 Small Business Jobs Act – This act would promote the establishment and growth of small businesses by establishing rural opportunity zones.
- HR 3938 Build It in America Act – This act would encourage economic growth.

Bonnie Prigge asked if HR 3937 would envision a new process to establish additional rural opportunity zones. Mr. Wilson was unsure of the exact process that would be used.

Mr. Wilson informed the board that the Congressman had introduced legislation that would impose a 60% excise tax on land purchases by people and companies of foreign countries having ties to terrorism.

Payton Ruddy with Rep. Mark Alford's office:

Ms. Ruddy informed the board that the Congressman was excited about the National Defense Authorization Act passing.

She also reported that the Congressman had introduced the following two bills:

- Holding Agencies Accountability Act – The goal of this bill is to enhance transparency and accountability in federal rulemaking.
- Successful Entrepreneurship for Reservists and Veterans SERV Act – This bill requires the Small Business Administration (SBA) to be more transparent with opportunities for veterans to transition into the private sector. It has passed the House and has been sent to the Senate for consideration.

### **External Relations Committee:** Darryl Griffin, chairperson

Darryl Griffin reported on External Relations activities as follows:

Tammy Snodgrass presented the final numbers for the annual dinner and reported that total revenue over expenses was \$1,222.99. The silent auction was one of the most successful in recent years.

Tammy provided the results of the state legislative priorities survey. She said she only receive 14 responses and the committee discussed ways to increase participation. Steve Vogt suggested that instead of a presentation, time could be carved out to pass out the survey at the board meeting where members could ask questions about some of the issues and then fill out the survey in the meeting. Tammy said the timeframe would have to be changed so it would be next year before we could try doing it that way. Bonnie said she and Tammy would take a look at the schedule and see

if it could be made to work. She added that tabulation of issues probably would not be able to be done during that same meeting.

T.R. said he would like to see last year's top priorities when the survey goes out. He also suggested making the process on-going like the CEDS and prioritize throughout the year. Vic Stratman suggested mailing the survey as well as handing it out at the meeting.

Joey Auxier made a motion to approve the state priorities as presented. Vic Stratman seconded. The motion carried.

The committee briefly discussed the Federal Legislative Priorities survey that went out.

The committee discussed plans for the MRPC Day at the Capitol, scheduled for Jan. 23, 2024. Darryl asked everyone to mark that date on their calendar.

Staff provided a handout on legislative updates.

**Operations Committee:** Sean Wilson, vice chairman  
Sean Wilson reported on operations activities as follows:

The committee reviewed MRPC/MRB and MRPC/MRDC-RLF and IRP program financial statements for the period ended Nov. 30, 2023.

Jason Ward made a motion to approve the financials for the period ending Nov. 30, 2023. Erik Lowes seconded. The motion carried.

Staff reported that scholarship checks will be cut in January and that MRB received a new vehicle. The vehicle came in under budget and was delivered early.

The committee conducted its annual review of the conflict of interest policy and determined no changes were needed.

Sean Wilson made a motion to approve the conflict of interest; Jason Ward seconded. The motion carried.

Linda Loughridge mentioned that she currently has three vacancies in her department (fiscal/loans). She said her search hasn't led her to any qualified candidates at this point and said she will resume her search for replacements after the first of the year.

**Planning Committee:** T.R. Dudley, chairman  
T.R. Dudley reported on planning activities as follows:

The committee reviewed some of the CEDS 2024 updated statistics in preparation for the full update that will be completed next year. T.R. highlighted the following regional statistics related to the goals.

- Goal 1 Assessed Valuation - increased by 22%.
- Goal 2 Unemployment Rates –decreased by 28%
- Goal 3 Tax Revenue – increased by 47%
- Goal 4 Access to Broadband – increased significantly in most counties.
- Goal 5 Number of Jobs in Healthcare – increased by 3.4%

- Goal 6 Annual County Health Ranking- went down slightly except for the Phelps, Pulaski and Washington counties. Current county health rankings are based on 115 counties plus the city of St. Louis. The lower the number, the worse the ranking. Current rankings are:  

|               |                  |                |
|---------------|------------------|----------------|
| Crawford – 95 | Dent – 103       | Gasconade – 67 |
| Maries – 62   | Osage – 8        | Phelps – 68    |
| Pulaski – 24  | Washington – 107 |                |

Some other regional highlights he shared from the committee's review:

- High school graduation rates – have decreased by less than 1%.
- Visitors to state parks – from 2017-2022 decreased by 7.7%.
- Work Keys testing – still going well.
- Educational attainment – for those with some college degree it increased by 4.8% and for those with an associate degree it increased by 29.1%
- Annual county wage – increased by 15.8%

T.R. informed board members they still have time to have some input. The document can be found on the website.

Samantha Sherman provided a review of the activities completed as part of the HRSA Opioid grant and reviewed the objectives of the grant. Activities as part of the HRSA grant included:

- Partnering with Dr. Sean Siebert on programs in schools and jails.
- CIT training
- The distribution of a large amount of Narcan purchased with grant funds.
- Holding Agencies Accountability Act – The goal of this bill is to enhance transparency and accountability in federal rulemaking.
- Presentation of the Too Good for Drugs program in schools in all eight counties in the Meramec Region, reaching 7,300 students.
- Providing the Seeking Safety program to jails in the region.

#### **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC): Anne Freand**

Anne Freand reported on transportation activities as follows:

Anne provided a handout showing MRPC's transportation priorities as ranked by the TAC just prior to the MRPC meeting. The committee recommended the full board approve the priorities as presented.

Steve Vogt made a motion to approve the priorities as presented; Vic Stratman seconded. The motion carried.

Anne reported that six out of 10 projects in the Meramec Region received TAP funding. Those projects were:

- State Tech – Sidewalks on US 50 and Route CC
- Waynesville – Historic Route 66 Sidewalk
- Gasconade County – Rock Island Trail
- Hermann – Hermann 4<sup>th</sup> Street Connection Project
- Dent County – Courthouse Square Sidewalks
- Potosi – Community Connection Sidewalk

Anne also spoke briefly on the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant. She said that starting in late January, MRPC staff would be visiting all counties in the region to discuss possible projects.

Bonnie Prigge gave an update on regional traffic safety and fatalities. The Meramec Region is up slightly while the Central District is down a bit.

The committee received a brief update on the Buckle Buddy, Bicycle/Pedestrian and DocuDrama programs as well as health fairs. MoDOT also provided a brief update.

Anne mentioned there would be another TAP round in the Spring for FY26 projects. She also reported that Joane Prenger will now be handling the TAP and BRO programs for the region. Anne concluded her report by informing the board that the consultant who prepares the RFQ for a project cannot bid on that project. More information to come.

**Housing Board:** Vic Stratman, chairman

No report was given.

**Environmental:** Tammy Snodgrass, Assistant Executive Director/Environmental Programs Manager

Tammy reported that four Climate Pollution Reduction meetings were held in the region to gather feedback for DNR's plan. She said implementation funds would be available, but only for those projects in the plan. DNR would be submitting one grant application to EPA she said. Among the types of projects that would be eligible for funding are charging stations for electric vehicles, tree plantings, city park projects and energy efficient appliances for low income families.

Tammy informed the board that MRC, the contractor that takes e-waste and appliances at the Ozark Rivers special collections is offering to set trailers in communities to collect e-waste and appliances on a permanent basis. She cautioned those interested that unless the trailers are in an area that is monitored in some way, they may end up collecting items other than what the trailers are intended for. Anyone interested in hosting a collection site was asked to contact MRPC staff.

She also mentioned the Ozark Rivers annual banquet that was held on Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>. Tammy said a new award, the Spirit Award, was given out this year. It went to MRPC employee Kathryn Hawes and former MRPC employee Patrick Stites for their work with education and marketing Trashasaurus.

A handout on environmental activities was provided.

**Business Loans:** Linda Loughridge, Fiscal Officer

Linda reported the next full MRDC board meeting will be held Feb. 14, 2024 at noon. The audit report will be presented at this meeting. She said a loan review meeting is tentatively set for Jan. 10, 2024, if needed.

She said interest rates for the 20-year and 25-year loans decreased slightly.

Anyone needing a small business loan should contact Linda Loughridge.

A handout on loan activity was provided.

**Meramec Community Enhancement Corporation (MCEC):** Vic Stratman

Vic Stratman reported that Orin Pogue, MRPC's new Naturally Meramec program facilitator, updated the board on grant funded activities with the Naturally Meramec Consortium. Orin provided the following updates:

- He is working with the Bourbon Economic Development Group to implement a Taste of Crawford County.
- A Request for Proposals for a website update is underway.

- Staff continue to develop day trips to add to the website.
- Staff continue to market and promote members and the region, and he is seeking ways to encourage more involvement from members.

Caitlin Jones provided a summary of the Missouri Department of Economic grant to promote the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) in the Meramec Region. Efforts made over the grant period included attending events to distribute information, distributing brochure racks at libraries, city halls and health departments and visiting Head Starts. Social media was used significantly to share information. Caitlin said the very short timeframe hindered efforts to enroll many people, so the focus remained on promotion.

Kelly sink provided an MCEC grant update. She informed the board the Department of Justice grant to serve children and families of those affected by substance abuse disorders in the region was not funded. She also reported the grant application submitted to the Clif Family Foundation was not funded. This request was to provide the same services to non-DRA naturally Meramec counties that are included in the DRA grant. Kelly said staff continue to look for resources for both programs.

Bethany Ferrell reviewed the financials for the period ending Oct. 31, 2023. She noted the ACP grant is closed and Naturally Meramec DRA is on-going. Financials were approved.

#### **Meramec Regional Community Foundation (MRCF): Bonnie Prigge**

Bonnie reported the MRCF meeting that was scheduled for Dec. 12 was cancelled.

She informed the board that the community grant program is now open, and information can be found on the CFO website. The deadline to apply is January 31, 2024. Bonnie noted that CFO had made some changes and instead of awarding three grants as in past years, there will be two grants of \$750 each that will be awarded.

She informed the board the there will be an MRCF training here at the MRPC office in January. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

Bonnie also mentioned that as part of CFO's 50-year celebration, they have hired a freelance writer to interview its affiliates. That writer was here this week and Bonnie said they talked about CFO and its history and the many scholarship opportunities offers that make MRCF unique.

#### **Board Comments**

Darry Griffin asked how counties are spending their opioid settlement funds. Joey Auxier with Phelps County said they have formed a 13 member board while Gary Larson with Dent County has said they are sitting on the funds until they receive further clarification on how those funds can be spent.

Bonnie informed board members that MML held a webinar on reporting and that MRPC's Kelly Sink sat in on it. She said information will be shared out and that the Department of Mental Health appears to be taking the lead.

#### **Chairman's Report**

Mary Heywood wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

## Executive Director's Report

Bonnie said invites to the CEDS committee have been sent out to begin work on the 2024 CEDS update.

She informed the board she attended the first planning workshop for the EDA Tech Hub Grant at MS&T. Topics of discussion included:

- Extracting/processing critical minerals (zinc, copper, cadmium and cobalt).
- There are no mineral processing plants in the U.S.
- Having a building at S&T to house a processing plant.

Bonnie reported there will be workshops held in Viburnum and Fredericktown. She said planning was the first phase of the grant with phase two being the build out if selected.

Other topics she touched on included:

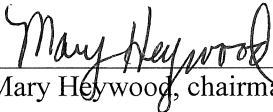
- Sunshine Law Training – Training, sponsored and presented by MML, will take place in January. It will be hosted by the city of Belle. More information to follow.
- Military Installation Resiliency – MRPC is working with Fort Leonard Wood, St. Robert and Waynesville on this project. A consultant will be hired to conduct a study. There will be a tabletop exercise with emergency personnel at Fort Leonard Wood with a housing component included.
- Broadband – The report is back. Meetings will reconvene at the county level to discuss the report. More information to follow.
- RAISE grant – This federal highway grant is open until Feb. 28, 2024. This grant has a planning component and Gasconade County and the cities in the county have asked MRPC to take a look at a planning grant for a benefit costs analysis for the Rock Island Trail Park. In order to apply for an implementation grant for the project, a benefit cost analysis for the project is required Bonnie said.
- Housing – Phelps County participated in a housing forum with some good information being shared. The forum is exploring housing resources.

Bonnie thanked board members for their Christmas donations last month.

In conclusion, Bonnie reported MRPC is finishing up hiring an employee to work with the opioid program and one person has been hired to work in the environmental and planning departments.

## Adjourn

Jason Ward made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 p.m.; Vic Stratman seconded the motion. The motion carried.

  
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Mary Heywood, chairman

  
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Attest