

**Meramec Regional Planning Commission**  
**Minutes**  
**Jan. 11, 2024**

**Call to Order**

Vice Chairman Darryl Griffin called the Jan. 11, 2024, meeting of the Meramec Regional Planning Commission to order at 7:35 p.m. The meeting was conducted via Zoom and in-person.

**Welcome**

Vice Chairman Griffin welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made around the room. Board members Duane Kraettli, Bob Parsons and Tim Schulte participated via Zoom. Board members participating in person were Steve Black, Jason Ward, Gary Larson, John Smith, Vic Stratman, Steve Vogt, Ray Schwartz, Darryl Griffin, Joey Auxier, Toom Coots, Kent Bagnall, Sean Wilson, Don Claycomb, John Money, Jan Haviland, Shane Anselm, Tai Kimes and John Casey. MRPC staff attending in person were Bonnie Prigge, Samantha Sherman, 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 and Jennifer Hoskins with Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer's office participated via Zoom. Representatives Tara Peters, Bennie Cook and Bruce Sassmann participated in person.

**Consent Agenda**

The following consent agenda items were presented for approval:

- a. Minutes – Dec. 14, 2023
- b. Local Review  
None.
- c. State Review  
None.

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

- Mark Twain Council of Governments

Permission is requested for the MRPC chair and/or the Executive Director to enter into a subcontract with Mark Twain Council of Governments for planning work related to the development of the statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) being developed by the Missouri Department of Economic Development.

- Missouri Association of Councils of Governments

Permission is requested for the MRPC chair and/or the Executive Director to enter into a subcontract with the Missouri Association of Councils of Governments for Phase 1 planning work on the Missouri S&T EDA Tech Hub grant.

- Missouri S&T

Permission is requested to authorize MRPC to be co-applicant/partnering agency on the Missouri S&T EDA Tech Hub Phase 2 grant, due on Feb. 29, 2024.

Permission is requested for the MRPC chair and/or the Executive Director to sign

all necessary documents within the application and any necessary subcontract documents, should the grant be awarded.

- Delta Regional Authority

Permission is requested for the MRPC chair and/or the Executive Director to submit a planning grant application to the Delta Regional Authority to develop a Comprehensive Plan for the city of Potosi, and to sign all necessary grant documents and award documents, should a grant be offered.

- City of Hermann, MO

Permission is requested to enter into a contract with the city of Hermann to develop a comprehensive plan for the city, should a contract be offered.

- Rolla Farmer's Exchange

Permission is requested to release third deed of trust on the RLF loan for the business known as "Rolla Farmer's Exchange" located at 12595 County Road 5110, Rolla, Missouri 65401 and authorization for the chairman or executive director to sign all necessary documents. The sale of the property is scheduled to close on January 16, 2024, and proceeds will pay off its SBA loan in full and provide a significant additional principal payment toward its RLF working capital loan. The remaining RLF loan balance will be sufficiently covered by a second deed of trust on the borrower's personal residence.

Jason Ward made a motion to approve the consent agenda; Vic Stratman seconded. The motion carried.

**Introduction of New MRPC Employee:** Bonnie Prigge, MRPC Executive Director  
Bonnie introduced Luis Griffin, the newest addition to the MRPC staff. Luis is a Community Development Specialist.

**Presentation: Idea Exchange with State Legislators:** Darryl Griffin, Vice Chairman and Bonnie Prigge, MRPC Executive Director

Bonnie shared that board members would like to bring some of the Meramec Region's top priorities to the attention of the legislators. She informed the legislators that a full copy of the priorities would be provided to the legislators when a delegation from MRPC visits the Capitol later this month. She added that, each year, MRPC goes through a process of surveying board members to determine state priorities. These priorities are then voted on and the top priorities are summarized in a report that will be presented to the region's legislators. Tonight, Bonnie said the board would like to share some of those top priorities.

**Regional Transportation:** Steve Vogt, TAC chair, asked legislators to support road, bridge and multi-modal transportation in the Meramec Region as identified by MRPC and its TAC through the transportation planning framework. Vogt reported a top priority as being the four-laning of Highways 63 and 50. He said those highways are high traffic areas that need improvements for better traffic flow.

**Regional Economic Development:** Jason Ward said the top priority in regional economic development revolves around construction wages. When state and federal funds are being used on a construction project, Missouri should defer to the federal wage rates (Davis-Bacon) instead of applying state prevailing in addition to federal rates.

**Health Care/Social Service:** John Money presented the top priority in health care as the need to assure adequate funding for rural hospitals to support recruitment of essential healthcare

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**Regional Economic Development:** Jason Ward said the top priority in regional economic development revolves around construction wages. When state and federal funds are being used on a construction project, Missouri should defer to the federal wage rates (Davis-Bacon) instead of applying state prevailing in addition to federal rates.

**Health Care/Social Service:** John Money presented the top priority in health care as the need to assure adequate funding for rural hospitals to support recruitment of essential healthcare

providers and clinical workers. He said reimbursement rates are not keeping up with expenses, and many hospitals are struggling to remain open. Through an application process, John said Phelps Health was one of six hospitals to be awarded funding for a TORCH project that will focus on preventative services to decrease Medicaid expenses. Rep. Cook added that this project is vital to the smaller hospitals in the region who are struggling with increasing expenses. He said the Federal Reimbursement Allowance (FRA) is scheduled to be voted on this year. It is very important to hospitals as losing these funds can affect hospitals drastically, with many facing the possibility of having to close.

Rep. Tara Peters informed the board she has filed three bills to help Phelps Health and rural hospitals. The first has to do with geographic location allowing Phelps Health to make a certain payment in the Salem area. The second addresses the choices hospitals have when it comes to investing money. Rep. Peters said hospitals are currently very restricted in how their money is invested. This bill would allow for expansion and greater investment choices. The third bill focuses on 340B and addresses the issue of prescription drugs and the percentage of those sales that go back to the hospitals.

Bonnie said she would get those bill numbers and share them with the board.

**Environmental:** Presiding Commissioner Gary Larson informed the legislators that HB1870 is a high priority for the region. This is the legislation that authorizes the collection of fees from facilities that store hazardous materials, and it is set to sunset in 2024. He said these funds support the planning and training activities of the Missouri Emergency Response Commission and the local emergency planning committees and districts throughout the state. Gary said it is critical to extend the sunset so a suspension of these critical services that protect the state's residents and emergency responders can be avoided. Bonnie added that a lot of important work gets done with those funds and if not extended, much of that work such as planning and training and development of hazard plans will come to a halt.

Rep. Bruce Sassmann reported this bill has been read two times but has not yet been sent to committee. He said that if the regional planning commissions each reached out to their respective legislators and encouraged them to co-sponsor the bill, it may help to move it along. Bonnie said she has reached out to Gamble and Schlemeier, and they are watching the bill. Rep. Sassmann reported that in just two weeks the speaker referred over 200 bills out to committee. There is no Senate companion bill at this time, and one needs to be filed.

**Education:** In the area of education, Mayor Sean Wilson said there is a need to reinstate shop-building trades, home economics and physical education. Bonnie said there is a need to recognize the importance of those courses.

Rep. Sassmann said education is a priority for the speaker of the House. He added that many schools have gone to a four-day school week but there is some discussion to get schools back to a five day school week. There has also been some discussion on open enrollment he said. Bonnie said there have been some concerns regarding open enrollment, especially in the small, rural communities in the region. Rep. Peters said schools don't have to participate. Rep. Cook commented that he felt a five-year veteran teacher in a rural school should make at least \$50,000 and added that the state legislature would be responsible for funding. He said he is working on making this an amendment to the open enrollment bill. He also said this pay rate should be a stipulation before a school could consider open enrollment. In addition to having raises in place for teachers, Rep. Cook said transportation should be fully funded before open enrollment could be considered.

**Local Government (City/County):** Presiding Commissioner Vic Stratman said MRPC opposes legislation that reduces/eliminates local taxes and local taxing authority. He cited SB190, passed

last year as a problematic law. Cities and counties rely upon sales tax as their largest, non-utility revenue provider supporting the many services and amenities on behalf of their citizens he said. If existing tax revenues are removed, there must be some sort of replacement revenue.

Rep. Cook mentioned that in Texas County, it was only county's portion of taxes that was affected. He said the taxes for schools and libraries weren't touched. Ray Schwartze said counties should be left to run themselves, and legislators should run the state. Presiding Commissioner Joey Auxier said the SB190 issue could be fixed with one sentence. He said when a person gets to retirement age, counties should stop reassessing. Rep. Cook said he is not opposed to cutting taxes, it just needs to be done right. Do it in a way that doesn't mess with the county's portion and doesn't affect services provided by those taxes.

**General:** Ray Schwartze brought up the fact that Missouri is a net importer of electrical energy. He said Missouri cannot turn to all solar, but putting more on the current lines won't work.

Bonnie Prigge spoke about amending the state aid to regional planning commissions by increasing funding to \$50,000. She thanked Rep. Don Mayhew and Sen. Justin Brown for sponsoring bills. Bonnie said that funding is used as match for grants and said she would appreciate the support of the other Meramec Region legislators. Rep. Peters asked for the bill number, and Bonnie said she would get more information and share it out.

Bonnie concluded the discussion on state priorities by informing the board these were the region's pressing priorities. She said the full report would be provided when MRPC representatives visit the Capitol.

Rep. Cook said he and Rep. Peters will be hosting a Phelps County Day at the Capitol on Feb. 6. He said he is working with Maries County to do the same. He also mentioned a couple of meetings that were coming up to discuss the issue with Fort Leonard Wood wanting to close its south gates. The first will be on Jan. 25 in Texas County and the second will be on Jan. 29 in Waynesville. Rep. Cook said that Rep. Bill Hardwick is also assisting with this issue.

It was reported that the Governor's State of State Address would take place on Jan. 24.

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

Jennifer Hoskins with Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer's office:

Ms. Hoskins informed the board that the Congressman will be retiring after this term but said he plans on finishing strong. In December, Rep. Luetkemeyer along with Congressman Mark Alford, held a fentanyl forum. She also mentioned he would be back in session this week. Bonnie Prigge said representatives from MRPC are planning a trip to Washington, D.C., in March to present the region's federal priorities. Ms. Hoskins said she would check in with the D.C. staff to make sure MRPC gets on the schedule.

Payton Ruddy with Rep. Mark Alford's office:

Ms. Ruddy reported that the Congressman introduced 15 pieces of legislation this past year and that 12 made it off the floor. She mentioned it was a good first year for the Congressman. Ms. Ruddy said the Congressman did spend some time at the border crossing and that he hopes to hold more fentanyl forums around the state.

Bonnie asked if there was any word about a government shutdown. Both Ms. Ruddy and Ms. Hoskins said they hadn't heard anything.

Bonnie brought up the issue of the ACP program shutting down on Feb. 8, with subsidies coming to an end in April unless Congress provides more funding. She said the shutdown will impact our region. Caitlin Jones said the grant was supposed to end in September 2025 but now it's estimated that funds will run out in April 2024. Bonnie said she can provide more information. Ms. Hoskins said she will reach out to the DC team. Ms. Ruddy said she would do the same. Caitlin said she will forward information.

**External Relations Committee:** Darryl Griffin, chairperson  
Darryl Griffin reported on External Relations activities as follows:

The committee discussed the vacant at-large for small business position and reviewed the results of the federal priority survey results. The results were approved. The committee conducted its annual review of the MRB bylaws and reported no changes were needed.

Staff discussed the trip to the Capitol later this month.

Staff provided a handout on legislative updates.

**Operations Committee:** Jan Haviland, chairman  
Jan Haviland reported on operations activities as follows:

The committee reviewed MRPC/MRB and MRPC/MRDC-RLF and IRP program financial statements for the period ended Dec. 31, 2023.

Jason Ward made a motion to approve the financials for the period ending Dec. 31, 2023. Sean Wilson seconded. The motion carried.

Bonnie Prigge presented a recommendation from the MRDC board to approve a lump sum payment on an RLF loan.

Joey Auxier made a motion to accept the MRDC board recommendation to approve the lump sum payment on the SBA loan. John Casey seconded. The motion carried.

The committee made a request to add to the state priorities the support of Fort Leonard Wood.

**Planning Committee:** Anne Freand  
Anne Freand reported on planning activities as follows:

Anne reported the committee reviewed the priorities.

The committee reviewed activities involved with Phase 1 of the MS&T Tech Hub grant, which is the development of Phase 2 implementation EDA proposal for a materials processing project. This project would be developing a plant to process mine tailings right across Southern Missouri. The committee discussed possibilities for the region if the project comes to fruition. Staff also provided, from the Lightcast website, regional data related to mining.

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

No report was given.

**Housing Board:** Vic Stratman, chairman

Vic Stratman reported on housing activities as follows:

The housing advisory board approved the financials and the FY22-23 audit report. Stratman said the report was unmodified with clean opinions. It was a good audit. The board also approved the FY23-24 revised housing budget, and Donald Keeney provided housing statistics.

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

Tammy Snodgrass provided an update on environmental activities, including activities of the Ozark Rivers Solid Waste Management District and the Meramec Local Emergency Planning District.

A handout was provided.

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

No official report was given.

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

No report was given.

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

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 MRCF 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.

Bonnie informed the board there will be an MRCF training here at the MRPC office on January 24 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Bonnie reported she has been working with the Phelps County Community Foundation. The group is raising funds to purchase a portable security camera system in Phelps County that will tie into MO S&T/Rolla Central Dispatch with security at events with large crowds.

She also reminded the board that scholarships for area seniors can be found on the CFO website. Applications will close around March 24, she said.

**Chairman's Report**

No report was given.

**Executive Director's Report**

Topics Bonnie addressed included:

- Bills on MRPC's radar – More per diem for housing prisoners and more funding for sheriffs' salaries.
- CEDS – First meeting will be Jan. 17 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at MRPC.
- Sunshine Law Training – Training, sponsored and presented by MML, will take place on Jan. 26 beginning at 10:00 a.m. at MRPC. (Jason Ward asked if would be available via Zoom.)



- MS&T Hub grant – Four regional planning commissions in this area are working on this project.
- Military Installation Resiliency Report (MIRR) – MRPC is working with Fort Leonard Wood, St. Robert and Waynesville on this project. The grant request to the Department of Defense will be submitted tomorrow.
- Vacant MPRC positions – MRPC is continuing to hire staff. She said MRPC is looking to hire two or three people in fiscal and a business loan specialist. Two have been hired in the planning department.

### **Miscellaneous**

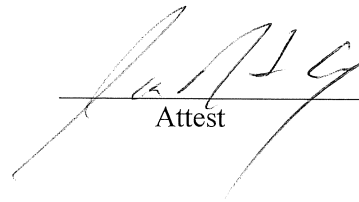
Rep. Cook reported a hearing on HB2079, which addresses the per diem for housing prisoners will be held on Jan. 17. This bill would raise the rate to \$60 per day. Interested parties can submit testimony on-line and the Congressman recommended taking the opportunity to do so.

Caitlin Jones informed the board the MRPC is working to pull back the ACP information that was provided to communities. She asked that anyone who has any of the ACP literature that they pull it back, and MRPC will be in touch.

### **Adjourn**

Vic Stratman made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m.; Shane Anselm seconded the motion. The motion carried.

  
 Mary Heywood, chairman

  
 Attest

